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What's New? By George Harding

Blu-Toque ...

Bluetooth is gaining in popularity and usefulness. More and more applications use Bluetooth, a short distance communication technology. Bluetooth is not new, but the use of it to enable applications is becoming more frequent and innovative.

One such application is Blu-Toque, otherwise known as Bluetooth Beanie. Here is an innovative use of Bluetooth to play songs that are on your smartphone.



The woolen cap has a battery which is charged with an included cable. One end is a micro-USB connector, the other a USB plug. The battery compartment is accessed on the inside of the Beanie. Charging takes a while, but should last for 2 ½ days of standby and 6 hours of talk time, according to the company. The battery is lithium-ion.

Once charged, you can pair the device with your smartphone in the usual fashion. Then you can listen to your songs as you skate, hike, ski, walk or whatever, out of doors and keep your ears warm at the same time.

The module is on the outside of the beanie and has three pressure points. The middle one pressed 3 seconds turns on the device and pressed once plays or stops the music. The right-hand one skips to the next selection or, if given a long press increases volume. The left-hand one skips to previous selection or, if given a long

press decreases volume. The long press actions did not work for me, but the smartphone can be used instead for volume control.

The beanie comes with the charging cable and a User Manual which is printed in very small type, but includes brief instructions in three languages.

There are some warnings in the instruction packet.

1. Do not expose to liquids or moisture
2. Don't tamper with it
3. Pull out the Bluetooth module before washing the beanie
4. Keep it away from fire (I wonder if it's flammable!)
5. Do not store it near acids or alkaline material

I had one problem with the fit of the beanie. I guess my head must be larger than the model in the picture, because I couldn't get the beanie to fit completely over my ears. I could still hear the music, but my ears would get cold, if I were in a cold environment.

Blu-Toque by Caseco

www.caseco.ca

Price \$50

D-Link WiFi Camera ...

This product is an example of IoT (Internet of Things) functionality. You can control a device with your smartphone. In this case, the Camera shows a view of, in my case, my living room, and you can view the image on your smartphone.

The idea here is that you can monitor for intruders or others in the camera's field of view. You might be interested in seeing what your cats do while you are out (sleep) or what your teenagers are doing while by themselves or what your daughter allows the boyfriend to get away with.



The product comes with the WiFi Camera, a power cord that is quite long and a Quick Install Guide. The Guide is really brief, being only 4 pages of small print. It tells you what each item is on the camera and tells you to download the smartphone app that takes you through the install process.

I downloaded the app and plugged in the camera, the first step. Next you have set up the connection between your WiFi router and the camera. It would be straightforward normally, but did not work for me.

I had to call Support for help. The product includes a card with the Support telephone number. I followed through several steps that the Support person told me to do, but the connection still didn't work.

After a considerable time, the Support person discovered that my router was set with WEP encryption. The Camera only works with WPA encryption. Once that was changed, the Camera worked as it should.

The setup process is fairly complicated. One has to set up a D-Link account and link it to the Camera you have. This involves the usual, user name and password, but also requires the password for the Camera, which is printed on the box and on a separate card in the box. These have to be entered correctly, of course.

After all entries are properly made, the Camera connects to the WiFi system and you can control the Camera from your smartphone.

The main thing you get is an image on your smartphone's screen of the area the Camera sees. The Camera has a 180° view, so you get a wide view which is a bit

distorted. However D-Link uses a “dewarping” technology to make the image much less distorted than standard fisheye lenses produce.

Activity in the view shows up on your screen in a jerky fashion, because the information transfer appears to be about 10 frames a second. But the quality is excellent, up to 1080p.

Another feature that might be handy is the ability to speak to your smartphone and have the Camera repeat. The camera has a built-in microphone which can pick up loud noises and send an alert to that effect.

The Camera has six infrared LEDs which provide a view even when the area is dark.

The Camera can be mounted anywhere you want, but for the best view, mounting on a wall would be best. The product comes with a couple of screws for this purpose.

This is a good product with a valuable benefit. I had difficulty installing it, but that was because of the encryption setting on my router. The process probably would have been less troublesome otherwise.

WiFi Camera by D-Link

us.dlink.com

Price 180

Ripple ...

One of the most unusual products at CES was demonstrated by a coffee maker!

The result is a cup of coffee with an image floating on the surface of the coffee. It has to be a latte, cappuccino or other foam-based beverage in order to show the image.



It's called Ripple and I saw it at a booth at CES, In fact, I was served a latte with an image of the Mona Lisa floating on the surface!

The first step is to make a latte, or whatever. The second step is to download an image of just about any sort to a machine that does the "engraving." The result is your image in the foam of the latte.

It's a unique operation and, while interesting, doesn't seem to have much in the way of actual use, outside of being an unusual offering at parties.

The Ripple Effect

<http://www.coffeeripples.com/>