



FLIP YOUR LID
3's prototype phone has been designed with TV and video playback in mind



Upwardly mobile

As manufacturers ring the changes, here's the shape of phones to come

This spring, much of the talk at Europe's vast electronics trade show CeBIT will be about mobilephones offering digital 'convergence' - the coming together of different forms of digital technology. The new designs will take better pictures, offer 3-D video games, show live TV (and even record it during an incoming call so you won't miss a thing), download movies and music, and remotely operate home-security systems.

But new product features don't count for everything. The dominant brands, such as Nokia and Samsung (which is poised to overtake Motorola as the world's second-biggest maker of mobile phones), have proved that the right

combination of clever brand-building and well-designed products will always win over a surfeit of technology for technology's sake.

As a result, mobile phone companies are looking for ever-more innovative designs. Firms such as Siemens, Sony Ericsson and 3 have been turning to cutting-edge designers to provide some radical thinking. Product Visionaires in Berlin, the Creative Design Centre in Lund, Sweden, and Priestman Goode in London have all been charged with some crystal-ball gazing - pushing design beyond the practical and into the high concept.

We took a preview of some of their offerings to see what will be glued to your ear next year.

PROTOTYPE MOBILE PHONE FOR 3

Charged with some directional thinking by Hutchison - the company behind the 3 brand - London-based design agency Priestman Goode worked on the principle that the phone market's move from speech to media will accelerate. Clips from TV shows are already a major part of 3's traffic,' explains Paul Priestman. The team predict such shared experiences will be the phone's main selling point, so the handset flips over to reveal a screen that can broadcast video to a whole room. Could this be the product that takes the phone from one-to-one communicator back to Alexander Graham Bell's dream of a broadcasting device? >> www.thre.co.uk, www.priestmangoode.com



IN TUNE

SIEMENS MOBILE HEADPHONES

Working on the principle that the biggest threat to the iPod is the mobile phone, Product Visionaires punted on a design which blends phone and headphones. The primary function for such a phone would be to download audio from 'the mobile web,' explains Siemens' CEO Andre Fischer, but, he adds, it would also provide increased privacy, as well as mobility and wearability. Convergence previously meant forcing many functions into a device as possible. In future, it could involve a coming together of design traditions too.

www.siemens.com, www.productvisionaires.de

SIZE MATTERS

INC MOBILE PHONE BY ALLOY FOR PMN

Market-intelligence company PMN recently asked product design agency Alloy to design a range of phones that are tailored to the needs of individuals. One of the new designs is the Inc phone, which is intended to meet the needs of older consumers. The Inc boils down to an easy-to-read LCD display showing caller information, large keypad graphics and numerals, contoured sides for simple opening and a simplified screen that makes navigation a child's play. One day, we may all need one www.thealloy.com, www.pmn.co.uk





SCREEN PLAY

SIEMENS GAMER AND MOBILE PHONE

Product Visionaires' blend of phone and games console is specifically designed to anticipate developments in virtual-reality technology - now known as augmented reality. The phone uses GPS to determine your location and overlays the game you're playing onto the cityscape around you, projecting your task or virtual enemy in front of you amid buildings, alleyways and parks. It's sure to make the commute to work a little more adrenaline filled. Oh, and the console clicks back in place to look like a normal phone when the fun's over.

www.siemens.com, www.productvisionaires.de

WITNESS PROJECTION

SONY ERICSSON IMAGING PHONE

Sony Ericsson's head of design, Hiroshi Nakazumi, realised that there may be a future for small camera phones that project images instead of showing them on a screen. Why carry around a display when you can project it onto a wall or page?' says Nakazumi. The idea is that we select which photo or film we want to show using a trackball on the end of the phone, then simply point it at any surface and view the projected image. The possibilities it creates are mind-boggling.

www.sonyericsson.com



FOCUSED PERFORMANCE

SONY ERICSSON SMARTPHONE

Sony Ericsson's SmartPhone is less about futuristic predictions and more about the sharpest way to incorporate technologies soon to come. The phone consists of back-to-back screens. On the outer surface, there's a full-colour screen that can rotate 180 degrees. It acts as a mini display unit, perfect when taking digital video and still shots. Inside, the touch screen controls and edits images as they are recorded. Look out for indie film-makers burning Mom and Pop's credit card to acquire one of these beauties.

www.sonyericsson.com

