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PLAY

PLAY|screen

Not even the best marketing team can save a movie from a stupid name. Take New Line's *Snakes on a Plane*. It doesn't come out until August, but it's already a laughingstock. Why the derision? A plot that borders on ridiculous (an assassin releases deadly snakes aboard a flight, terrorizing passengers like Troy, played by Kenan Thompson), coupled with an absolutely artless title. The studio tried to change the flick's name to *Pacific Air Flight 121* earlier this year, but star Samuel L. Jackson balked, saying the title was a big reason he signed on. Thing is, the terrible name might end up being the film's saving grace. It caught the attention of [meme-happy bloggers](#) who produced songs, apparel, poster art, pages of fan fiction, and even a mock trailer. This attention all but clinches the would-be dud's place in the camp classics hall of fame.

- Eric Steuer

PLAY|screen

Michela Ledwidge wants her film to be more than watchable. She wants it to be remixable. By February, the director plans to post all of the raw material for *Sanctuary*, her 10-minute sci-fi movie about a girl, her computer, and a mysterious murder, on www.modfilms.com. Expect nearly nine hours of production footage, 90 minutes of sound effects and dialog, plus hundreds of storyboards, concept drawings, and still photos. Viewers will be able to manipulate the cinematic elements with downloadable software called Switch. Ledwidge was inspired by game modding: Fans spend untold hours performing retrofits on their favorite titles (famous examples include *Half-Life* and *Quake III*). If her project catches on, *Sanctuary* could turn into the first massively multiplayer online movie.

- Jason Silverman

PLAY|music

If you think you've seen that CD cover before, it's probably because you have. Appropriation of album art is abundant in the pop world: Take Franz Ferdinand's latest disc, which riffs on the same 1924 Soviet poster as a recent Richard Pryor collection. Or the new Sufjan Stevens album, which goofs on a Slick Rick classic. "The designers are twisting the associations we have with pieces of pop culture," says Pete Hilgendorf of the Knockoff Project, a Web site that documents record sleeves and thieves. Artists whose designs are most commonly plundered? The Beatles and Elvis, Hilgendorf says. The biggest repeat offender? Parodist "Weird Al" Yankovic, of course.

- Ken Taylor

PLAY|motor

When is a Porsche not a Porsche? When it's a Triposto. Montreal-based mechanics Clyde and Hugh Kwok turned the quintessential sports car - a 1990 Porsche 911 C2 - into a bona fide street racer. They modified its 3.6-liter engine to hit 180 mph (up from 162 mph) and its horsepower to reach 300 (up from 250). Clyde, a retired engineering professor, and his son Hugh, a professional race car driver, also replaced the body with a Kevlar, carbon fiber, and aluminum skin similar to what's on Formula One cars. Though it no longer looks like a Porsche, aficionados won't be fooled: The air-cooled engine still emits the classic growl. And it can be yours for \$250,000, twice the price of the new, fully loaded 2006 Carrera 4S.

- Fred Langan

PLAY|motor

It's not a seat belt, but it's better than nothing: Honda is putting the first airbag on a mainstream motorcycle, its top-end Gold Wing, starting this summer. Safety-conscious riders will pay a yet-to-be-disclosed fee for the option over and above the bike's \$22,800 list. Sensors on the front forks detect an accident and trigger the bag mounted between the handlebars. In a head-on crash, the fabric bubble absorbs some of the rider's forward momentum. He'll still probably wind up on the pavement, but, hey, it beats flying through the air like a human lawn dart.

- Paul A. Eisenstein

PLAY|arts

Sixty years after Little Boy and Fat Man obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the cultural fallout is still fueling Japan's exploding neo-pop art movement. Check out Kenji Yanobe's collection of whimsical doomsday gear like *Yellow Suit* - radiation-safe attire for children and dogs - and *Atom Car*, a postapocalyptic commuter pod. Yanobe's latest creation is *Giant Torayan*, a 25-foot-tall, fire-breathing bot whose voice recognition software responds only to kids. During a recent show at the Toyota Municipal Museum, youngsters reacted with glee when the pyrotechnic bot danced and sang folk songs. Yanobe's next big exhibit takes place in March at the Osaka Contemporary Art Center, also in Japan.

- Todd Jatras

PLAY|games

It's clunky. It doesn't have Wi-Fi. It guzzles AA juice. So why is the GP2X gaming-and-media device a must-have among geeks? It's all about the penguin. The \$180 handheld, made by an obscure Korean company called Gamepark Holdings, uses a Linux operating system and ships with a software development kit. The GP2X launched in November without any official titles, but devout users are already writing games and other apps. "You can do anything with this device because it's open source," says Sanghoon Park, a Gamepark department manager. "It's a gift from heaven." Take that, Nintendo and Sony! Here's taste of manna in a plastic case.

What the GP2X Can Do**Play Media Files:**

This gizmo plays all the ebooks and audio files you can cram onto an SD card (sold separately). It also supports video formats from MPEG-4 to DivX and image formats from BMP to JPEG. Plug the GP2X into a PC via USB to transfer stuff, then connect it to a TV with an S-video cable to screen your latest BitTorrent score.

Run New Games:

Gamepark Holdings has deals with developers to release consumer games like Crazy Kart 2 for the GP2X. The company promises a dozen titles by next summer, including dating sims, adventure games, and arcade actioners. In the meantime, fans are rolling their own, such as puzzlers like LinesX.

Emulate Classics:

Making software that runs vintage games is a popular hobby among GP2X coders. The PC shooter Duke Nukem 3D is playable, and there's an app that handles all of the old Super Nintendo titles like Super Mario World. Emulators of coinop classics, Atari 2600, and Commodore 64 are also on the way.

- James Lee

PLAY|street

Don't even bother with search engines, 411, or the Yellow Pages. The only way to track down Caravan, New York City's hottest new boutique, is by getting real-time GPS coordinates from [its Web site](#). The modded Winnebago regularly cruises from uptown to Brooklyn selling art and clothing. Packed with a GPS transmitter, a plasma screen, and a wireless credit card processing unit (receipts are emailed to customers), the roving 240-square-foot store carries hard-to-find items from trendy labels like Penguin, Modern Amusement, and Catch a Fire. Caravan pulls in \$25,000 to \$30,000 a month even though it accommodates only a dozen shoppers at a time, says cofounder Claudine Gumbel. "We do a lot of appointments for insecure Wall Street guys," Gumbel says, "guys who need a little extra guidance and who like the privacy." The fleet is expanding to Austin, Los Angeles, and Miami, to help a few more rich slobs outrun the fashion police.

- Sonia Zjawinski

PLAY|korean schoolgirl watch

Like kimchi, cosmetics spoil without proper refrigeration. Or so says Korean company Eupa, which markets a portable cooler that helps schoolgirls keep their hand lotions and face creams fresh by storing them at a constant 54 degrees Fahrenheit. The fridge - available with red or blue accents - uses a thermoelectric cooling system in lieu of Freon so a gal can preserve the environment along with her potions. Just don't store your lunch in there. You'd hate to have your toner smell like fermented cabbage.

- Brian Ashcraft

PLAY|reviews

Print**Web Comic Relief****Penny Arcade Volume 1: Attack of the Bacon Robots!**

Jerry Holkins and Mike Krahulik

As geek icons go, Holkins and Krahulik rank right up there with Linus Torvalds and HAL 9000. Since 1998, the duo has been cranking out a hilarious Web comic strip that pokes fun at videogames and the people who play them. [Penny Arcade](#) gets 45 million pageviews a month and supports a thriving line of merchandise featuring beloved characters and memorable catchphrases ("Guns don't kill people. Kids who play videogames kill people"). This book collects the first two years of Webisodes and provides a peek at how the team honed its comedic chops. The comic occasionally descends into dog-whistle humor - impenetrable to normals but sidesplitting to folks who overclock their hard drives. Luckily, helpful commentary explains references to dated topics like 3Dfx cards and *Daikatana*. - *Chris Baker*

**Screen (Theaters)****The World's Fastest Indian**

Anthony Hopkins gives a ferocious performance as New Zealander Burt Munro, the real-life biker who schlepped his Indian Scout motorcycle to Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats in the 1960s in an attempt to break the land-speed record of 200 mph. It's a sweet story of an obsessed tinkerer going balls out - with no brakes. - *Anne Thompson*



Screen (DVD)**Kamikaze Girls**

Based on a best-selling Japanese novel, *Kamikaze Girls* tells a story of friendship between two unlikely gal pals (one is Little Bo Peep-esque, one Goth). The film hits the mark with its neon design and slapstick humor - like a scooter-chick gangsta who ends arguments with head butts - but the gushy lessons about life are kind of a drag. - *James Lee*

**Music****We Are Scientists**

With Love and Squalor

This smart (and smart-alecky) trio plays hook-heavy rock that's fast, fun, and totally free-spirited. Although the band's sound isn't particularly inventive (think Franz Ferdinand meets Green Day), WAS's funky, frenetic songs are strong enough to push *With Love* to the front of the power pop pack. - *Eric Steuer*

**Music****Saint Etienne**

Tales From Turnpike House

This gorgeous concept album is built around a fictional London apartment complex and the day-to-day lives of its tenants. Saint Etienne's discofied club pop, lilting vocals, and playful synthesizer add color to stories of street crime, eBay's effect on thrift shopping, and what it means to be twentysomething, passionate, and a bit mad. - *Ken Taylor*

**Games (PC)****City of Villains**

City of Heroes streamlined the massively multiplayer online role-playing game with comic book action, but forced you to be a boring do-gooder. This sinister sister game lets you be bad - as in rob banks, kidnap wealthy heiresses, and delegate dirty work to your henchmen. Or lead a double life. Your \$15 monthly fee gives you residence in both worlds. - *Kieron Gillen*

**Games (Xbox 360)****Dead or Alive 4**

Tecmo's fighting series comes out swinging - and jiggling - on Xbox 360. It's visually spectacular, with sprawling environments and faster pacing. It still isn't as deep or satisfying as the *Soul Calibur* or *Virtua Fighter* franchises. But connoisseurs of virtual mammaries won't mind. The series' buxom brawlers now duke it out in hi-def. - *Evan Shamoon*



PLAY|playlist

Games**D2K: Jumpman Returns**

What if someone wrote a splashy new chapter of Moby Dick or a terrific new scene of Citizen Kane? It happened to Donkey Kong. Jeff Kulczycki hacked the ROM to add challenging levels to the arcade classic.

Screen**Sins of the Fleshapoids**

This jaw-dropping '60s sci-fi flick is so campy, it makes *Plan 9 From Outer Space* look like *2001*. In the future, humans relegate their work to androids. One "fleshapoid" tires of toil and decides to join his masters in *sin!*

Music**Greatest Hit**

The six tracks on this meta-mix were each made by smashing together the entire selection of songs from a different album. It turns everyone from the Rolling Stones to Kenny G into an eerily familiar cacophony.

PLAY|fetish

**Big Boom Box**

Behold, an iPod sound system with the presence - and the output levels - of a baby grand. The red (or black or white) lacquer on this slick plinth goes beautifully with whichever Apple music player you dock in its crown. Two 300-watt channels drive pairs of 1-inch tweeters, 5.25-inch midranges, and 8-inch subs to give you awesome output. Also tucked into the 66-pound cabinet: a radio receiver and a slot-loader for CDs. It's loud, stylish, and much more versatile than a Steinway.

Geneva Sound System XL: \$1,075, www.genevalab.com

**Magic Fingers**

Adjusting your MP3 player on the slopes used to require mashing tiny buttons with bulky gloves (*argh!*) or taking your mitts off (*brrr!*). Not so with Tävo's gadget-friendly gloves. The thumb and index-finger tips are made of nylon strands coated with silver alloy, so you can work any capacitive touchpad (like the iPod click wheel). Go ahead, pump up the volume or change tracks - you'll be warm and in control.

Tävo Gloves: \$35, www.tavoproducts.com

**Pathfinder**

In downtown areas, many GPS navigation systems get blocked by skyscrapers and tunnels and lose their way. This one continues to map your progress by sensing turns with a gyroscope and tracking forward movement through your car's odometer. It also plays MP3s and receives XM satellite radio. Its gi-normous 7.5-inch touchscreen is sized for the dashboards on 18-wheelers, but we think it'll match the mammoth rims on any badass ride.

StreetPilot 7500: \$1,938, www.garmin.com

**Bright Light, Big Picture**

Digital home projectors crank out crisp, larger-than-life images, but ambient light can make them hard to see. Before you install blackout curtains, check out this model. Its ultrabright 400-watt pure xenon lamp resists washout. Better yet, the hi-def 1,920 x 1,080 picture is produced by liquid crystal on silicon panels. Translation: superior color range to what you get from the tiny mirrors in regular projectors. Brilliant!

VPL-VW100: \$10,000, www.sony.com

- Brian Lam

PLAY|test

Scene Setters

These do-it-all devices are your ticket to cineplex grandeur with minimal fuss. Each packs a projector, a built-in disc player, and an audio system. But if you want hi-def, look elsewhere: Most have mere DVD-quality resolution (854 x 480 pixels). And the speakers are neither surround nor very loud. Still, when was the last time you set up a screening room in less than a minute? - *Seán Captain*

SIMPLE SET UP TIPS

Raise the projector Ignore the feature that lets you digitally fix the "keystone" shape of an image that's projected at an upward angle; it reduces clarity. The better fix is low tech: Raise the entire projector until the picture is square.

Select a screen Sure, you can watch movies on any light-colored wall. But you'll get higher quality from a portable screen made by Da-Lite (www.da-lite.com) or Draper (www.draperinc.com).

Tweak the settings Adjust your projector for the screen and room lighting using a basic calibration DVD, such as *Sound & Vision Home Theater Tune-Up* or AVIA's *Pro DVD*.

HOW WE TESTED

Calibration We used the AVIA Pro DVD kit to determine the optimal image presets for watching movies at night:

"Cinema" on the Optoma, "Theater" on the Epson, and "Film" on the RadioShack. (The Hasbro doesn't offer image presets.)

Performance We played a battery of challenging DVDs - *Charlotte Gray* for shadow detail and saturated colors, *Star Trek: Insurrection* for deinterlacing, *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* for sound effects, and *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* for audio quality and flesh tones.



Optoma MovieTime DV10

This projector delivers a hearty helping of eye candy, with the sharpest visuals and most accurate colors (especially evident in skin tones). The sophisticated, though somewhat clunky, controls let cinephiles tweak the picture to perfection. Plus, its steep projection angle and relatively short "throw" - from 60 inches back, it beams a 4-foot-wide image that's 15 inches higher than the surface the unit rests on - make it ideal for coffee tables and cramped apartments. Unfortunately, the integrated 5-watt stereo system sounds a bit thin; you'll need the optional \$199 subwoofer to add boom to your room. Or, as with the Epson and Radio Shack models, you can connect the MovieTime to a 5.1-surround system via a digital audio connection.

Wired: Best overall image. Full controls on player handy if you misplace the remote. Three adjustable feet for easy leveling. Quiet cooling fan. Stylish carrying case.

Tired: Wimpy audio. Vague, poorly translated manual. Slight speckles appear in shadows.

\$1,299, www.optomausa.com



Epson MovieMate

Wired: Brightest projection. Shortest throw:

4-foot-wide picture from 50 inches back. Killer audio. Includes powerful subwoofer and 80-inch screen.

Tired: Gaps between pixels cast shadows, giving images a screen door effect. Low projection angle. Dark flesh tones look a tad yellow.

\$1,199, www.epson.com





RadioShack Cinego D-1000 Instant Theater

Wired: Accurate color. Comes with a decent subwoofer. Very compact.

Tired: Video isn't deinterlaced, resulting in squiggly lines and crawling pixels. Low contrast. Unimpressive stereo speakers. Chintzy remote.

\$1,300, www.radioshack.com



Hasbro's Tiger Electronics Zoombox

Wired: Cheap. Audio doesn't completely suck.

Tired: Everything else completely sucks. This toy projector can barely muster a dim, 25-inch-wide image in a dark room. Pathetic 557 x 234-pixel resolution creates hopelessly grainy projections. You'd be better off buying a portable DVD player.

\$299, www.hasbro.com



Untangled Tunes

Tired of getting caught in your headphone cable? These cans use Bluetooth to transmit your music wirelessly. Some even support a cell phone and put your tunes on hold while you chat. - *Cathy Lu*



TEN Technology naviPlay Bluetooth Stereo Headset

These headphones are designed to work only with Apple iPods. In this case, exclusivity rules: iPod owners need look no further. While the transmitters for the others we tested plug into any music player's audio jack, the naviPlay links to the iPod's dock connector, which enables the 'phones to control tracks. And, when you charge the transmitter and headset, it powers up your player, too. NaviPlay is compatible with Bluetooth-enabled phones, but not other digital audio machines.

Wired: Rich sound. Cranks up the loudest. Embedded mike for phone calls. Good battery life: 8.3 hours.

Tired: Answering the phone means fishing for the Call button under the right earpiece.

\$199, www.tentechnology.com



Logitech Wireless Headphones for MP3

Wired: Crisp, clear audio with ample bass. Solid connection: almost no hiccups or stuttering.

Tired: Tight fit and heft (3.2 ounces) made it uncomfortable. No cell phone connections.

\$130, www.logitech.com





Plantronics Pulsar 590A

Wired: Superb 11-hour battery life. 30-foot range - 5 feet more than any other unit tested. Tons of extras: charging stand, case, audio cord.

Tired: Stuttered every now and then. Music quality is passable but lacks detail. Expensive.

\$250, www.plantronics.com



Iogear Bluetooth Stereo Kit

Wired: Universal support - works with cell phones, PCs, and music devices.

Tired: Around-the-neck design pinched behind the ears after a few hours. Giant microphone (thankfully, detachable) screams "Telemarketer!"

\$180, www.iogear.com



Stream On



All audio streamers pipe music from your computer to your stereo, but few do it with such effortless style as the Squeezebox. It pulls digital audio files - nearly any format you can imagine - from across an Ethernet or Wi-Fi network. And the etched-aluminum case is super sexy. But the Squeezebox's software is what really rocks: It serves up your entire PC music collection, plus Net radio, podcasts, and RSS headlines. Because Slim open-sourced the code, geeks have built endless plug-ins to do even more. - *Paul Boutin*

Analog or digital output

Besides digital optical and coax outputs, Squeezebox has a premium Burr-Brown converter to transform digital audio to hi-fidelity analog output.

Fluorescent display

LCDs? Puh-leeze. The Squeezebox screen glows a brilliant blue-green that's bright enough to read from the La-Z-Boy on a sunstruck afternoon.

Open source software

SlimServer handles music streaming; dozens of homebrew plug-ins let you check weather and email, control a TiVo, and even play Pac-Man.

Wired: Sounds fantastic. Big, bright display. Plays all popular audio file formats, plus Net radio. Surfs iTunes and Winamp playlists. Hackable.

Tired: Won't play protected files from iTunes or other stores. Nearly as costly as a budget PC.

\$249 (wired), \$299 (wireless); www.slimdevices.com



Birds of Play

Reach for the sky with these radio-controlled helicopters. Like the real things, they're prone to crashing, but with a little practice, you'll soon earn your rotors. - *Richard Baguley*





Megatech Horse-fly

Wired: Two counter-rotating blades eliminate the need for a squirrely rear prop, making it fairly stable. Manual explains the ABC's of helicopter piloting.

Tired: 10-minute battery life cut flights short.

\$500, www.megatech.com



Draganflyer V Ti Pro

Wired: Easiest to fly, thanks to gyros and infrared sensors. Videocam adds a copter's-eye view. 15-minute battery life.

Tired: Price hovers higher than the chopper.

\$1,600, www.draganfly.com



GWS Mini Dragonfly

Wired: Small but tough - stood up to numerous crashes without damage. 14-minute battery life.

Tired: Spartan build: You turn the copter on and off by unplugging the battery. Twitchy in the air.

\$246, www.gwsus.com



Just Drive It

Early cordless screwdrivers were big and heavy - overkill for around-the-house jobs like hanging pictures. Now, with compact new designs and features like lightweight lithium-ion batteries, toolmakers are driving for your kitchen utility drawer. - *Sean Cooper*



Black & Decker SmartDriver

Wired: Strong driving and drilling ability. Mammoth 40-piece bit set included. Lithium-ion battery.

Tired: Cheap trigger housing sometimes didn't engage.

\$40, www.blackanddecker.com



Metabo PowerMaxx

Wired: Drove wood screws into wall studs like hot nails into butter. Five torque and two speed settings.

Tired: Pricy. Nickel-cadmium batteries lose charge when idle for long periods. Bits not included.

\$159, www.metabousa.com



Skil iXO

Wired: Smallest, lightest model tested. Resilient lithium-ion battery. Solid construction and responsive controls. Two-year warranty.

Tired: The 3.6-volt motor choked on heavier-duty tasks like drill-driving.

\$39, www.skil.com



Craftsman 4.8-Volt Impact Power Driver

Wired: High-RPM motor made short work of small jobs.

Tired: Wouldn't drive screws into wood without predrilling. Big and heavy. Lowly nickel-cadmium battery.

\$50, www.craftsman.com



PLAY|shopping cart



Denon S-101 Home Entertainment System

\$999, www.usa.denon.com

Simply put, the S-101 rocks. The head unit plays DVDs, CDs, and music from my iPod mini (the menu appears on my TV screen), cranking out gorgeous sound through its twin speakers and subwoofer. The only bummer: I had to upgrade the video cable. - *Rebecca Smith Hurd*



Freedom flashlight

\$20, www.freedomflashlight.com

Monsters are an issue at our house. The only way the 2-year-old manages to keep them at bay is to sleep with a flashlight.

But slapping in new AAs at 3 am gets old quick. This battery-optional torch lights up with a little shake. - *Laura Moorhead*



Burton Mission Snowboard Bindings

\$180, www.burton.com

I bought these lightweight bindings mainly for the toe strap and the quick-release buckles, but the "gas pedal" insert helps me start turns faster. I'm gonna fly. - *Jeffrey M. O'Brien*

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