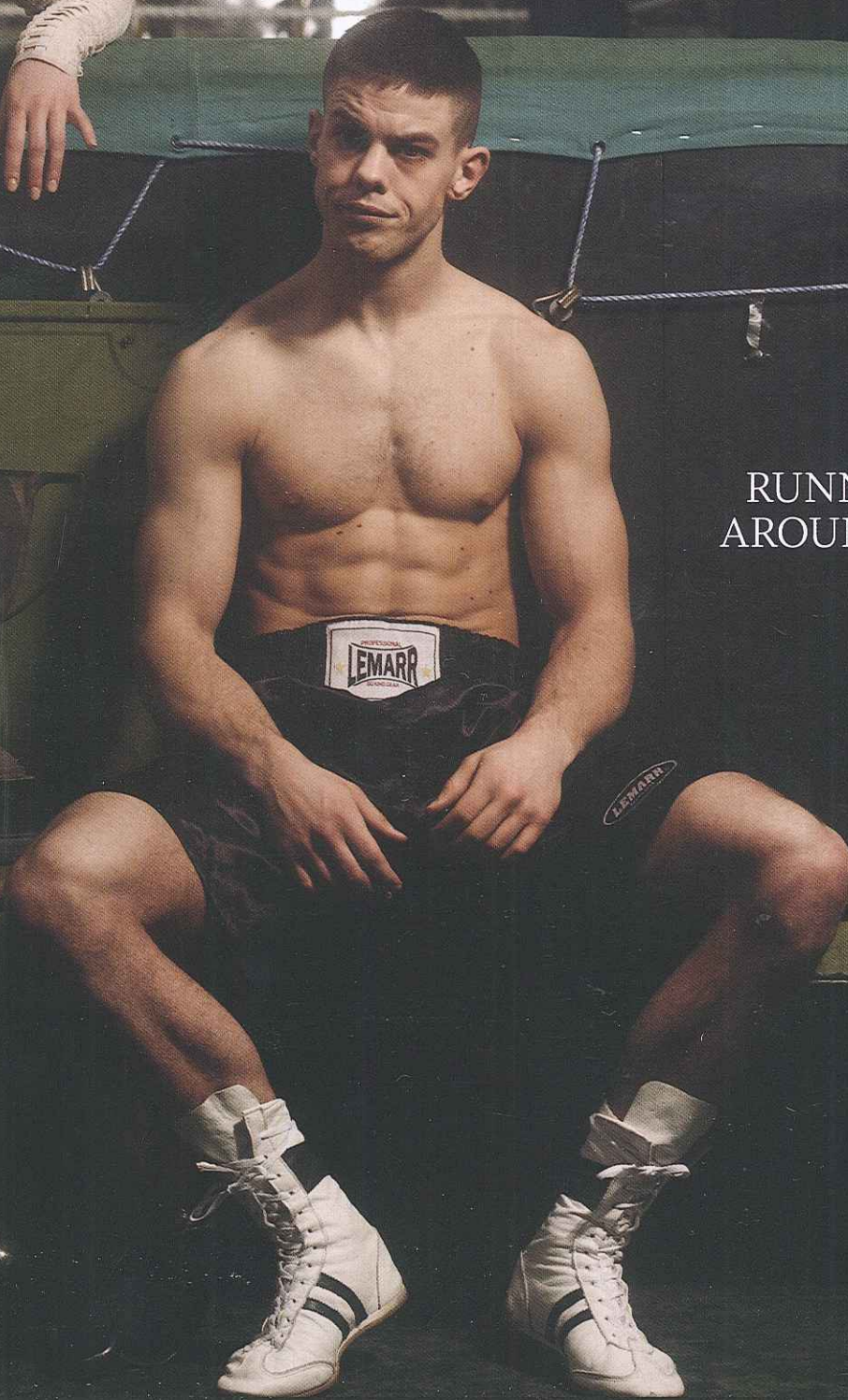


FINANCIAL TIMES

How to spend it



RUNNING RINGS
AROUND THE REST

THE FRIDAY EDITION APRIL 8 2011

technopolis

Cruise the highways and rat runs of Gizmo City with the grand wizard of gadgetology, Jonathan Margolis.



MOPHIE JUICE PACK AIR AND EXOLIFE

If you want to use your iPhone 4 for business, you have to think about battery life. One charge is not sufficient for a full day's work, especially if the iPhone doubles as your in-car or on-train entertainment.

A couple of years ago, in the era of the iPhone 3, I introduced you to a Michigan company, Mophie, which invented a clever jacket for the iPhone that doubled as a protective case and an add-on battery, doubling, more or less, the phone's use time.

Since then, battery-filled jackets have become quite common, and when I realised I was running my iPhone 4 down before the end of a work-filled day, I wondered what was out there now. I found two especially good products. One is the Exolife by Exogear, which makes your iPhone thicker front to back, but preserves its head-on profile. The Exolife is OK, but a bit flimsy.

The better iPhone 4 case for me, however, is the new one from, well,

Mophie (pictured), which invented the genre. It's beautifully engineered, with a much better feel in the hand than the Exolife - even though it does turn the iPhone into a big, heavy fellow. Buy both and see which you prefer; it's the kind of accessory you will lose or leave at home continually, so having two isn't a bad idea. Exolife, £59.99 from www.exolife.co.uk; 01132-473 796. Mophie Juice Pack Air for iPhone 4, £66.49, from www.amazon.co.uk and other stockists; see www.mophie.com for details.

BINATONE IHOMEPHONE

This peculiar but not unlovable - and certainly unique - item from Binatone might be just the answer for workaholics who like to sit in front of the TV at home but remain connected by reliable old landline to the office and to the wider world by internet.

Yes, the Binatone iHomePhone takes a bit of getting your head round. It's a home DECT (digital enhanced cordless telecommunications, since you ask) landline phone - so far, so good - with a speakerphone charger base - fine - but also Android-powered web surfing.

OK, you say, so it's a combined landline and mobile phone. We've seen those before. Except the Android web surfing on the iHomePhone doesn't work on the mobile-phone network, but through your Wi-Fi. Oh, and it's also a mini entertainment system and can play tunes from the handset's built-in FM radio and media player.

A dog's dinner? Certainly, but this eccentric chimera (I hardly need tell you it's British) can actually fit into your life. It's also rather nicely made and feels good to use.

About £100; Google for best price and see www.binatonetelecom.com.



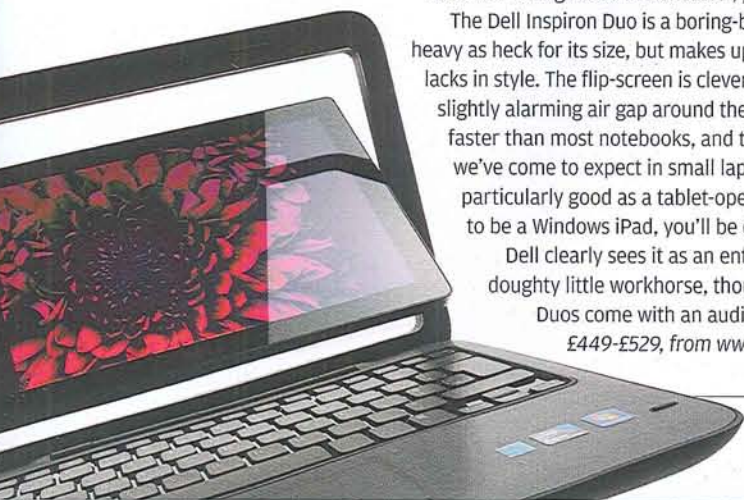
DELL INSPIRON DUO

While the Accuratus iImage for iPad (top right), is proudly British in design and what I might call "techie culture", this convertible notebook-cum-tablet computer is as Texan as Huevos Rancheros. It just looks and feels as if it originated in Doncaster, possibly for military use.

The Dell Inspiron Duo is a boring-but-important gunmetal grey and heavy as heck for its size, but makes up in supreme practicality what it lacks in style. The flip-screen is clever and sensible, although it leaves a slightly alarming air gap around the 10.1in screen. It's also quite a bit faster than most notebooks, and the screen is much better than we've come to expect in small laptops. Windows 7, however, isn't particularly good as a tablet-operating system, so if you want this to be a Windows iPad, you'll be disappointed.

Dell clearly sees it as an entertainment machine as well as a doughty little workhorse, though, because the better-specified Duos come with an audio docking station.

£449-£529, from www.dell.co.uk; 0844-444 4699.



ACCURATUS IMAGE FOR IPAD

The tablet onslaught continues. Sales have been rising exponentially, with 17.6m shipped worldwide last year, and indications of some 48m this year, according to JPMorgan forecasts. But more specifically, it is an iPad onslaught, as it's Apple that's still hogging the sector with at least three-quarters of tablet sales - and that was before last month's launch of the iPad2. Rivals, such as the Samsung Galaxy Tab and the imminent BlackBerry PlayBook keep coming, but are failing to impact iPad mania.

January's CES technology show in Las Vegas was more accurately an iPad show. Though Apple wasn't an exhibitor, hall after hall was dominated by things to use with your iPad. This terrific British iPad case with a detachable Bluetooth UK keyboard (a proper one including £, # and €) wasn't out in time for Vegas but is perfect if you are a new laptop refusenik intent on making iPad, whether 1 or 2, your business trip computer. (I've noticed a new thing on this score, by the way: people in meetings using an iPad for presentations rather than the tired old projector-and-PowerPoint.)

The Accuratus iImage for iPad ticks every traditional box for British consumer technology back to Psion and beyond. Idea: brilliant. Design: superb. Practicality: outstanding. Technical quality: great. Aesthetic quality: not so great. Branding, marketing and other fluffy stuff: appalling because it's an entirely engineer-led product. Overall sexiness as a result: sub-zero. Hence chance of international success: not much.

The Accuratus iImage should be a worldbeater, however. It turns your iPad into a laptop that's perfect for use on plane or train. As a carrying case, it does its job well (though the plastic leather displeases me). But the keyboard, which will last about 50 hours on one charge, is one of the most satisfying pieces of kit I've come across for ages.

One awkward question: can you use a Bluetooth device on an aircraft? I always thought not, but the British Airways website specifically says it's OK. In my experience, though, once in a while you will have a problem. £75, from www.ceratech.co.uk; 01420-85470.

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SILLY STREET

Anyone in the market for an interesting new health scare will enjoy this mini LCD screen which, as you can see, carries a graphic representation of a single eye. What you can't see is that the eye blinks at random intervals. You may think this is just to offer a bit of cheery reassurance during the working day, and well it might, but its real job is to sit on your computer screen and remind you to blink frequently. Apparently, say the manufacturers, not blinking enough can lead to Computer Vision Syndrome, which entails dry eyes, tiredness, irritation and other bad things. Fair enough. Maybe. Blinknow, £30, from www.blazeurope.com; 01302-325 225. See www.blinknow.co.uk.

