

Just in time: gadget-heavy, high-tech tickers

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Miniature utility and high style mark this holiday season's offering of high-tech watches. But don't expect to find all these minimarvels at your local jewelry or electronics store. You'll have to do the shopping for your favorite geek online, and a mastery of the Japanese language wouldn't hurt.

Here is the 2004 Techno Geek-fest Watch Holiday Roundup:

Suunto X9 GPS watch

Designed with serious hikers in mind, the Suunto is also a godsend for those who can't find their car in megamall parking lots. Relatively easy to use, the Suunto features:

*Altimeter: altitude, vertical speed, altitude alarm, thermometer.

*Barometer: Sea level pressure, absolute pressure, weather trend graph, temperature, weather alarm.

*3D compass: bearing, graphic compass rose, bearing tracking GPS with a resolution to 3 feet.

*Watch: Calendar, 3 alarms with date option, dual time, stopwatch.

*Menu-based user interface familiar from mobile phones.

*Other: rechargeable battery, water resistant; PC interface software.

\$699 from www.suunto.com.

Diode by Saishin

If time is not of the essence, you'll appreciate this piece of Japanese performance art you can wear on your wrist.

The diode's LED hour and minute markers light up one by one until the correct time is reached.

The square case unisex design makes it ideal for men or women who are more interested in talking about, than telling time.

\$199 from www.tokyoflash.com.

Rotating Earth Watch

This visually stunning and imaginative watch puts time in a global perspective on your wrist. It was created by a team of Japanese designers with manufacturing assistance by the innovative watchmakers from Seiko Instruments. The small earth rotates once every 24 hours inside an optical-quality Hardlex globe. Time is indicated by colored dots.

*Quartz movement with three custom-made reducing gears; light-weight Titanium case.

*The virtual Earth rotates once a day as the real Earth does in a counter-clockwise direction with the time zone indicator pointing to the correct hour on the bezel.

*Water resistant to 100m; 10 year Lithium battery (included).

\$99 from www.thinkgeek.com.

NHJ Wristwatch Television

Never miss another of those important television programs with this full-featured television watch. The headphones act as an antenna and the 1.5-inch, 280 x 220 pixel color LCD screen truly puts the TV experience in proper perspective.

*High resolution digital TFT technology (Thin Film Transistor) screen; docking cradle; PLL synthesizer tuner for quick channel changing; built-in rechargeable lithium-polymer battery; stereo earphones also act as an antenna; neck strap attached; watch functions.

\$199 at Target stores.

Tag Heuer Microtimer F1

The Microtimer is an amazingly sleek and stylish offering from Tag that is the perfect complement to your Motorola Razr phone and Sony Clie PDA.

Designed for timing racers, the Microtimer is accurate to 1/1000 of a second, which should work for getting you to the train on time.

*Time, date, alarm feature, second time zone; water resistant to 100 Meters/330 feet of water. Battery operated high quartz movement; scratch proof anti-reflective sapphire crystal; stainless steel case, black rubber strap.

\$1,699 from www.tagheuer.com.
XACT X3X 2-Way Wristwatch Communicator

Two-way radio watches have been getting increasingly smaller, but we're far from the Dick Tracy promise.

The Xact is a powerful unit with a neat push-to-talk/call feature and an antenna that's not too obtrusive.

Give this category a few more years for something that actually looks like a watch.

*Digital watch two-way radio, up to a 1.5 mile range; 22 channels -- 1-14 are FRS channels & 15-22 are GMRS channels; voice activated; backlit LCD display, call alert; electronic volume control; 5.2 MHz bandwidth; two interchangeable face plates included for a unique look.

*User replaceable rechargeable battery.

\$49.99 a pair from www.xactcommunication.com.

LAKS memory Date USB 2.0

Just when you thought your work files couldn't possibly follow you everywhere, LAKS offers a watch with integrated 32-512 MB flash memory.

The plug-and-play watch is accessible through a standard USB port, making it the ultimate portable data storage unit. Amazingly, it even looks like a standard watch and tells time to boot.

*Available in flash-memory 32-512 MB configurations; mineral glass; exchangeable USB cable; Japanese quartz watch movement, USB plug-in strap integrated; password protected, and water resistant.

\$100 to \$450 from www.laks.com.

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Rotating Earth watch
NHJ Wristwatch Television
XACT X3X 2-way Wristwatch

The Suunto X9 GPS watch with compass also measures altitude and barometric pressure, with a retail price of \$699.

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