

# technopolis

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



## NOMADZ

Advice for business travellers tends to come only when you seek it out, but this new paid-for BlackBerry application, Nomadz, from Zurich Financial Services seeks you out and gives sage tips and advice even when you aren't aware you need them.

Zurich is marketing it as the "electronic guardian angel" and it is not dependent on your having Zurich travel insurance. Nomadz aggregates reliable information on relevant medical, health and security issues and feeds them to you wherever it locates you. You can also be proactive, of course, and request information ahead of your arrival.

The information Nomadz customers get comes from a skilled team based in Canada (like the BlackBerry itself), which I like the sound of: American fear of everything tempered with Scottish sensibleness and French practicality seems a good mix if it's reliable, non-hysterical, professional advice you need.

\$240pp a year for 25 users in a company. See [www.getnomadz.com](http://www.getnomadz.com).

## MINIGORILLA

As I've noted in previous columns, everyone today - mobile professionals included - is going bananas for netbooks, a trend I both applaud and understand as one who bears the frozen shoulder of he who has carried heavy laptops around the world too much and too often.

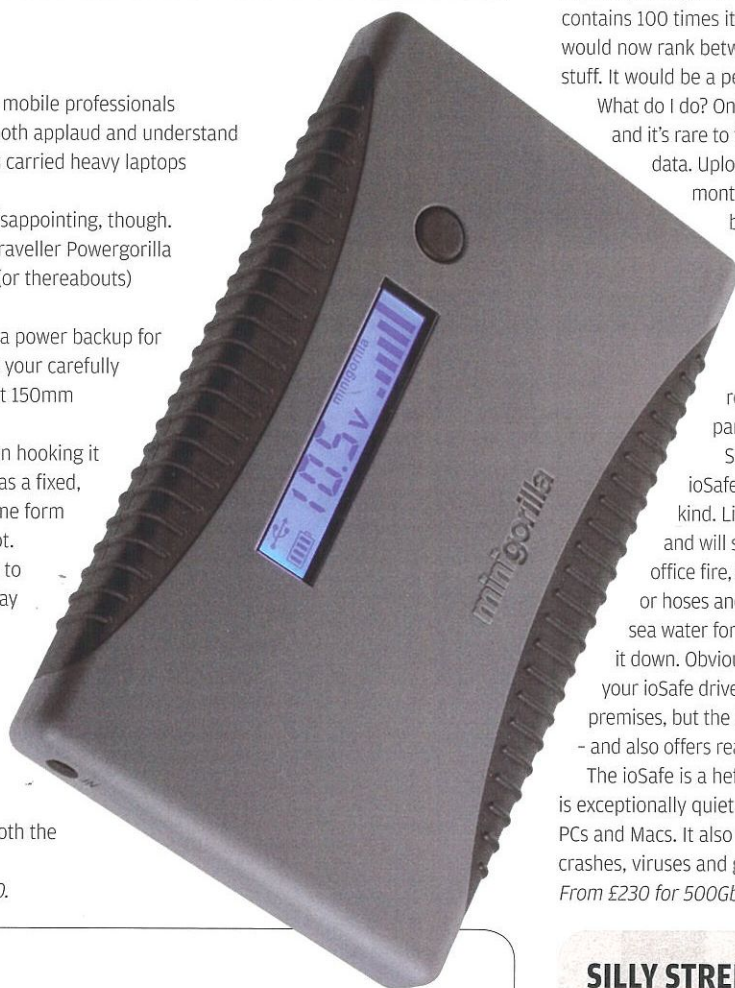
The battery life of netbooks can be surprisingly disappointing, though. This miniature new version of the legendary Powertraveller Powergorilla helps correct that by giving an endurance-doubling (or thereabouts) boost to the average netbook's life on one charge.

The Minigorilla - which will also, of course, act as a power backup for a mobile phone and other devices - will not bulk out your carefully slimmed-down travel pack, however. It measures just 150mm x 83mm x 14mm and weighs a puny 265g.

Its use isn't restricted to netbooks, either. I've been hooking it up to my glorious new MacBook Pro 13in. The 13in has a fixed, sealed-in battery, so you can't carry a spare, and some form of power enhancement is important if you travel a lot.

The Powergorilla will extend the Mac's endurance to almost 10 hours (so long as you turn the bright display down), and the mini will still add a couple of hours, giving you seven hours and more. To do this at the time of writing you need to source a Gorilla-to-MagSafe lead, which Powertraveller won't be able to help with until a few months' time or so. I got one in China, but I wouldn't advise it as it's not approved or guaranteed. If you use a normal laptop, you needn't worry about this, of course, as both the Powergorilla and the Mini will happily mate with it.

£100, from [www.powertraveller.com](http://www.powertraveller.com); 01420-542 980.



## ALIPH JAWBONE PRIME

Bluetooth earpieces, as we know, are sadly tarnished with being the lowest-status gadget in the universe - even beneath those incredibly thick briefcases touted by downtrodden salesmen at the work donkey end of the market.

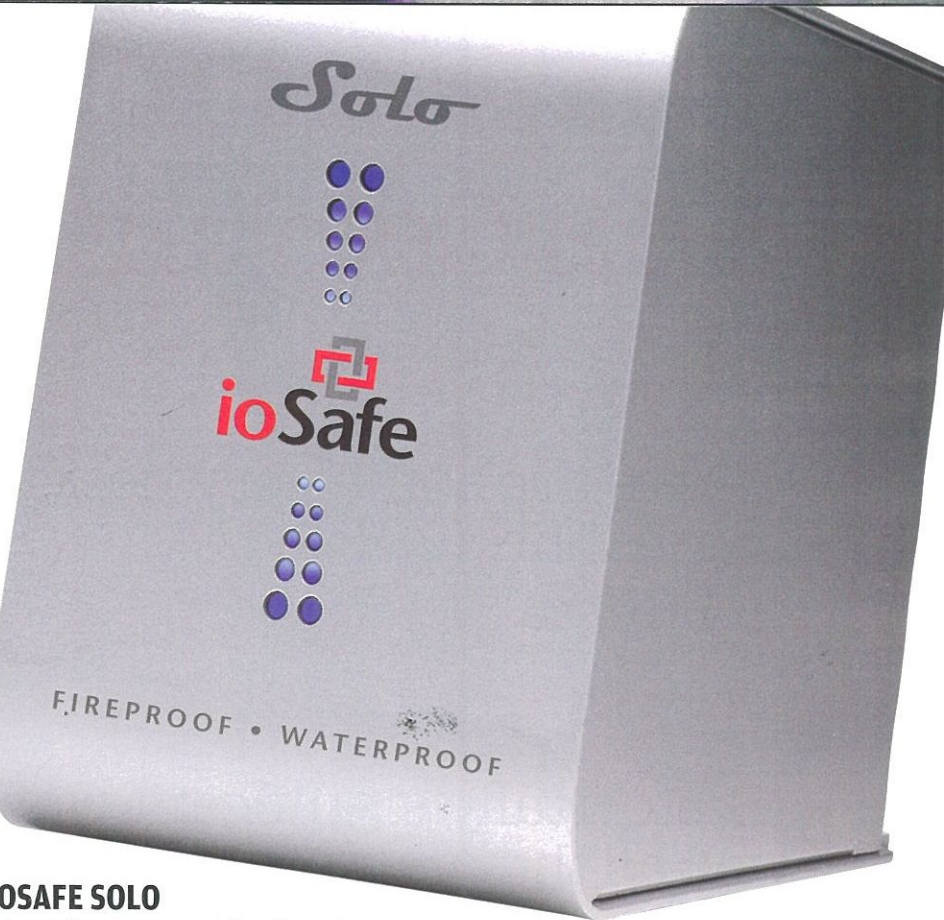
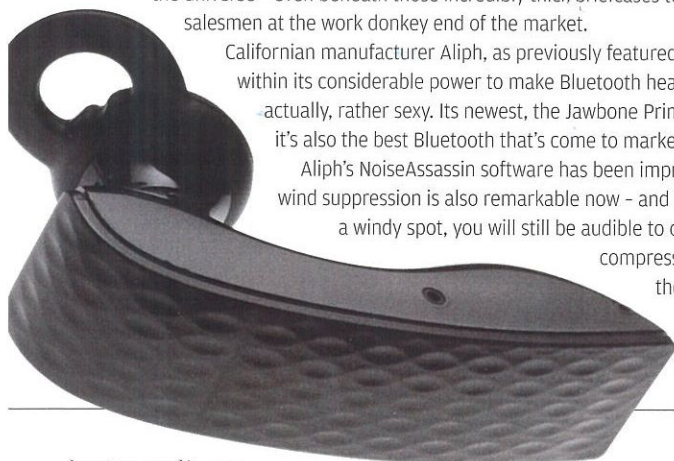
Californian manufacturer Aliph, as previously featured here in lights, has done all within its considerable power to make Bluetooth headsets a mite less depressing and, actually, rather sexy. Its newest, the Jawbone Prime, doesn't only look superb, it's also the best Bluetooth that's come to market.

Aliph's NoiseAssassin software has been improved still further and the device's wind suppression is also remarkable now - and it was pretty good before. Even from a windy spot, you will still be audible to others, albeit sounding a bit

compressed and like you're phoning from the International Space Station.

Recommended - if you must.

About £88; Google for best price, and see [www.aliph.com](http://www.aliph.com).



## IOSAFE SOLO

Let me tell you how paranoid I am these days about backing up. As the years go by, my backlog of documents increases, as yours doubtless does too. We're now talking nearly 20 years of stuff. Then there are my precious music, picture and video libraries - 10,000 or so painstakingly collected tracks, 20,000 photos, 200 films and videos. Oh, and all my software. Whoever said the average computer contains 100 times its worth in data was rather underegging the pudding. The loss of my data would now rank between a house fire and a bereavement; seriously, I would mourn the loss of my stuff. It would be a personal blow and a professional disaster.

What do I do? Online backup, I'm not 100 per cent sold on. It tends to be hideously complicated and it's rare to find a broadband connection fast and stable enough to upload large amounts of data. Uploading the hundreds of Gigabytes I need to include all my music etc would take months, even if there were such a dream connection. Hardware wise, I'm belted and braced, though. I have a terabyte external hard drive under my main work desk, which, when I'm there, regularly backs up everything on my laptop. I also update a second big drive at another office. And when I'm away, I never leave the laptop in a hotel room without backing up relevant files and folders to a 120Gb TrekStor DataStation Microdisk drive, which I keep on me when I'm out.

All this, however, is still a bit gappy for a back-up paranoiac. If my office were robbed, burned down or flooded and, in a freakish parallel, a meteor hit my part-time London office, I would then have lost all my music, films and photos. So this new product from California company ioSafe is incredibly welcome. The ioSafe Solo fireproof and waterproof external hard drive seems to be the first of its kind. Like an aircraft black box for data, it is made in 500Gb, 1Tb and 1.5Tb flavours and will sail through a typical house or office fire, shrug off water from sprinklers or hoses and even survive in three metres of sea water for three days. Oh, and you can bolt it down. Obviously, you won't be able to plug

your ioSafe drive straight in when it's fished out of the flooded, burned-out wreckage of your premises, but the UK importer includes data recovery to the tune of £500 (if it needs that much) - and also offers reasonably priced plans to extend that cover beyond the built-in 12-month period.

The ioSafe is a hefty beast at 15lb, but it's remarkably home-friendly, as its fan-cooling system is exceptionally quiet. It has a normal USB 2.0 interface and is a simple plug-and-play with both PCs and Macs. It also works as a normal back-up drive to save you from the results of hard-drive crashes, viruses and good old-fashioned idiotic I've-deleted-all-my-stuff error.

From £230 for 500Gb to £345 for 1.5Tb, from [www.thetechbag.com](http://www.thetechbag.com); 0845-643 9397.

See Technopolis TV, Jonathan Margolis's new weekly video bulletin, every Tuesday at [www.howtospendit.com](http://www.howtospendit.com)

## SILLY STREET

The Ecco Pocket GPS claims to be the world's smallest satnav, and it's hard to dispute as it takes the form of a key fob, albeit a hefty one, both in size (69mm x 37mm x 14mm) and weight (42g), which means with keys you feel like Mr Chivery, the Marshalsea jailer in *Little Dorrit*.

The gadget helps you find your lost car, hotel or bicycle to an accuracy of 10m. Once you've lost one of the above (I'm constantly losing hotels, especially in China), the Ecco will guide you back using arrows rather than mapping, so it will often require you to walk through walls. You can, of course, circumvent this by not walking through walls, but rather sticking to streets and letting the fob catch up.

Proof, if any were needed, that the thing I fear most - inventors running out of things to invent - remains an unlikely prospect. There are those who point out that a smartphone will also guide you back via its own satnav, but well, heck, this is Silly Street, isn't it? Ecco Pocket GPS key fob, £70, from [www.cutebitz.com](http://www.cutebitz.com); 020-3286 7414.

