

SALE ALERT

THE REGISTRATION FOR THE FIRST FLASH SALE OF LEECO LE 2 AND LE MAX 2 ON JUNE 28 IS NOW OPEN

SYMPTOM SEARCH

GOOGLE IS LAUNCHING A FEATURE THAT PROVIDES DETAILED RESULTS FOR SEARCHES ON MEDICAL SYMPTOMS

TECHKNOW



THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD GAME IS SET TO RELEASE IN 2017 FOR NINTENDO WII AND NX

TECH-A-BYTE



Flipkart retires Ping

Flipkart's attempt to make the e-commerce marketplace more social, a chat application named Ping, has been shut down. Ping was meant to allow chats between friends within the Flipkart app to aid purchase decisions. The company also announced that the image search feature that let users find products similar to images they uploaded is also being axed. Flipkart is set to replace these outgoing features with 'user to seller' and 'user to customer care' chat options.



iPhone 7 may keep headphone jack

The Internet has been teeming with rumours that Apple would get rid of the 3.5mm headphone jack on the upcoming iPhone 7 in favour of more advanced and compact standards. Chinese-manufacturer LeEco has already abandoned it in their latest models, replacing it with USB-C-based CDLA technology.

However, recently leaked renders suggest that the iPhone will keep the jack for this generation. Other circulating rumours about the upcoming Apple product suggest the arrival of dual-SIMs and the abandoning of the popular Space Grey colour for Deep Blue.

Pokemon Go to release in July

Based on reports on beta testing of the augmented reality game, which has been going on in selected regions for a few months, and the announcements made during Nintendo's Treehouse events at the recently concluded E3 2016, Pokemon Go is set for release in July. While it is unclear

whether the game will have immediate global release, Nintendo and Niantic Labs (who also developed smash-hit AR game Ingress) have said that the game will be free to download from Google Play and the App Store, though in-game purchases will be available.



Amazon express delivery criticised in Paris

Amazon's express delivery service has come under fire in Paris for allegedly impacting local businesses. The company has been asked by the office of the Mayor to ensure that their Prime Now service does not add to the pollution problems in the city and that it does not affect the Paris economy.



High-octane action in slo-mo

The Bolt High-Speed Cinebot is a camera rig that can bring alive movie sequences

NIKHIL RAGHAVAN

You have probably watched a gun being fired and the bullet hurtling towards the target, at an impatiently slow speed, till it hits the bull's eye and disintegrates. Then, there is the cork ejecting out of a Champagne bottle, again slowly, while wine cascades out of the neck in slow sparkling bubbles. You have seen a bottle being smashed to smithereens on the head of the villain, as the fragments fly agonisingly slowly in different directions, even as blood splatters all over. All these high-speed action sequences are filmed at super-high speeds using new technology robots and 4K HD digital movie cameras, and played back at very slow speeds for dramatic impact. Hollywood has made extensive use of the unique Bolt High-Speed Cinebot in many of their top blockbuster movies, including *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *Jupiter Ascending*, *Skyfall* and *Maleficent*. The world's fastest camera robot was also involved in the Marvel production, *Ant-Man*.

"High-speed motion control photography was needed to shoot some exciting explosions

Trivia

- The Bolt Cinebot can move from standstill to high-speed motion and back again in fractions of a second.
- The camera-mounted arm can be programmed to follow falling objects or fast-moving objects and capture them precisely.
- The Flair software/hardware combo is an Ethernet-based distributed control system, and can run on any Windows platform on PC, Laptop or Tablet. The machine facilitates movements that can be repeated precisely and accurately to get the perfect take



and fires at high speed, but down at the scale of an ant! Using small lenses to get the camera close to the model sets, the Bolt High-Speed CineBot was the ideal tool for these shots – combining its high speed with accuracy, precision and synchronised triggers for firing miniature explosions and fires," says Peter Rush, senior quality manager, Mark Roberts Motion Control, U.K.

The Bolt is a multi-axis precision motor-controlled robotic arm fixed to a stationary base, which, in turn, can be moved on hi-tech rails at the speed of four metres per second, while the arm can swivel in a 180-degree arc, in any direction.

"Logically, what we are making is art. I am an engineer who makes these highly complex machines. The people who use them create works of art. The camera at the end of the Bolt arm is first positioned at the beginning of the sequence of movement that has to be filmed. This is programmed into the software. Then, the end of the movement

is determined and programmed, along with any intermediate positions or angles. We always remember that the visual is the product, and at no point of time should the machine overwhelming detract the viewer from the product. The machine facilitates movements in such a way that they can be repeated precisely and accurately as many times as required to get the perfect take. It also facilitates multiple shots of the same sequence to enable special effects at the post-production stage," explains Peter.

He adds, "Mark Roberts Motion Control makes Bolt and we also write the Flair software that operates the Cinebot. Flair facilitates 128 axes of motion for the robotic arm," states Peter. This is now in India, courtesy Stereovision.

Gopal Shah (Veer), Director of Photography, who is currently working on a film produced and directed by Anil Sharma (featuring his son Utkarsh Sharma as hero) is to use the Bolt in several sequences. "The new Bolt is ideal



MAKING PICTURES COME TO LIFE Peter Rush and Harish Samtani; a Bolt cinebot on tracks

for conveying emotions," he says.

Cinematographer Binod Pradhan (*Rang De Basanti*, *Munna Bhai MBBS*), who is in the final stages of making the English film *Heidi*, plans to use the Bolt for

scenes that require high-speed sequences. "Playing back at super-slow motion speeds is one thing. But, if action scenes are speeded up; the visual effect will be really heightened," feels Binod.

Mahesh Mathai, who has done pioneering work in music videos and commercials, is exploring using the option of using Bolt for a film on the life and accomplishments of astronaut Rakesh Sharma, which he is directing.

Unplugged, unbound

The Plantronics BackBeat Pro wireless headphones are feature-packed and offer plenty of value for money

SOORAJ RAJMOHAN

Getting a pair of wireless headphones is not the easiest of decisions. Why do you need headphones in the first place, when a nice pair of earphones (or in-ear headphones) would suffice? If you do decide to get a pair, do you go for on-the-ear or over-the-ear? Is wireless worth it? Is noise cancellation needed? The questions are endless.

Unless you've spent some amount of time researching audio products, you may not have come across the name Plantronics, with counterparts like Bose, Beats and more recently Audio-Technica dominating the headlines among headphones. That is not to say Plantronics has not been around. The company has been around since the 1960s, and has developed the headsets used in commercial airlines, and even worked with NASA. In fact, Neil Armstrong's famous first words from the moon were transmitted through a Plantronics headset.

In recent years, the company has focussed more on commercial products, with the Game-Com series of gaming headphones and the



A GOOD DEAL Plantronics BackBeat Pro

BackBeat wireless headphone line. The BackBeat Pro we have our hands on is one of their top-tier offerings, featuring Bluetooth 4.0 wireless connectivity, NFC, Active Noise Control, the works. The headphones come in a big, sturdy case, accompanied by a gold-plated 3.5mm headphone cable and a micro USB charging cable. The headphones are quite sturdy, but a little on the bulky side, and have an over-the-ear design. The black-and-purple colour scheme is a funky yet unobtrusive touch, adding a dash of flair to the design.

Speaking of design, this is one of the better exercises in ergonomics among wireless headphones. The sides of the ear-cups act as buttons, with a rotary dial around them. The right side features a call answer button and volume control, with

a power switch located next to them. There is also a set of five blue LEDs that light up to display charge levels. The left side has the play/pause button and a dial to switch between tracks, as well as the noise-cancellation button. Plantronics uses a technique they call OpenMic, which uses microphones on the exterior of the headphone, to let ambient noise in when noise-cancellation is off. This also means that BackBeat Pro can be used to wirelessly take calls. A microphone mute button completes the hardware overview.

The BackBeat Pro can connect to two devices simultaneously, and connection is a breeze. A tap pairs it to NFC-supported devices; while holding down the call button for two seconds can pair it with devices that don't have NFC. A start-up jin-

gle is followed by a cool, female voice that announces connection state and battery level, and the music is ready to go.

The headphones handled a wide variety of music without any stumbles, with a decent soundstage that lets listeners pick out different instruments and balanced bass levels. The sound remains pretty neutral, so fans of bass-boosting hardware may remain unimpressed. But if your playlist ranges from Soundgarden's 'Black Hole Sun' to folk music from Yorkshire, you have a handy companion in the BackBeat Pro. The noise cancellation does work, but some external sound does creep in. It doesn't disturb the listening experience, but don't expect to be cocooned in another dimension when in noisy environments.

The headphones are stated to offer an impressive 24 hours of music playback, and we did notice that the battery held up remarkably well. Some intelligent features, such as automatic pausing of playback when the headphones are removed from the ears, help prolong the battery life, even if you forget to turn them off now and then.

With the headphone jack seemingly set to go the way of the dinosaur, and USB-C headsets still too few and too expensive, the era of ubiquitous wireless audio may be upon us soon. And with the BackBeat Pro, Plantronics have delivered a well-designed, feature-packed device that makes shelling out a sum in the range of Rs.12,000 seem quite worth it.

Untangling the web

The weird and wonderful world of YouTube

ANSHUMAN RANE

I'm pretty sure everyone who reads this newspaper has heard of YouTube. YouTube has over one billion users; its videos get over eight billion views a day; and people upload more than 400 hours of video to YouTube each minute. In short, it's huge!

You can find almost anything on YouTube. Want to learn how to iron a shirt, fix a car, cook biryani? It's on YouTube. Nostalgic for the days when DD was the only TV channel around? You can watch old shows and ads on YouTube. There's also, of course, the usual Bollywood content, great comedy content from young Indian groups and so much more.

Because it's so huge, there's no way anyone could find all the crazy stuff on there. So, I've taken it upon myself to share a few of the slightly weirder YouTube channels out there with you.

FunToyzCollector
This channel has hundreds of videos of a lady unpacking and playing with toys. You just see her hands opening up the toy box and hear her describing what she's doing. No one knows who she is, but it's been estimated that she earns \$5 million annually from her YouTube channel. I wonder what her house looks like. It must be filled to the brim with toy boxes.

JonDrinksWater
Described as "the Internet's premier water drinking series" this channel is just under 4000



STRANGE AND WONDERFUL YouTube is a rabbit hole of interesting content

clips of Jon drinking water. Seriously. He also compares different types of bottled water.

RealAnnoyingOrange
This is one strange (and funny) channel. Basically, it's a talking orange with a human mouth and human eyes, sometimes accompanied by a talking pear. They talk about everything from how to find a job, riding a bike, using Uber, to parody videos of movies, people and much more. It's not something that can be described easily. You just need to watch it for yourself.

TalkingAnimals
Funnier than weird, but still a little weird, this is a channel of animals talking about all kinds of stuff, or reacting to humans. The funniest video to check out is a bunch of pets singing the carol '12 Days of Christmas'.

WebdriverTorso
The mystery surrounding this channel had the Internet aflame a couple of years ago. It turns out that this was a test channel set up by Google to

monitor the upload quality of videos on YouTube. Clips are of red and blue shapes accompanied by electronic beeps. Try doing a Google search for "webdriver torso" and you'll see the logo replaced by these rectangles on the results page.

MemoryHole
This channel just collects a whole load of old amateur home movies and sticks them on YouTube. There are some very strange clips in here, like a man walking on the beach in diapers sporting the Nike logo. Go figure...

If you haven't watched anything on YouTube yet, I'd recommend taking a look at these weird and wonderful channels before you go mainstream. I guarantee they'll keep you occupied for weeks. Enjoy!



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