



Hi, Jason.

Thanks to you and Knitlin Henry for your help with the Genius HD camcorder. You'll find it on p. 19.

Best regards,  
Marty Jones



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# Master Your Browser



*Customize & Troubleshoot Your Window To The Web*

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# More For Less

## High-Def & Surround Sound On A Budget

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G-Shot HD520  
\$149.99  
Genius  
(305) 468-9250  
www.geniusnet.com

Call us shallow and materialistic, but more often than not, we want better stuff than we have. Personally, I have a fairly cruddy old DV camcorder that records in standard definition (or less, from the looks of things). On the other hand, I'm still pretty happy with the lush sound of my stereo speakers and subwoofer when I put on a DVD, even though they don't give me surround sound.

Being American, I covet things left and right. Being cheap, I'd prefer to pay as little as possible for those things, as long as they meet my needs. Hence, over the last few weeks I tried out some inexpensive upgrades.

### Genius G-Shot HD520

If you've spent any time with bulky cameras and camcorders, you might have come to the conclusion that the pocket-sized model you have with you is a lot more useful than the big camera you leave at home, even if the latter takes better-looking pictures or video. Heck, even camera phones are considered good enough for casual shots in the age of Twitter and Facebook.

This palm-sized camcorder competes against rivals such as the Flip MinoHD (\$229.99; www.theflip.com) and UltraHD (\$199.99). It can shoot 720p HD video, which it compresses in the MPEG-4 (Moving Picture Experts Group-4) (H.264) format and stores on an SD card (not included). It doubles as a 5MP (megapixel) still-image camera that can upscale photos to 11MP, with autofocus and face recognition. There are HDMI and composite cable connections for TV display, plus a USB port for offloading video to a computer.

So what does 720p video look like from a \$149.99 camera? Well, not as nice as that of a more expensive HD camcorder, but the video can be reasonably good under bright lighting when the camera is not moving rapidly.

Outdoor scenes look a little like a video game, with some things being pixilated or softly focused (branches, leaves, dog fur) and others being sharp and clear (faces, tree bark, houses). The control lever for the 5X digital zoom is somewhat abrupt until you get used to it. Red and orange colors seem to shift a little, too, but that's nitpicking. I was able to capture some very intricate still images of fabric patterns with the HD520, although its built-in flash really needs red-eye reduction.

There's more, such as motion-detecting surveillance recording, ebook display, video and music playback, voice recording, and easy YouTube uploading. For students and other active users, this G-Shot is simply Genius.

### Sony HTS-S360

A Sony HTB (home theater in a box) for \$349.99? What's the catch?

Not much, from a practical point of view. It doesn't come with a DVD or BD (Blu-ray Disc) player, but then I've always wondered why most HTBs do. It doesn't include any cables other than speaker wires, but that's not unusual. And it doesn't come with speaker stands or wall mounts, but you can add some.

On the plus side, it will take up to 1080p video from your BD player or HDMI-equipped DVD player and pass it through to your HDTV. There's a microphone for use with Sony's Digital Cinema Auto Calibration hands-free setup feature.

Sony loaned me this impressive kit when I wrote an HTB installation article in the August issue (page 81). Of course, I kept it around for a while for "testing." The system's sound quality is intense and clean, and it's more than loud enough for a medium-sized room.

About the only complaint I had was that the subwoofer seemed to let the techno music get a little lost in the gunfire when Neo and Trinity shot up the lobby in "The Matrix." Still, I couldn't find fault with its performance with any other movie. For a passive sub with a mere 6 3/8-inch woofer, it certainly was authoritative.

Speaking of movies, the HTS-S360 can decode DVD's audio formats, but not BD's more advanced ones. In other words, the high-def soundtracks you'll be able to listen to at their full quality will depend on the formats your BD player can decode. ■



HTS-S360  
\$349.99  
Sony  
(877) 865-7669  
www.sonystyle.com