

## Gifts for geeks

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Geeks, the most misunderstood of all species (yes, I'm a member), are notoriously difficult to shop for. We don't [bow to the fashion gods](#) [1] (to put it kindly), our literary tastes are unpredictable, and as for electronics, *forgetaboutit*—only geeks know what other geeks want. Thus, I present *Gifts for Geeks*. If you're a parent/friend/relative with one of these eclectic individuals on your shopping list, take note. Otherwise, read up—you may have overlooked a cool item.



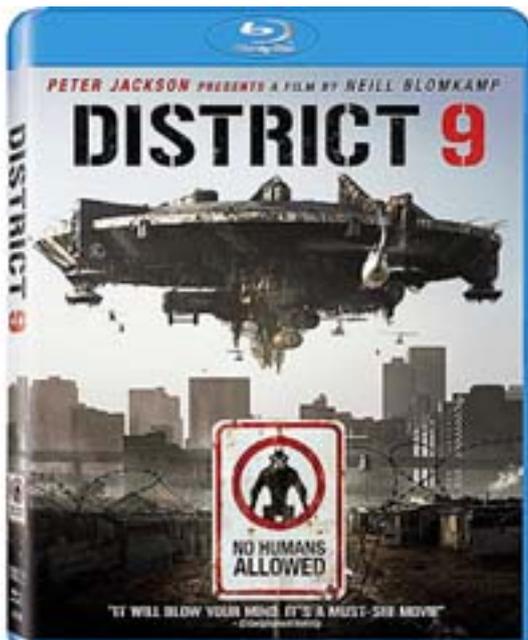
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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

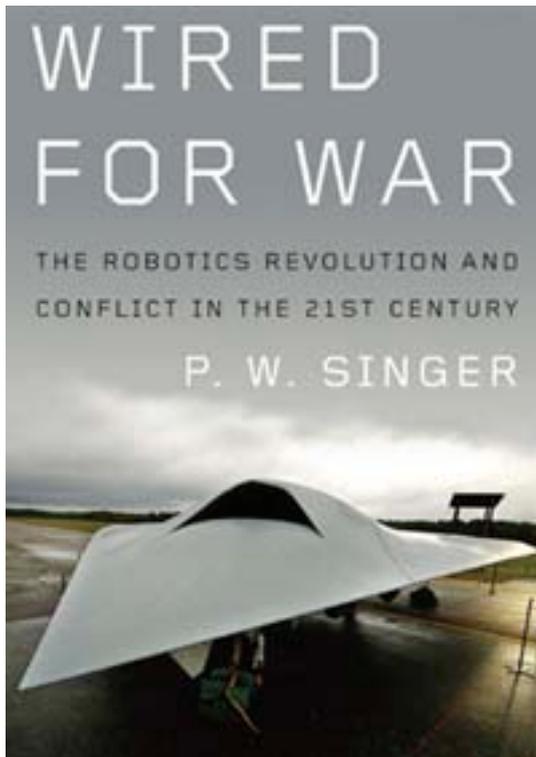
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1) *Hillcrest Labs' Loop Pointer*: Quite simply, one of the coolest gadgets I've played with in a while. I previewed this at CES '09, and [Hillcrest Labs](#) [2] has since released a consumer version for \$99. The [Loop Pointer](#) [3] is an air mouse for PC-connected TVs, Playstation 3s, and PCs. The functionality is terrific. With a range of up to 10 meters, the Loop Pointer suffers no line-of-sight restrictions, and is ultra-responsive. The plug-and-play setup couldn't be easier—connect the USB RF transceiver, put batteries in the Loop Pointer, turn it on, and you're good to go. What are you waiting for??



2) *District 9 [Blu-ray]*: Amidst a summer of overblown, expensive movies about [transforming robots](#) [4], campy adaptations of 80's cartoons (\*cough\*[G.I. Joe](#) [5]\*cough\*), and all the unwelcome sequels and "blockbusters," [District 9](#) [6] was a bright shining light. The sleeper hit of the summer (and one of the best films of the new millennium), *District 9* did the impossible—establish a brand new franchise, based on fresh, original ideas. In 1982, aliens (known as "Prawns") appeared over Johannesburg, South Africa. 28 years later, the aliens are confined to a squalid ghetto known as District 9. That is, until the munitions corporation, Multi-National United (led by odious bureaucrat, Wikus van der Merwe) is contracted to evict them. I wouldn't dare spoil the rest. The best thing about *District 9* is how seamlessly, almost imperceptibly, the visual effects are integrated. You never question that what you're seeing is real. *District 9* [comes out](#) [7] on Blu-ray and DVD December 22nd.



3) [“Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century”](#): If you’re even vaguely interested in military robotics, you’ve got to read this book. [“Wired for War \[8\]”](#) is a broad survey of military robotics, from the earliest origins, to the [Packbots \[9\]](#), [Predators \[10\]](#), and [Talons \[11\]](#) of today. The book makes the case that military robotics is the next [Revolution in Military Affairs \[12\]](#) (RMA), and explores controversies related to their deployment. Some readers may not appreciate the author’s political slant (which is decidedly liberal), but if you can overlook the political undertones, “Wired for War” is a must-read.

4) [Modern Warfare 2 \[Playstation 3, X-Box 360\]](#): There’s a decent chance your giftee has this already. If not, buy it now—[Modern Warfare 2 \[13\]](#) is the hottest game out right now (and your geek would think you a genius for discovering it). *MW2*, like its predecessor, places the first-person shooter in a modern context. Unlike the first installment, *MW2* goes off the reservation with its preposterous storyline. But most people don’t play FPS’s for the story. They play for the visuals, the sound, the atmosphere, and the multiplayer support—all of which *MW2* excels at. For most people, this is the closest they’ll get to combat, and though we’re not fighting the Russians anymore, as a whole, *MW2* provides a thoroughly realistic experience.



5) [A trip to the 2010 Consumer Electronics Show:](#) The geek Mecca, [CES \[14\]](#) is the preeminent trade show for consumer technology.

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Originally held in 1967, CES has a long and storied history. From 1978 to 1994, CES was held twice a year, with the Vegas show dubbed the *Winter Consumer Electronics Show*, and the *Summer Consumer Electronics Show* was held in Chicago, Illinois (they subsequently eliminated the latter). And until they formed their own show, [E3 \[15\]](#), the video game industry used to have a presence. Historically, many of the hottest tech items originated at CES. Highlights include—the VCR (1970), Pong home console (1975), the Camcorder (1981), the CD player (1981), Commodore 64 (1982), the Nintendo Entertainment System (1985), Tetris (1988), the DVD (1996), HDTV (1998), DVR (1999), X-Box (2001), and Blu-ray (2004). Last year, Windows 7 and the Palm Pre were arguably the biggest announcements. Microsoft usually gives the main keynote address (last year it switched from Bill Gates to Steve Balmer), and a number of celebrities are in attendance. All the big tech companies have a presence—Microsoft, Samsung, Panasonic, LG, Sharp, Sony, Dell, Palm, Nokia. Research in Motion (Blackberry), Logitech, and many more. The 2010 CES will be held in Las Vegas from 7-10 January (if you're press, the festivities start on 5 January with [CES Unveiled \[16\]](#)). This is probably the best present a geek can receive. Make sure to check out our CES coverage [here \[17\]](#) and [here \[18\]](#).

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### Links:

[1]

[http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/images/press/2008/GatesCES2008\\_01\\_print.jpg](http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/images/press/2008/GatesCES2008_01_print.jpg)

[2] <http://www.hillcrestlabs.com/loop/index.php>

[3] <http://www.ecnmag.com/Blogs/2009/12/Loop-Pointer/>

[4] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1055369/>

[5] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1046173/>

[6] <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1136608/>

[7] [http://www.amazon.com/District-9-Blu-ray-Norman-Anstey/dp/B002SJIO5E/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&camp=s=dvd&qid=1260476064&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/District-9-Blu-ray-Norman-Anstey/dp/B002SJIO5E/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&camp=s=dvd&qid=1260476064&sr=8-1)

[8] [http://www.amazon.com/Wired-War-Robotics-Revolution-Conflict/dp/1594201986/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&camp=s=books&qid=1260478408&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Wired-War-Robotics-Revolution-Conflict/dp/1594201986/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&camp=s=books&qid=1260478408&sr=8-1)

[9] <http://www.irobot.com/sp.cfm?pageid=171>

[10] <http://www.ga-asi.com/products/aircraft/predator.php>

[11] <http://www.foster-miller.com/lemming.htm>

[12] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution\\_in\\_Military\\_Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution_in_Military_Affairs)

[13] <http://ps3.ign.com/objects/142/14281101.html>

[14] <http://www.cesweb.org/default.asp>

[15] <http://www.e3expo.com/splash/>

[16] <http://www.cesweb.org/press/events/default.asp>

[17] <http://www.ecnmag.com/News/2009/12/CES-2010/>

[18] <http://www.ecnmag.com/tags/topics-and-features/Trade-Shows-and-Associations/Consumer-Electronics-Show>