Top 10 must-see posts of 2012

Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

2012 was a banner year for ECN.

Several months ago, we were lucky enough to bring aboard Associate Editor, Kasey Panetta, and her biting editorials, quirky blog posts, and investigative pieces have dominated our website ever since. Indeed, Kasey's articles snagged 8 of the top 10 spots for November [1] (including the top 5), and this wasn't an anomaly.

Her work has a significant presence in the proceeding list – which is remarkable considering she's been with us but a small fraction of the last 12 months.

So without further ado …

Here's a rundown of the most read, most popular, most awesome articles on the web from 2012. Take a look at what you missed the first time around or check up on an old favorite to see the conversation in the comments. Keep checking out the Lead at www.ecnmag.com [2] and follow us on Twitter @ecnonline [3] for our most up-to-date articles.

1) Hungry? Press the emergency pizza button **[4]**

By Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

Engineers and geeks (and everyone else, it seems) have one thing in common: an unconditional love for flatbread, tomato sauce, cheese, and voluminous toppings. Like most of America, they're also impatient. Thus, it's no surprise that the ECN community fell in love with the VIP Fridge Magnet, which orders pizza at the push of an adorable button. Sadly, this miracle device is only available in Dubai (for now).

2) **Saudi Arabia's new "tracking" system for women** [5]

By Kasey Panetta, Associate Editor

Saudi Arabia doesn't have the most progressive attitude toward women (to say the least), but the Kingdom took the rather draconian measure of installing electronic tracking systems in female passports (in case women decide to leave the country without their spouse's permission). "Controversial" doesn't begin to describe it. Kasey's article stirred a rather large pot and launched a [mostly] civil and informative debate on ECN's site. What's most remarkable is that the piece shot up to #2 for the entire year in less than a week!

3) **This "smart" traffic light could cut commutes by 60 percent** [6]

By Kasey Panetta, Associate Editor

We've got smart phones, smart cars, and smart refrigerators. So why not a smart "traffic light" that enables vehicle-to-vehicle communication, alleviates traffic jams, and cuts commutes by up to 60 percent? Another winner from Kasey.

4) **Why Android is beating Apple** [7]
By Kasey Panetta, Associate Editor
Kasey pontificates about why Google's Android operating system is besting the king of the [smartphone] hill, Apple, and its pervasive iPhone line. Pointing to the myriad options and flexibility of the Android platform along with Google's brand-name recognition, Kasey writes a persuasive treatise as to why Apple is losing its preeminent status.

5) **Cornell professors challenge hydrofracking study** [8]
By Cornell University
A Cornell study's contention that hydraulic fracturing would be worse for climate change than burning coal is being challenged by another study, also by Cornell researchers. In April 2011, Robert Howarth and colleagues published a study in Climatic Change Letters concluding that methane leakage from hydraulic fracturing would outweigh any benefits of natural gas as a transition fuel to greener technologies.

6) **Bill Nye the Science Guy says creationism not good for kids** [9]
By Lily Kuo, Reuters
If the ECN community loves anything, it's a good debate. And TV personality Bill Nye's contention that parents shouldn't force their creationist beliefs on their offspring hit a raw nerve, with some readers calling for Nye's head and others congratulating the Science Guy for spreading the secular gospel.

7) **Why this "useless" technology is a must-buy for your kids** [10]

By Kasey Panetta, Associate Editor

One of the recurring themes of Kasey's articles is that advanced technology often begets commercial "innovations" with no practical purpose. But this is different. From Kasey's intro: "When I say a particular piece of technology is useless, I usually mean it fails to serves a tangible purpose in a smart and efficient way. Either it's overly complicated or too expensive to justify the time it will save you. In some cases, the pure stupidity of the device makes me want to bang my head against a desk for a while. But sometimes, you have to step back and admire the sheer beauty of a simplistic, seemingly pointless piece of technology."

8) **A blow to wind energy** [11]

By M. Simon, Technical Contributor

Over the last 4 years, freelancer M. Simon has been one of the most loyal, exciting, and *provocative* additions to ECN's award-winning website. He also has the uncanny ability to poke the hornet's nest and engender a lively debate. This piece is no exception, as M. Simon discusses wind power's notable shortcomings; his article was a call to action for the readers (on both sides of the debate).

9) **Goodbye, watts. Hello, LUMENS!** [12]

By Energy Savers Blog

"For years, I bought light bulbs based on watts, or energy use. Like many light bulb consumers, I looked for a traditional 40, 60, 75, or 100 watt incandescent bulb. Now that stores today carry more and more energy efficient lighting choices, I wanted to replace my old incandescents with new bulbs to save energy and money on my electricity bill. But in shopping for the right bulb, I came across a challenge in looking for bulbs based on watts."

10) **Bearing damage: A lurking problem in electric cars** [13]
By Matthew Roman, Engineering Manager, Electro Static Technology
Electric cars are news. Every major automaker has introduced some electric vehicle, and the trend seems to be toward greater reliance on electric motors. The "Holy Grail" is a battery electric vehicle (BEV, a car powered solely by electricity) with an extended driving range, at a reasonable price.

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