



## Wired: Gadget Lab

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## Video Demonstrates Wired's Concept iTablet App

Who takes Apple's rumored touchscreen tablet seriously? *Wired's* parent company Condé Nast. Earlier this week, the corporation revealed its plans to work with Adobe to repurpose magazine content for upcoming digital devices, including the Apple tablet (if it is indeed real). The first mag to get the tablet treatment, of course, is *Wired*.

All Things Digital's [Peter Kafka first reported](#) that news, and he said he was trying to convince Condé to share a video demonstrating the tablet app. Well, here you go. The video above was shot at the Wired Store promotional event currently being held in New York. On display there is a concept video of *Wired's* "iTablet" app.

To me, the most interesting part appears around the 30-second mark, where we can see an animated, interactive graphic. Exciting to think about the potential for this hypothetical new format, isn't it?

Enough said. Here's a good time to ask — what do you think? Could an [Apple tablet save publishing?](#)

### See Also:

- [Everything We Know About Apple's Touchscreen Tablet](#)
- [Large-Screen Kindle Won't Mean Squat if Apple Tablet Arrives ...](#)
- [How an Apple Tablet Could Pit iTunes Against Amazon.com](#)
- [In-App Sales and iTablet: The Killer Combo to Save Publishing ...](#)
- [Essay: Steve Jobs' Legacy Is Missing Clue to Apple Tablet ...](#)
- [iTab Mania: Wired.com Readers Beat Apple to Producing a Tablet ...](#)

## 5 Nifty Apps That Turn Your Android Into A Universal Remote

With all the gadgets, remotes, and thingamajigs piling up on your coffee table, finding the right remote can sometimes be a real pain. But thanks to a few heroic Android developers, there are tools to consolidate some of those pesky remotes ... into your Android phone. While you can't use an Android app to turn your TV on or change the channels (because of the lack of an infrared emitter in the Android phones on the market today), the following apps let you control a home theater PC, Tivo, Squeezebox and other devices via your phone. And at the very least you can save a few bucks when it comes to media center accessories.

The following 5 apps are neat demonstrations of what you can do with a flexible, app-friendly phone like the Verizon Droid, the T-Mobile G1 or the Sprint HTC Hero.

### 1. RemoteDroid

This app transforms your Android into a wireless keyboard and mouse. It consists of 2 components: the RemoteDroid app on your phone and a server application for your computer. The difficulty level for set up is low; hop on a Wi-Fi network, run the server application and enter an IP address into the phone (the server app even displays it for you). Best of all, the app is free, so you'll have that much more money towards a custom home theater PC.

### 2. Boxee Remote

It's too bad you can't call your lost, wee Apple remote when it's disappeared and you know it's gotta be around *somewhere*. But if you're using Boxee, you've got a backup: The Boxee Remote app makes a great, free backup remote if you use Boxee as your primary means of streaming television and movies from your computer.

### 3. TivoRemote

A note to Tivo Series 3 and Tivo HD people: Forgetting to record your favorite shows on Tivo is a thing of the past. Put your medium-savvy tech hat on, dish out \$1 and remotely control your Tivo from anywhere using Tivo's Network Remote Control setting and TivoRemote. Since I don't have a Tivo myself, I wasn't able to personally test this application, but the reviews are positive and the community feedback are hymns of

praise. One commenter on the market also found a ninja-like purpose for the pocket-sized remote, “My wife finds this highly irritating... thanks!”

#### **4. SqueezeControl**

SqueezeControl is a free app that taps into and controls your Logitech SqueezeCenter, a handy wireless network music player. We are all accustomed to lugging our phones around, so any app — like this one — that eliminates the fumbling of pockets for an additional device has a place in our world.

#### **5. Gmote**

Similar to RemoteDroid (and, like it, totally free), this app becomes a wireless keyboard and mouse for your computer or HTPC set up. It’s not too hard to set up: All you need is the phone app along with the server application on the computer you wish to use. Gmote pulls music, movies, and other media and organizes it all in convenient folders. In addition to it’s wireless keyboard/mouse functionality, it offers a remote control screen to quickly control your media.

What apps do you use to control your media? Post your suggestions in the comments below.

#### **See Also:**

- [Android Version of Foursquare Combines Function and Fun](#)
- [Android Army Pumped for All-Out Attack on iPhone](#)
- [Photoshop for Android Phones Now Available](#)
- [12 Phones Strong, Android Army Mobilizes for Explosive Growth](#)

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*Photo Credit: Roselyn Roark*

## Why Google Should Cool It With Chrome OS

Sometimes you have to take a step down to step up. That's what Google should've done with its open source PC operating system Chrome OS, which the corporation demonstrated Thursday.

Instead, Google is positioning Chrome OS against Microsoft with a lightweight OS shipping with netbooks next year. Chrome OS will function as a modified browser, enabling netbooks to handle everyday computing with web-based applications. That's right: No native software, just the web.

The philosophy behind Chrome OS is extreme: Go the web way, *all* the way. It's a "paradigm shift to make the web synonymous with the computer," as Mashable's Ben Parr puts it. But it's an idealistic vision that could take several years to actualize, given the currently limited state of wireless connectivity and web-based applications. Google is aware of that, and the company is merely massaging us with this radical idea of a web-only computing experience by suggesting we try it on netbooks first.

Looking ahead, the company said it plans to share Chrome OS with more-powerful devices, including notebooks and desktops. But we doubt consumers will show much interest in a Chrome OS netbook the way Google is currently packaging it.

With Chrome OS, the search giant is pushing an OS that enables us to do less — even less than already low-powered netbooks can do. Web apps can't let us process Microsoft Word documents, sync our iTunes libraries, or edit photos with Photoshop, for example. Thanks to their cramped keyboards and small screens, netbooks aren't ideal for productivity apps such as Photoshop or Microsoft Word — but you'd be surprised at the different uses for netbooks that made them last year's hit product category. Watch what happens when Google offers an OS that doesn't at least provide the option of using the aforementioned apps.

Of course, as Google's pitch goes, there are web alternatives to everything. Cloud storage for backups, internet-streaming music and video services, and the Google Docs web suite for all your spreadsheet or word-processing needs. The list goes on.

The idea is such: Give up the computing experience you've grown accustomed to for over a decade. Come live in Google's browser.

Why would anyone wish to do that today, tomorrow or even next year when the OS ships?

Michael Gartenberg, a tech analyst at Interpret, sums up the state of computer use today better than anyone else: “What we’ve seen is most users are looking for a combination of the two: rich applications on my desktop, and the apps where I want to be connected.”

“This idea that I’m somehow going to do away with rich app architectures and do everything through the browser is an old argument, and it’s never taken root,” he added.

The benefits of Chrome OS don’t seem to outweigh everything Google’s modified browser will do away with. The pluses: Tight security, thanks to Google’s careful monitoring for malware in Chrome OS apps; saving the money you’d spend on an external hard-disk drive thanks to cloud storage; ultimately, being able to “stop worrying about your computer,” as Google said in a promotional video shown at its Thursday event.

Stop worrying about our computers? We’re worried about you, Google. T-Mobile Sidekick customers should especially be disenchanted with the cloud. Microsoft, T-Mobile and Danger hosted the data of all of T-Mobile’s Sidekick users in the cloud, and recently the server crashed, losing everything.

Nobody’s perfect, so it’s conceivable that the same thing could happen with Chrome OS. After all, Google’s Gmail service crashed in February and again in September this year. While no data was lost, it did cause hours of angst for people who had grown dependent on the mail service.

And then there’s money. Aside from losing access to the native apps we’ve paid for on our PC, it’s certainly imaginable that using Chrome OS could get expensive in general. If we wished to put an always-connected, web-app-only computer to good use, we’d need to purchase a data plan from a carrier. This could come in the form of an EVDO card or a smartphone tethering plan — in other words, a monthly bill. Google said Chrome OS will have caching features, so you won’t need internet access to do everything, but caching won’t provide the same offline experience as a full native application.

(Of course, our wireless problems could be solved if we could find an open Wi-Fi connection just anywhere we go. But unless you live in Mountain View, California, where Google provides free Wi-Fi, ubiquitous, free hotspots are not part of your reality.)

With all that said, there’s a ton of potential here for Chrome OS to be vastly appealing, and I’m keeping an open mind. To succeed with Chrome OS, Google should take a step down. To start, Google should

modify Chrome OS into a “mini OS” of sorts that can live alongside another OS, such as Windows, on a netbook.

For comparison, Phoenix Technologies offers a mini OS called HyperSpace, which some netbooks are already shipping with. HyperSpace runs parallel to Windows as an instant-on environment, allowing netbooks to perform internet-centric functions without actually booting into Windows. Functions include multimedia players, browsers, internet telephony, e-mail and IM.

Sounds a lot like what Chrome OS is going to be, doesn't it? That's because it's almost the same idea, only Phoenix Technologies is a lesser-known company (which developed the BIOS that boots many Windows computers today, by the way) and is taking a humbler approach — offering HyperSpace as an optional, complementary (but not complimentary) OS rather than a full-blown substitute for Windows. It's an approach that could lead to greater results if embraced by an incredibly powerful brand like Google.

By offering Chrome OS as a free, downloadable mini OS that runs parallel to a full one, Google can still continue to expand its presence onto hardware — without having to sell the OS with netbooks. Consumers could still try out the benefits of Chrome OS and cloud computing when it's convenient for them. Then, if users wished to boot into their primary OS to back up their data or do document processing with Microsoft Word, for example, they could — a hybrid, more feature-rich experience.

Unfortunately, not everything we want is on the web just yet. That's not going to radically change in one year, and not even Google can change that.

**See Also:**

- [Google Chrome OS: Ditch Your Hard Drives, the Future Is the Web](#)
- [Five Things Google's Chrome OS Will Do for Your Netbook](#)
- [Google Announces PC Operating System to Compete with Windows ...](#)
- [You Predict the Winner of OS Wars: Chrome, Windows, Linux, OS X?](#)
- [Google FAQ Reveals Chrome OS Hardware Partners](#)

*Photo: [Melanie Phung/Flickr](#)*



## Android Version of Foursquare Combines Function and Fun

It's surprising that Yelp, the go-to site for finding restaurants, bars and other venues, has no presence in the Android Market. But that's okay. Foursquare does the job with a social incentive to boot.

Foursquare is a location-based social mobile network that allows users to check-in at different places, post tips and to-do items with their phones, and compete with their friends and fellow city rivals to accumulate points and become the "mayor" of various places (basically, by spending more time there than anyone else).

The Android app makes Foursquare into much more than a game — it becomes a handy way to find new places for a cappuccino, a martini or a bowl of ramen.

During my use, I found the app to be refreshingly simple. Foursquare hides most of the options in the "Menu" button; allowing the focus to be on its two main features: Nearby locations and friends. Clicking a location displays tips from other users, a map, and recent check-ins. If you would like further options, press "menu" and you can add a tip or call the establishment. Navigate to friends and you can view their recent check-ins, shout a message and keep tabs on the leaderboard. The app's consistency in usability makes it easy to dive in and find your way around; just press menu for more options.

Interestingly enough, Yelp is also built into Foursquare as an option to find further information. It seems at this point, Foursquare should build upon their business information and leave Yelp out of the equation completely.

Foursquare is free and available in the Android Market.

### See Also:

- [Hands-On: Android App 'Layar' Brings Reality's Unique Snowflakes ...](#)
- [Taste Android 2.0 'Eclair' From Your Own Computer](#)
- [Spotify Premium Bundled With Android Phone](#)

## Steve Jobs to Developer: Name Change ‘Not That Big of a Deal’

Apple is mighty protective of its iPod trademark, and if you violate it, you’ll get no sympathy from Steve Jobs.

Apple recently sent a letter to software company Little App Factory, requesting that it change the name of its most successful application: “iPodRip,” an app that enables you to copy and transfer songs from your iPod.

In response, John Devor, CEO of Little App Factory, sent a lengthy, emotional e-mail to Jobs. An excerpt:

Dear Mr. Jobs,

....

*We are in desperate need of some assistance and we beseech you to help us to protect our product and our shareware company, both of which we have put thousands upon thousands of hours of work into. Our company goal is to create Mac software of the highest quality with the best user experience possible. I myself dropped out of school recently to pursue a path in the Mac software industry, and you yourself have been a consistent inspiration for me.*

*If there is anything at all you can do with regards to this matter, we would be most grateful.*

*Best,*

*John Devor*

Jobs’ reply?

*Change your apps name. Not that big of a deal.*

*Steve*

*Sent from my iPhone*

Complying, Little App Factory has since renamed iPodRip to iRip.

That’s unfortunate for Little App Factory, but we have to admit it’s pretty funny Jobs didn’t even take the time to check for correct punctuation. In any case, it’s understandable why Apple is protective of its iPod trademark: It’s the name of one of Apple’s most successful products. From a business perspective, Apple’s legal team has to pursue

companies big or small trying to use the mark “iPod.” (On the other hand, it’s more difficult to sympathize for Apple when it’s chasing down companies using the word “Pod.”)

Little App Factory’s full letter is available at CrunchGear, which originally reported this story.

**See Also:**

- Apple Bullies iPhone Accessory Maker Over the Word ‘Pod’
- Apple Aggressively Pursues ‘Pod’ Trademarks
- Apple Battles Entrepreneur Over ‘Pod’ Trademark

*Photo: [happylandfill/Flickr](#)*

## The Illustrated Man: How LED Tattoos Could Make Your Skin a Screen

The title character of Ray Bradbury's book *The Illustrated Man* is covered with moving, shifting tattoos. If you look at them, they will tell you a story.

New LED tattoos from the University of Pennsylvania could make the Illustrated Man real (minus the creepy stories, of course). Researchers there are developing silicon-and-silk implantable devices which sit under the skin like a tattoo. Already implanted into mice, these tattoos could carry LEDs, turning your skin into a screen.

The silk substrate onto which the chips are mounted eventually dissolves away inside the body, leaving just the electronics behind. The silicon chips are around the length of a small grain of rice — about 1 millimeter, and just 250 nanometers thick. The sheet of silk will keep them in place, molding to the shape of the skin when saline solution is added.

These displays could be hooked up to any kind of electronic device, also inside the body. Medical uses are being explored, from blood-sugar sensors that show their readouts on the skin itself to neurodevices that tie into the body's nervous system — hooking chips to particular nerves to control a prosthetic hand, for example.

Chips are already used inside bodies, most notably the tiny RFID tags injected into pets. But the flexible nature of these “tattooed” circuits means they can move elastically with the body, sitting in places that a rigid circuit board couldn't.

The first displays are sure to be primitive, but likely very useful for the patients that receive them. You won't be getting the full-color, hi-res images that come with ink, but functional displays. This doesn't mean that the commercial and artistic possibilities are being ignored. Philips, the electronics giant, is exploring some rather sexual uses:

It's certainly rather creepy, but we're sure that the inevitable next stage of playing adult movie clips on your partner's back will be appealing to some. We, of course, are considering the geekier side of this tech. GPS, with a map readout on the back of the wrist would certainly be useful, as would chips that cover your eyeballs and can darken down when the sun is shining too bright.

And a full-body display will eventually be used for advertising. Combine this with bioluminescent ink, for example, and you could turn yourself into a small, walking version of Times Square. At least, unlike a real tattoo, you can switch this one off.

In fact, if you start to imagine the possible uses, they seem almost endless. Just like the stories that play across the body of the Illustrated Man.

*Tattoo You [H+ Magazine]*

*Implantable Silicon-Silk Electronics [Technology Review]*

*Photo of real tattoo: Spacemanbobby/Flickr*

## Power HotSpot: Juice Your Gadgets Anywhere

The Power HotSpot from Solis takes something good (solar power) and makes it easy to use. For \$375, you get a portable solar panel and base unit which puts out a 12 Volt supply. Plug in anything with a car cigarette-lighter adapter and you have gadget-power, wherever you are.

Or at least, wherever it is sunny. Some possible uses are suggested on the site: keep the lights burning in a garden shed or den, run a pond fountain, or “maintain a deer feeder & surveillance camera” (and edge case, we suspect). Of course the real uses are far more fun. Blog about gadgets all day long from the beach, for example, or power a beer cooler and stereo whilst picnicking.

We like it, although “portable” in this case clearly just means “fits in a car trunk”. We’re intrigued by one of the possible use-cases, though. The list says that you can “recharge bun warmers”. What is *that* all about?

[Power Hotspot product page \[Solis\]](#)

## Credit Card Cutlery: Ordinary Cutlery, Without the Cut

How many times have you wanted to eat something whilst out and about but been unable to do so because you had no cutlery? Me neither, and that's because, like you, I have hands and teeth. But for the prissier amongst you, those who have what my mother calls "good manners", we might have the perfect emergency fork and spoon with which to pick at and push your food around the plate.

Credit Card Cutlery comes in a little credit card sized package, from whence you draw the two plastic sheets and bend them to stiffen them up and form handles.

And what uses might there be for such handy implements? Not many. The only thing I usually need for picnics is a knife, for slicing a hard cheese, perhaps, or cutting a tomato so I can rub it on my bread. What I never need is a fork (like I said, I have hands), and very rarely a spoon. And this spoon rather stretches the definition anyway, being more of a flat paddle or a spatula.

No, this is destined for those people who like to think that they are prepared for every eventuality, but actually just like buying things and dreaming. It's a little like the person who spends thousands of dollars on new camera kit but then takes photos of nothing but color calibration charts, never actually leaving the house. The only thing you need to carry with you in your go-bag is a box cutter and a roll of gaffer tape. From this, as MacGyver showed us, you can make any object in the world.

[Cutlery Product page](#) [A+R Store via [Noquedanblogs](#)]

## 'Smart Info Engine' Media Player Isn't So Smart

The *Cyberus Smart Info Engine* may sound like a steampunk computer which connects to the Victorian Internet (which would actually be awesome) but it is instead the most full-featured digital photo-frame ever.

To be fair, the manufacturer, Sungale, wouldn't describe it like that. The company (which *does* make LCD photo-frames) is selling this as a device which can do almost everything in the way of entertainment: Internet radio, e-book reader, movie and music player, photo-frame (natch), RSS, Gmail, and so on. In fact, the only thing it doesn't seem to do is connect directly to the web through a browser, which is an odd omission in a Wi-Fi-enabled box (although it might just be an omission from the spec sheet).

Add to that a big seven-inch touch screen and a planned price of \$280 and this starts to look like a rather compelling little box. And then things start to go wrong.

First, about that "e-book" reader. The screen may be "high-resolution" (actually, at 800×480 it is not), but e-ink it isn't, and the reader only offers support for PDF (a terrible e-book format) and plain text files. Not even the emerging epub standard or rtf. Then there's the movie "support", which is AVI-only, or the almost brain-melting lack of MP3 support (you need to convert music to WMA).

Photo support is (of course) better: you can pop in an SD card to view JPG, TIF, PNG and BMP formats. And you'd better leave that card in there: the device ships with just 1GB of memory.

Worse still is the battery life. The Web site claims two hours, the press release four, but either way that is pretty poor, especially as this isn't a power-hungry all-purpose laptop.

It is inevitable that this will be compared to the iPod Touch, which has a smaller screen but does all of the above and more, along with a battery that actually lasts long enough to read a book. It also has 8GB of memory and costs \$80 less. Oh, and it doesn't look like a school-teacher's Filofax, either.

[Product page](#) [Sungale]

## Chumby Guts: Robot Viscera For Hackers

In Cory Doctorow's latest novel, *Makers*, one of the main characters puts together an amazing little hack using a bunch of *Boogie Woogie Elmo* toys. These have been stripped of their fur and let loose on a tiny electric Smart Car. Reprogrammed to know how to drive, they collectively take the car for a spin: one on the "gas", one on the brakes, one on the wheel and so on. They can talk and listen, so they call commands to each other, becoming one big many-armed robot.

Now, something similar has happened in real life. For \$140, you can buy a naked Chumby (or "Chumby Guts"). The Chumby is a plushie internet box which displays web-info on its little screen, and Chumby Guts come without the soft skin of the original.

On (limited) sale at the Maker Shed, Chumby Guts are pretty ideal for the beginnings of a hacking project. You might not be able to make them drive a car for you, but the 3.5-inch LCD touch screen, Wi-Fi, USB ports and assorted other gubbins have the advantage of being made to work together, and that you can pretty much reconfigure them however you want. My fogged, early morning brain can only think of building the screen into my fridge door as a podcast, music and widget device, but I'm sure y'all can do better. \$140.

[Chumby Guts product page](#) [Make]

[Cory Doctorow's \*Makers\*](#) [Craphound]

### See Also:

- [Chumby Guts, Get Yer Chumby Guts!](#)
- [Worth the Wait: Chumby Lands at a Desk Near You](#)
- [Chumby to License its Software to Other Gadgets](#)
- [Chumby Desktop Media Player](#)



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