

Houses fit for a spy

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Science fiction is now reality.

At one time in the not-too-distant past, thoughts of James Bond-era technology being available to us normal folks for regular home use were strictly fantasy. But that unforeseen day has finally arrived, as several companies electronically train your house to be smarter than the average dwelling.

How much have we progressed? Not as far as an FBI retina scan, but biometric locks are still an impressive and unconventional way to protect your home.

For example, SmartScan (manufactured by Burnaby, BC-based Weiser Lock and retailing for approximately \$199) allows you to protect your premises with the tip of a finger. A touchpad attached to the front of your door activates a keyless electronic dead bolt system that requires a swipe of your finger -- or those you've approved and registered in the device's memory bank -- in order to gain entry.

If needed, you can program up to 50 individuals to access your home. As Weiser Lock marketing manager Adam Findlay points out, such an option can come in handy.

"Say you're on vacation and you wanted to authorize your neighbour to come in, water the plants or feed the cats," Findlay suggests. "They can come in for the two weeks you're away.

"When you return, you can deactivate the fingerprint."

The good news is that should you want to lean on your friends again for a similar favour due to an unexpected absence, you don't need to reenter or re-scan their data.

"You can just reactivate their fingerprint," Findlay says.

But what if you're away and worried about the security of your premises when your friends aren't checking in?

Never fear -- Visonic is here.

The Visonic PowerMax Pro Advanced Wireless Home Security System (approximately \$330) comes equipped with an array of wireless door and window contacts, pet-immune motion detectors and keychain remotes.

If you're tech-savvy, you'll salivate at the number of options the PowerMax's built-in X-10 home control interface will offer you. As long as you have a personal digital assistant, a cellphone or a laptop, you can program and monitor your system whether it's from a beach in Bermuda or from your car dealership in Rexdale.

The real beauty of the ProMax is that you can even program such household appliances as your coffee-maker to brew up that kick-start of morning caffeine. Even better: you can keep an eye on things at home through a maximum of four real-time security cameras, should someone like Goldfinger or one of the other nefarious Bond villains come looking for those top-secret documents in your possession or -- even worse -- try to steal your coffee.

And Visonic sales operation manager Mike Streeter says the company intends on doubling and tripling camera capability before 2010.

"We're also going to introduce tilt and pan options on the cameras," says Streeter.

Technological wonder can also apply to secondary entrances, like your heavy garage door.

Skylink's wireless G6KR remote garage door opener (\$40) operates on a rolling code system that allows you to stealthily slide your car home via keychain or remote.

Universally compatible with the majority of existing garage door motors, the safeguard of a rolling code prevents you from opening doors down the rest of the street as you pull into your driveway.

Not all gadgets are designed for security. HammacherSchlemmer is concerned about your nose and has offered the Automatic Deodorizing Toilet Seat (\$129.95 U. S.).

When you sit on the antimicrobial polypropylene seat, fresh blends of jasmine and lavender or citrus and eucalyptus blast out from a hidden fragrance module and clear the air of all things foul.

The technology required to maintain this device for nine months would make even Q beam with pride: two D batteries.

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