

Client: University of Warwick
Source: Coventry Telegraph (Main)
Date: 16 April 2011
Page: 24
Reach: 35581
Size: 1018cm2
Value: 7635



QUEEN OF THE TECHIES

FEATURE writer **Catherine Vonledebur** goes behind-the-scenes at The Gadget Show Live 2011 – this weekend’s big event at the NEC – to talk 3D gizmos, growing vegetables in the South of France and Vegas weddings with the TV presenter and avid tech fan Suzi Perry...

TV PRESENTER Suzi Perry lives an itinerant double life – commuting 995 miles between her home on the French Riviera and filming Channel 5’s *The Gadget Show* in Birmingham.

Here she is known as the world’s first female bike racing presenter and Channel 5’s queen of tech – with penchant for leather catsuits – in France she loves nothing more than to grow her own vegetables...

We meet at The Gadget Show’s huge Super Theatre on press day.

The glamorous 40-year-old said: “I have two separate lives. My mad techie life and my life in France. When I am filming I stay in hotels, which can be quite lonely. My life in France is the absolute antithesis of that – we grow our own vegetables, live 10 minutes from the sea and can see the mountains.

“I call our garden ‘the healthy garden’. Whenever I walk through it I always feel good.”

Suzi lives with her Dutch husband Bastien Boosten, a 41-year-old businessman, step-daughter Laurien, aged 15, and cat Ginge.

Suzi and Bastien were married in Las Vegas by an Elvis impersonator in August 2009 – six months after she had life-saving surgery for a ruptured ectopic pregnancy.

She said: “I had been ill. Bastien and were going to get married, but we decided to get married sooner rather than later. It was completely stress free as I booked it all on e-mail.

“We went to Vegas for five days. We saw Tom Jones, who was performing out there, and flew to the Grand Canyon in a helicopter where we cut the cake. It was one of the most romantic days of my life. Vegas is party central we didn’t stop laughing.”

Suzi also became the first celebrity bride to post her wedding snaps on Twitter.

Within hours of tying the knot, her followers shared her Las Vegas wedding – and could even add their congratulations online. She said: “The whole Twitter thing came about after I got asked to sell my wedding photographs. Our wedding

was very private – I didn’t want anyone there who I didn’t love. So I decided to Tweet them instead.”

Suzi may have adopted a simple back-to-nature lifestyle but her French farmhouse near Nice is filled with the latest hi-tech gadgets, including WiFi and Sonos, the wireless multi-room music system.

“I don’t think the French are as into gadgets as much we are,” she said. “Sonos means we can all listen to our own music – I couldn’t listen to my stepdaughter’s music.

“I love a lot of 70s music – soul, funk and blues. Last year I saw Stevie Wonder perform in Hyde Park and at a small venue in Monaco.

“I am also a massive fan of John Mayer. He’s the most amazing guitarist – Eric Clapton-esque.”

Suzi and step-daughter Laurien love playing Dance Central on the Xbox Kinect. She said: “I always lose – I tend to do mum dancing from the 1980s.”

Suzi’s love of gadgets began in the 1980s with a Polaroid camera and a Snoopy radio when she was growing up in Wolverhampton. “I loved my dad’s eight-track car radio and I remember we had the first video player in the street.”

Former model Suzi was originally brought in to make Channel 5’s hugely popular consumer electronics programme, less blokey. Her down-to-earth charm and wit combined with a love of tomboy-ish pursuits, notably bike racing, appear to have worked.

She has since been joined by Pollyanna Woodward – the singer who did not make *Girls Aloud*. “Lots of women watch *The Gadget Show* – it’s now around 40 per cent,” said Suzi. “When we started it



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was really low.

"I think a love of gadgets is now totally unisex and the gadget to achieve that was iPod. It was the first truly unisex gadget."

Suzi's love of tech and motor racing was combined in a presenter challenge on The Gadget Show to invent her own iPhone and iPod touch application. It resulted in Biker Blast Off which even made it into the US top 10 of free iPhone apps. Suzi said: "We were all shocked. It has now had three million downloads."

"I like the fact that on The Gadget Show we stand on the edge of cutting edge technology – we've seen the Smartphone wars and now we're seeing battle of the tablets – the iPad vs the Motorola Xoom. And we are lucky, we can test all the gadgets."

3D gizmos are all the rage at The Gadget Show Live 2011. It sees the launch of 3D cameras and camcorders, TVs, laptops, projectors and even 3D printers – including one designed by Warwick University's Future Tech Project.

But the Channel 5 presenter confesses she sits on the fence when it comes to some of the 3D gadgets on the market – apart from the new glasses-free Nintendo 3DS handheld games console.

She said: "I wouldn't rush out and buy a 3D TV, it is more of an aside, like HD."

"3D is better without the glasses and we've seen that with the Nintendo 3DS, which has done it beautifully."

"I've tested 3D cameras, they are really good, but I want to see a photograph in 2D. I think they are gimmicky."

■ This year's Gadget Show Live sold out within 12 weeks, but extra afternoon tickets are available. For more information visit www.gadgetshowlive.com



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WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR...

Here's our pick of the best gadgets at the show...

- **SUGRU** – a brightly coloured Play-doh-like substance which hardens to glue things together – is one of the more unusual highlights of this year's The Gadget Show Live 2011.

Designed by London artist Jane ni Dhulchaointigh, it was named one of the top 50 inventions of 2010, alongside the iPad, by TIME magazine.

Sugru has been described as the best thing since Sellotape and Blu-Tack. Jane, aged 32, who is on stand B13B, came up with the idea while she was at the Royal College of Art in 2003.

- **CROWDS** were flocking to check out the new Nintendo 3DS, which gets its first public show at The Gadget Show.
- **BAMBOO** has come up with a pen

stylus (£24.99) which is worth looking at as it adds a new dimension to the iPad - allowing you to write, doodle or draw.

- **YOU** can listen to the award-winning Orbital T12 Soundbar (from £299) - a stereo bar with ipod docking station, wiping out the need for speakers around the room.

■ **HAVE** a go at mind controlled gaming on the Neurosky stand - L2/FT4 - as demonstrated on this week's Gadget Show. The presenters teamed up with Loughborough University to break a Guinness World Record for 'the Largest Object Moved Using a Brain-Computer Interface'. Wearing a MindWave headset they used a crane to lift a Volkswagen car with a giant magnet.

- **AS WELL** as the latest 3D tech to try out there is the UK's first street legal e-bike, Dyson's lightweight cordless vacuum cleaner – the Digital Slimo, a robotic lawnmower you can programme to cut your grass using an iPhone app, and a self-flushing cat loo...

SUZI'S TOP 5 GADGETS...

1. XBOX KINECT

FOR pure unadulterated fun it has to be Kinect. My favourite game is a dance against my step-daughter on the Dance Central game, unfortunately, I haven't yet! This is the best on the market for physical gaming and, of course, the Xbox is the hard core gamers console of choice so it ticks all boxes.



It connects directly into your computer, connects to the TV with a HDMI cable so you can watch your footage and the flipshare software enables easy editing. It's so tiny you can fit in your pocket

2. THE HARINEZUMI DIGITAL CAMERA

It's a cult hit in Japan and shoots in the style of Super 8, saturated colours or in black-and-white. Great fun stills or movie mode. I shot a promo for Scouting for Girls. It might not make MTV, but it was fun!



3. SONOS

IT has made listening to music in the house so much easier. It streams tunes wirelessly around the house

and with the internet and Spotify the choice of music is endless. We can listen to different tunes in different rooms, so it keeps everyone happy, and no wires.

4. THE FLIP MINO HD

A WONDERFUL little camcorder with touch sensitive buttons, it is so simple to use and a gadget must-have. It charges via



THIS was my gadget of 2010. It leads the way in tablet technology. The iPad still stands as the blueprint in this market, though others like the Motorola Xoom are eagerly anticipated. The iPad does everything you would expect it to and the apps take it a step further, look out for more home automation apps to join Sonos and Control4.

