



The future of our homes: where are we heading?

Robotic assistants, voice-controlled appliances, and mattress technology designed to track and improve our sleeping habits – they're all entering our homes sooner than we may have thought.

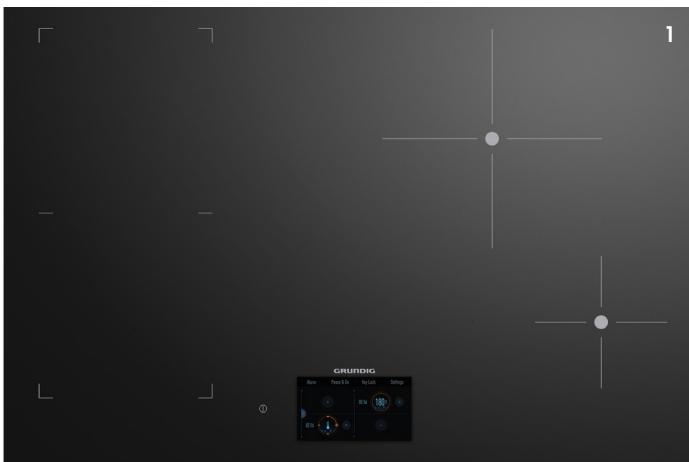
Yvette Murrell takes a closer look

Our initial concept for Alexa was based on the Star Trek “spaceship computer” – sounds futuristic, doesn’t it? But these were the words of Amazon’s vice president of smart home, Daniel Rausch, when I attended IFA Berlin back in September. As the world’s leading trade show for consumer electronics and home appliances, it is the place to get a first-hand glimpse at high-tech developments before the new concepts have even gone into production and become available to the likes of you and me. So, much like the Star Trek spaceship computer, one of the main focuses of this year’s show was how household appliances can make our lives easier through voice control (using Amazon’s Alexa and Google’s Home software) and smart interconnectivity. Which, in essence, means that, in the very near future, we will talk to our appliances and they will be able to communicate with each other, too. Scary or super useful?

One of many innovations that caught my eye was Hoover’s ‘kitchen of the future’ concept, which demonstrated the Vision 2.0 oven with voice-control technology and an advanced LCD screen on which you can, among other things, watch recipes videos. These would be recommended based on what has been recorded as being in your fridge and due to expire soon – a great idea for tackling food waste. You could ask “what should I cook for dinner?” and the appliance could say “you should make a frittata because you have eggs that need to be used soon”.

Once in the oven, sit back, relax, and check up on your dish via the Hoover Wizard app on your smartphone, which connects to the built-in camera in the oven. The app, already available for current smart Hoover products, can set timers and show you recipes.

Similarly helpful are the latest ideas for flexible and intuitive induction hobs. Miele’s KM 7000 full-surface model heats entirely, so it can hold up to six pots and pans, detecting when they are moved around. But don’t worry – each setting stays with the right pan. Grundig’s Flexismart induction hob has an integrated touchscreen ‘auto cook’ menu, too, which includes a wide array of functions. Select ‘pasta mode’ and – thanks to new sensor technology detecting where a pan is on the hob and how hot it is – the appliance will set and maintain the ideal temperature so it won’t boil over.



1 Grundig’s Flexismart induction hob allows you to browse the auto cook menu to select from a wide range of functions as well as recipe ideas. grundig.co.uk



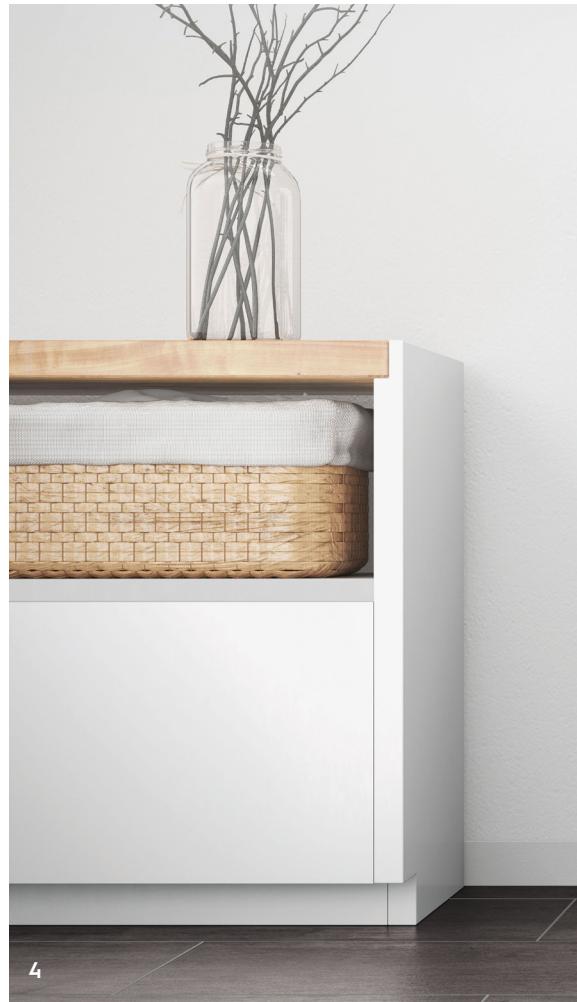
Hoover’s ‘kitchen of the future’ innovation concept is the idea that not only will all of our appliances talk to us via voice-control and the Hoover Wizard app, but they will also be connected to each other. hoover.co.uk



2 Siemens’ dishwashers will be able to detect when you are running low on tablets and automatically reorder them via Amazon’s Dash Replenishment Service system. siemens-home.bsh-group.com



3 Miele’s KM7000 full-surface induction hob is not restricted by rings. Instead, pots and pans can be placed anywhere and moved around as and when required. It is due to launch in spring 2019. miele.co.uk



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Cooking complete, on to the washing up where added convenience is also the biggest talking point. Bosch and Siemens are some of the first to launch dishwashers that will automatically reorder your preferred tablets with Amazon's Dash Replenishment Service. You may already have heard of the Dash Buttons, but the latest advancement eliminates the need of pressing a button yourself to reorder necessities such as dishwasher tablets or coffee pods. Instead, the appliances will automatically stock up for you when the systems detect supplies are running low.

Responding to research revealing most of us don't put the correct amount of detergent and fabric softener into the washing machine when doing laundry, brands are looking to incorporate helpful smart functions into their new devices. Too much detergent can actually damage clothing, wastes money, and has a direct impact on the environment – so to combat this, Bosch's new i-DOS technology automatically doses liquid detergent and fabric softener, which reportedly helps you save more than 7000 litres of water per year

"If, like me, you stick a load in and turn the washing machine on to your regular setting, the designs of the future will also be able to recommend and automate the correct cycle"

(and up to 30% of liquid detergent, too). If, like me, you stick a load in and turn the washing machine on to your regular setting, the designs of the future will be able to recommend and automate the correct cycle depending on what colour and material your clothes are made from, plus how dirty they are. AEG have even created a washer-drier that can handle delicate dry clean-only materials such as silk. "Our insights show that people only tend to use their tumble dryer for their bed linen and towels," says Karina Moreira, product marketing director at Electrolux Laundry EMEA. "We want to change this so people can have confidence and dare to dry most items in their wardrobes." But

there is even more intelligent stuff – such as AEG's 3DScan technology. Reading the humidity of the garments inside the drum, it provides responsive temperature and time adjustments to dry clothing without the risk of damaging or creasing delicate pieces – and gets rid of the need to go to the dry cleaners. If that sounds like music to your busy household's ears, Haier's Duo Dry washer-drier will, too. Ideal if you don't have the space for a washing machine and tumble dryer, it features two drums which simultaneously wash on different cycles. The larger drum can also be switched to drying mode to help you get through the seemingly never-ending loads of laundry. ▶



4 No more worrying about how much detergent you put into your wash – Bosch's i-DOS automatic dosing system will be able to detect the amount of laundry, the materials your clothes are made from, and the level of soiling to select the most appropriate setting. bosch.co.uk



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5 Candy's Rapid'ò washing machine has a raised door positioning to make loading and unloading easier. Controls are also placed on top of the door for convenient viewing – alternatively, you can adjust settings through your smartphone via the Candy Simply-Fi app. candy-domestic.co.uk



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6 Autodosing and 3DScan technology are two new innovative washing machine features in AEG's 9000 series, resulting in increased longevity of clothing as the machine dispenses the correct amount of detergent and detects the humidity and temperature inside the drum to dry garments just right. aeg.co.uk

7 With smart functionality including material and stain-level detection, Haier's Duo Dry is an ideal concept for busy families who may not have enough room for a separate washing machine and tumble dryer.

haier.com



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"These new concepts are designed to help improve our everyday lives by automating mundane tasks, allowing us to use our voices to control settings, and providing advice when we need it."

And then we come to the most sacred area of our homes – the bedroom. Given the high levels of stress we all experience in our day-to-day lives, having good-quality sleep is more paramount than ever. China-based company Sleepace has created a range of smart monitoring products designed to track your sleeping patterns in order to help you improve it. Connected to an app, the brand's Reston sleep tracker is placed under your sheets from where it can record your heart rate, breathing, sleep cycles, and body movement. It then continuously sends this data to your phone, which in

turn can set a smart alarm clock to wake you up naturally – which sounds like something I could absolutely do with. Innovations throughout the whole home are certainly getting smarter, offering more functionality than ever. No longer novelty gimmicks, these new concepts will help improve our everyday lives by automating mundane tasks, allowing us to use our voices to control settings and providing advice when we need it. They're likely to become available over the next one to two years and will soon be the norm in households everywhere – see you in line. **KBB**

8 Sleepace's Nox smart sleep light (above), Reston sleep tracker (top left), and the round Dot sleep monitor (bottom left) have all been designed to record your sleeping patterns. In combination with a smartphone app, they can use the data to wake you up naturally during the lightest part of your sleep cycle, within a 30 minute range either side of the time you set your alarm for. sleepace.com