

Futures

Customer reviews for Mystery Gadget 1.0, sorted in chronological order

Hit or miss? By Alex Shvartsman



First!

I'm an early adopter. Whenever there's a hot new tech toy, I want to clasp it with both hands and hiss "My preciousss" at it. So when one of the world's largest tech firms announced the Mystery Gadget being offered at a deep discount, you better believe I mashed that pre-order button like a Street Fighter combo move.

The gadget is a little white plastic cylinder that looks like a wireless Bluetooth speaker or maybe an Internet router. The instructions say to plug it in and wait for the firmware update and a mass rollout.

No idea what it might do, but I bet it's AI-powered and it's going to be absolutely huge. Even if it isn't, for the price of a fast-food lunch it will have paid for itself in entertainment value.

5 stars

A huge rip-off

If I could give this piece of trash 0 stars, I would. It does nothing. Literally nothing.

The instructions say to plug it in and wait. The manufacturer claims it's going to change the world. You know what other product made that sort of a hyperbolic claim? The Segway! I bet this will be just as useless.

Update: When I requested a return they refunded my money and let me keep the item, so they get an extra star for that. And I guess I'm a little curious to see the precise way this product launch is going to crash and burn.

2 stars

Not a spatula

I ordered a spatula and they sent me this thing instead. It's not a spatula!

1 star

Clever scam

No one knows what this thing does but a huge corporation is selling it for what must surely be below cost. And they want us to plug it in! I will bet you anything it's using your electricity

and your home network's processing power to mint cryptocurrency. The tech bros are going to make a mint (see what I did there?) off of us!

I'm still keeping it plugged in because I figure they might offer profit sharing or something after the big reveal.

3 stars

Perfect for my needs

My spouse informs me that I must buy my worthless son-in-law a holiday present. After exhaustive research, I've stumbled upon the perfect gift. Mystery Gadget 1.0 is cheap (just like my son-in-law), takes up space (just like my son-in-law) and refuses to do any work (just like my son-in-law). I can't wait to see the look on his face when he unwraps this thing.

5 stars

Holidays ruined!

You sent me a broken device. It doesn't work and now there's not enough time left to order

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something that would arrive before Christmas. Thanks for killing Santa, you scrooges!

Update: My son actually liked it. He said it's not supposed to work yet, which ... I don't really get it? He refused to explain it, and instead I got to learn the meaning of the abbreviation 'RTFM'. So now my son has no access to his Nintendo for a week. Let's see how he likes playing with this intentionally broken thingamabob instead.

1 star

Watch the Mystery Gadget teardown!

I run a popular streaming channel where I disassemble the latest cell phones, game consoles, etc. Watch the Mystery Gadget teardown here: [external link removed].

I know others have tried and failed to figure out what the Mystery Gadget does, but maybe I'll succeed. Be sure to like and subscribe!

4 stars

Décor

I was on the fence about ordering this but then they started offering bundles that, combined with free overnight shipping, make the Mystery Gadgets an irresistible bargain. So I ordered four and I used the cute little contraptions to decorate my living room.

My cats like them.

5 stars

In under the wire

They announced that the Unveiling will take place once 10 million units have been plugged in. The company says this will happen within days, so I ordered a 12-pack. Gave most out to my friends and plugged in four. Can't wait to see what happens!

5 stars

Warning! Do not plug in!

This device is some kind of a mind control machine!

Ever since the company turned them on, all the people who have one have been acting super weird. My best friend won't even talk to me any more, other than to try to get me to plug in this thing. She only talks to other brainwashed people and says they're happy because they achieved some sort of an uber-mind singularity mumbo-jumbo or whatever. I've lost a family member to a cult before and the cultists acted just like this.

They've been sending these devices to people for free. I strongly suspect my friend ordered it for me. At least now this e-commerce platform would let me post the review. I will recycle the device safely so no one accidentally

turns it on. I know I sound like some conspiracy nutcase from the Internet, but I promise I'm not. Whatever you do, do not plug this in!

1 star

End of the world

That previous reviewer is right! The mind control tech is everywhere, you can't escape it in the cities. They're beaming it from cell towers probably. Cities are filled with creepy children-of-the-corn type folks with big smiles and vacant stares. I'm in the cabin with my guns and my seeds and my canned goods and who is laughing about being a prepper now? I shot down two delivery drones that tried to drop off them gadgets on my sovereign property.

The TV networks and the streams and even the radio channels have been shutting down. I don't know how long the Internet will work. If you're reading this, get away from cities and towns while you still can!

1 star

Additional ratings

7.4 billion users rated this product 5 stars without leaving a review.

Alex Shvartsman is a writer and translator from Brooklyn, New York. Read more of his fiction at www.alexshvartsman.com.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Alex Shvartsman reveals the inspiration behind Customer reviews for Mystery Gadget 1.0, sorted in chronological order.

Most of my successful stories result from taking two disparate ideas or concepts, placing them into the sandbox together, and jotting down their amusing interactions.

The idea of a group mind has been around in science fiction for a long time: from Vernor Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep* to *Star Trek's* Borg to Peter F. Hamilton's *Commonwealth* books, there are various iterations of this. But how is such a thing born? Especially with the present-day (or near-present-day) level of technology? I've rarely seen that covered in fiction. My story proposes an active effort by an anonymous technocrat, and although the implications are rather ominous, I intentionally leave the motives and the outcome up to the reader's imagination.

The second idea in my sandbox was to tell this story through a series of product reviews. Part of my day job is to deal with escalated customer support cases. We primarily sell on a huge e-commerce platform named after a river. More than any other merchant they adhere to the idea of 'the customer is always right' and although that's usually good, it also turns the platform into a breeding ground for some of the most entitled and unhinged consumers on the planet.

A product getting a 1-star review because a person received a wrong item in the mail? Happens all the time. And that bit about killing Santa? I've been personally accused of Santacide by a disgruntled customer whose last-minute holiday order got lost in the mail.

The reviews I used in the story are mostly fictional, but they're imbued with quite a bit of real-life trauma, which happens to be the best place to reach into for humour.

