

TIME

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Best Inventions 2005: Thin Skins

By DEPARTMENT

•**GOIN' COCONUTS** Cannondale's upcoming Carbon LE line of cycling wear is cut from a new kind of cloth: moisture-wicking, odor-absorbing, UV-ray-protective polyester. What makes it so? Carbon from coconuts. The husks are heated to 1,600°F; the activated carbon (also found in water and air filters) is infused into yarns that make up the material. The carbon particles, kept activated by a patented process, create a porous surface that traps nasty smells and harmful rays and causes perspiration to evaporate quickly. A regular wash-and-dry cycle refreshes the fabric for more easy riding.

INVENTOR Greg Haggquist, Traptex AVAILABILITY January 2006, shirts and shorts, \$150 each TO LEARN MORE traptek.com cannondale.com

•**THE RIGHT TOUCH** The key to making artificially intelligent robots lies in giving them plenty of ways to gather information about their environment. Takao Someya, a researcher at the University of Tokyo, has created an electronic film--made up of bendable, shock-resistant transistors embedded in plastic--that can detect pressure and temperature. The sheet, known as a "large-area sensor array," is flexible enough to cover small objects and could give robots a sense of touch. Another potential use: smart carpet or furniture upholstery that can automatically adjust its temperature.

INVENTOR Takao Someya AVAILABILITY Prototype only TO LEARN MORE www.ntech.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp

•**KEEPING DRY** Like many great inventions, Ecology Coatings' new type of waterproof paper was an accident. While experimenting with a new protective coating for plastic in her lab, chief chemist Sally Ramsey put down paper to keep her workspace clean. But before she trashed the coated paper, she got curious. It turned out that she had created a waterproof and mildew-resistant paper that was easy to write on. The technology could be perfect for such low-cost paper products as shipping labels.

INVENTOR Sally Ramsey, Ecology Coatings AVAILABILITY Commercial production in about 18 months TO LEARN MORE ecologycoatings.com



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