

They sing you lullabies, give heat massages and use cutting edge Nasa technology...



Sleepy sounds: The Musicozy mask plays tunes through speakers hidden in soft fleece

by Susannah Jowitz

The rise of the smart sleep mask

MANY of us wear an eye mask to block out light when we sleep, but what if your mask could also sing a lullaby, give you a massage and harness the latest NASA technology?

Enter the new wave of high-tech eye tech which promises to do just that. These 'smart' masks claim to help us nod off by enlisting the support of other senses — touch, heat and sound — to create a relaxing sleep environment.

With 60 per cent of people reporting an increase in sleep problems post pandemic, it's no wonder we're turning to futuristic options.

Last year the global eye mask market grew by £8.2 billion to £1.7 billion and, over the next three years, nearly a third of growth will come from the technology sector, according to Technavio market research.

Are gadgets really the answer to a good night's kip? 'High-tech solutions may help to improve your night's sleep,' says Sammy Margo, author of *The Good Sleep Guide*. 'Try the tech options but don't lose sight of the other factors, such as your bedtime routine, diet and screen time, which may affect quality and quantity of sleep.'

We put the latest ones to the snooze test...

STARTING SIMPLE

Manta Sleep Mask (£30, mantasleep.uk)

THIS may look low-tech but it uses breathable materials to provide the most light and sound-excluding fit without snagging your hair or pressing on your eyeballs: adjustable eye cups stop the longest of eyelashes from being squashed and allow even the most vigorous rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Ear plugs are included, but cold and hot eye patches have to be ordered separately. **VERDICT:** Beautifully comfortable and the perfect blackout without eye pressure, but too expensive to justify the lack of smart features. **2/5**

LULLABY BABY

Musicozy Sleep Headphones (£20.99, amazon.co.uk)

GET sung to sleep with snugly concealed speakers hooked up with Bluetooth to your playlist. Supersoft, washable fleece gently wraps the head (pictured top) rather than pressing in on the eye sockets or ears. **VERDICT:** This makes up in snuggle power what it lacks in

massage features, and the ability to set your listening to a snoozy tune or podcast really does help you sleep. One for the side sleepers because it's so comfortable at any angle. The easy volume control on the forehead means you don't have to fumble for your phone in the dark. **4/5**

HOT CONTENDER

Renpho True View Eye Massager (£55.99, uk.renpho.com)

RENPHO'S new model brings a Bladerunner vibe to the mask game with its wrap-around mirrored visor and newly introduced vision windows. The heat massage option supposedly gets rid of bags under the eyes with an acupoint massage. **VERDICT:** Simple controls on the side and calm voice instructions while you choose your options put the Renpho mask out ahead. A choice of music tracks is built in — or you can Bluetooth to your own. It also handsily folds in half into a soft carry case. But the vision window is a little plasticky and it's too bulky for anything other than on-your-back napping. **4/5**

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DAWN TRADER

Sound Oasis IlluMy (£129, relax-uk.com)

REFLECTED in the price, this is the gold standard of circadian-light eye masks. It taps into NASA technology pioneered in the International Space Station

which sets the astronauts' body clock by using the colours of light to mimic a day on Earth.

Once you've installed the app and set your alarm, you'll see a gradual dimming sunset that nudges your mind and body to rest. In the morning, the mask brightens on its own, mimicking the action of the sun.

VERDICT: Groundbreaking tech aside, this is let down by its cheap feel and the need to fiddle with an app. But for travellers, it's a winner: the gentle dawn of a jet-lag-free day is almost worth the money alone. **4/5**

SPACE-AGE SILLINESS

BREO iDream5S Eye and Neck Massage Helmet (£199.99, amazon.co.uk)

THEY say this is the future — the ultimate multi-function and automatic massage mask: the 150 pressure points of iDream 5S apply deep-kneading massage to eyes, upper neck and scalp areas, integrating heat compression and 'intelligent air pressure', setting you up for a more restful sleep. **VERDICT:** Not for the faint-hearted: while the vice-like grip of the helmet starts to feel soothing, the head massage feels like witches' talons scraping right down to my hairline and the neck massage never really gets there. What works is the eye socket and temple pulsing, which makes you feel a million dollars, but the bulk and price make this overpriced and impractical. **1/5**

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ages, so do your teeth. Not only do they get worn down over the years, but with inevitable bone shrinkage and a degree of gum receding, they can change position.

I'm lucky to get an appointment with Rhona. As one of the UK's top 'dental influencers', she has a long, long waiting list.

'I think it's so interesting in the UK how people will rush for the Botox and filler without realising their teeth need rejuvenating too,' she says.

Big sheepish hand up here, because that pretty much is me. Though I haven't had it in a while, historically, I've never shirked from the cosmetician's needle in the quest to look younger than I actually am.

But Rhona is right. The dentist, like the dermatologist, is just one more weapon in the anti-ageing arsenal. In many ways, it may even be a better one in that the effect doesn't wear off.

'As you age, your hard tissue and soft tissue, especially round your jawline, diminishes,' explains Rhona. 'This has a dramatic effect on the lower third of your face.'

'The structural changes that part of your face is experiencing often make the space between your nostrils and upper lip [the philtrum] lengthen, which in turn causes you to reveal less of your top teeth and more of your bottom ones. This effect is quite ageing.'

She goes on to explain the importance of something called the buccal (pronounced 'buckle') corridor.

'By that I mean the distance between the corners of your lips as you smile and your actual teeth. The more negative space you have [the dark spaces between where your teeth end and the sides of your mouth start], the older you look.'

'If you look at, say, Angelina Jolie or Margot Robbie, they have nice full buccal corridors, whereas you've got a lot of hollow negative space.'

'I notice you're a big-time tooth grinder,' she goes on. 'I can tell this because your front teeth have those tell-tale cracks and have also significantly worn down at the bottom edges. That's going to make those top teeth disappear even further when you smile.'

'Teeth grinding is a real issue for professional middle-aged women — their daily stress can't help but seep into their sleep patterns.'

Rhona notes I also have a 'class-two' overbite where my upper front teeth protrude and project so far forward they create the appearance of a receding lip and chin.

Little raty front teeth. Poor buccal corridor. Class-two overbite. Ulp. Further bad news is that I've had a titanium implant, replacing the root of a tooth on the upper right-hand side, which means Rhona's ability to expand my palate arch (and thus increase the amount of teeth shown in my smile) is limited.

The good news is that a lot of supermodels have class-two over-

bites (Kate Moss is one of them) and I have reasonably healthy teeth.

It will be another two weeks before the 34 pairs of plastic trays (one for your lower teeth; one for upper), which are transformed from digital scans into reality via a 3D printer, are ready; and it's going to take wearing them for 22 hours every day for over a year, but I'm on my way.

The cost? £4,500 including whitening and another £600 for the Vivera night-time retainers to wear after they come off.

The first week of wearing them is definitely weird. I feel terribly self-conscious, as I now have a lisp and possibly spit a little when I talk. Unable to eat or drink anything other than water when they are in, I am struck by how reliant I usually am on coffee, gum and sweets. Who can fit all their eating and coffee drinking into two hours? Not me.

It's extraordinary how no one notices I'm wearing them until I take them out. And then, it's even more extraordinary how many times the reaction is not, 'Aren't you a bit past it?' but 'How funny! Me too!'

After week two, I have to get these little piranha-like 'hooks' bonded on to my teeth, to give the aligners something to grip on to during the shifting process.

They totally discombobulate my bite, catch on my inner cheeks and, at first, make eating anything solid almost impossible.

By week six, I feel more acclimatised and nothing actually hurts. My family are now used to them being left around the house and me wailing about not being able to find them.

The weeks wear on, with me graduating to a new set of plastic trays every two weeks, and by the three-month mark, it feels weird when I don't have them in.

To clean them I use sterilising tablets, which I think are also used for dentures, but a certain amount of discoloration, especially with my coffee addiction, is inevitable.

We go to a friend's house who serves curry. Turmeric, apparently, is the worst ever thing in terms of staining braces, but I forget to rinse my mouth afterwards and they turn an indelible shade of yellow.

I'm tempted to tear a new pair open prematurely (they come in packs like children's lollies), but resist. Because a lot of the responsibility is placed on you, the client, you have to be strict with yourself and play it by the book if you want them to work.

Four months in, Rhona calls me in to have a look. She's pleased with the progress, although I can barely see any change. To help the process she wants to file some space in between each tooth so they can move more. I shrink from this idea having such a low pain threshold, but she promises it won't hurt. It doesn't, but it is disconcerting — like one of those juddering machines they use to dig up pavements.

Once she does this, she assures me, I'm going to start to see a big difference. OK, so yes, after five

People rush for filler — but teeth need rejuvenating too

I no longer flinch when smiling for the camera or hold my hand in front of my mouth



Brace yourself: Christa looks on as Dr Rhona Eskander prepares retainers, top, created using a 3D printer

months, I am finally seeing some progress, but they have become very dingy. Not that I'm slovenly exactly, but in terms of brushing them after every meal, forget it, I simply can't be bothered.

Suddenly, all these orthodontic accessories start popping into my Instagram feed. There's a sleek plug-in contraption you can buy magically to remedy a 'cloudy aligner' which tempts me, but when I tell Rhona about it, she tells me they're a waste of money. I haven't told her I've started sucking boiled sweets on car journeys with my braces still in.

Summer is here and I spend a lovely weekend in France with friends and their multitudes of children. As a bowl of fresh figs is brought to the pool, almost all the younger folk take out their braces and place them next to each other in a little circle, a little bit like handbags at the disco. I add mine and to my delight suddenly find myself part of their gang. Turns out braces are the best leveler.

According to a forecasting report in *Fortune* magazine, the global clear aligner market, which stood at \$2.85 billion (£2.3 billion) in 2021, is projected to grow to \$10 billion (£8 billion) by 2028.

The technology is constantly advancing. Hardcore types might even want to explore something called Accelerated Invisalign, which involves a vibrating contraption you put in your mouth for 20 minutes a day to stimulate

the process. (Rhona doesn't recommend this for me.)

Meanwhile, there are plenty of other companies besides Invisalign that do it, like, for example, Smile Direct Club, where prices start from £1,639.

In the case of many brands, including Smile Direct Club, you don't even have to see a dentist, everything takes place via mail order, which, by definition, brings the price down considerably.

Rhona, though, strongly counsels that it is always better to go for a brand which involves physical visits to an orthodontist. Although

Aligners: a step-by-step guide

1. AFTER a consultation, your orthodontist maps out your bespoke treatment plan.
2. HE OR she will take an imprint of your teeth to create a series of clear, removable retainers to wear over them.
3. EVERY few weeks, you swap

- one set of aligners for a new set. Each moves your teeth until, after six to 12 months, you have a straight, healthy smile.
4. YOU must keep your aligners on for 22 hours a day, only taking them out to eat, drink and brush your teeth.

teeth so called because they are often purchased for bargain prices abroad, like Turkey — are the norm for either sex.

Right from the get-go I've told Rhona that I categorically don't want that 'Turkey teeth' look. On the other hand, my standards have definitely been raised since I started the process. Friends' naturally good teeth I used to admire, I don't so much any more.

Thirty-four sets of braces in and on my last plastic tray, it's time to take those 'piranha' hooks off and see where we are.

There's no Damascene moment because I've lived with this process for almost a year, but I'm excited nonetheless. Also, I can't wait to be able to chew gum again and not to have to keep scrunching the braces up in a napkin on my lap during dinner. The amount of times I've been on my hands and knees in a restaurant trying to find where I've dropped them.

What's interesting is how the

process has made my two front ones look more stunted than ever. But then misaligned teeth hide a multitude of sins.

The straightening is actually only part of the process. I've now got to have them whitened. And after two weeks of that I need some bonding on my front teeth. Partly because of all the nighttime grinding, they have been worn down to little squat stumps and are chipped round the bottom edges.

Proportionately, they don't take up enough space in my smile. They need more volume to increase their length, even out the bottom edges and dominate my toothscape, as flawless front teeth are supposed to do. Only then will I get the proper big reveal.

I can, if I like, says Rhona, keep the aligners on for longer to get the twisted bottom tooth perfectly straight, but I can't be bothered. Besides, maybe having a slightly wonky one will ensure they don't

relatively straight!

Getting my teeth done has had both a physical and psychological effect. I feel sure I'm smiling more and, as scientific research shows, the act of smiling encourages your brain to release stress-fighting hormones and call 'happy' neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin into play.

So maybe it's not that they make me feel and therefore look younger, but that they make me feel better, which in turn can't help but make me look younger — a virtuous circle, if you like.

Looking through old pictures, I can see that a lot of times, if I'm smiling, I've either got my hand in front of my mouth or I'm looking away. This is a long, ingrained habit it'll take a while to get out of, but after having these pictures taken here, I can see how it might one day disappear.

look too 'done'. The following week I meet with Stewart Beggs, London's unofficial king of composite bonding.

Unlike veneers, composite bonding involves adding a layer to only part of the tooth (in my case the bottom edges of my two stumpy top teeth) and often looks more natural.

Each tooth costs £495 to bond. Stewart does the front four in order to make them symmetrical, so that's another £1,980.

Because I'm a wimp I have lots of numbing spray and two local injections so I don't feel a thing. The whole process, adding resin to the bottom edges of my four top teeth and filling in the gap between the two centre ones, takes over two hours and I'm impatient to see the final result.

Stewart is right, I look in the mirror and see Donkey from *Shrek* looking back at me. They're ludicrously long! But after some talking down from him, they start to look more and more normal and by the end of the week they feel completely in proportion.

It is only when Stewart sends me my before and after pictures that it becomes apparent what a profound difference they've made. Did they really used to look like that? To think I thought they were relatively straight!

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■ chelseadentalclinic.co.uk

Life's LITTLE luxuries

COLD-BREW COFFEE MAKERS

- Brew bottle, £32, whittard.co.uk
- Coffee or tea, £66.95, fruugo.co.uk
- Brewing system, £79.99, coffeehit.co.uk
- Plug jug, £14.49, sillybean.co.uk

Life's LITTLE luxuries

COLD-BREW COFFEE MAKERS

- Carafe, £35, kistthehippo.com
- On the go mug, £41.99, coffeefriend.co.uk
- Perfect extraction, £72, uk.alessi.com
- Microfiltration, £229.99, wayfair.co.uk
- Adjustable flow, £94.67, amazon.co.uk
- Mellow taste, £15.95, clumsygoat.co.uk
- Dripper, £124, maxicoffee.com