THE SKUNK ANANSIE SINGER, 53, ON HER HEADPHONES COLLECTION, LOVE OF ELECTRIC BIKES AND BEING A GADGET QUEEN. BY SAMANTHA REA

What a Triumph: Skin owns a Mutt motorbike

What tech can’t you live without? My Beats Flex Wireless in-ears. I have them plugged into my ears at all times because life is noisy and getting from A to B is annoying but if I'm listening to music or an audiobook, everything’s nicer. Whether it’s Abba or Nirvana, it’s fun to walk to the beat. Also, they don’t cut out sound completely so I’m still aware of what’s going on around me. As a woman, that’s important. If I’m running, I use Powerbeats Pro, and if I’m producing music, I use Austrian Audio Hi-X55 headphones. I’m a nerd - I have around 20 different types of headphones.

What was your favourite gadget growing up? I was obsessed with the radio. The first piece of technology I bought for myself was a Sony Walkman. That changed my life because I could walk around with music. I’d put my recorder next to the radio, record on to the cassette, then walk around with those cassettes all day. Even now I listen to the radio all the time – it’s still the most important technology in my life.

How techie are you at home? I’m the gadget queen! I walk in the door, I tell the lights to turn on and off. I have a Siri speaker in each room. They’re all hooked up to each other and I have my phone bluetoothed to every speaker so I can tell Siri to play a track or play the radio. Siri’s great for sound but when it comes to turning on the lights, Alexa smash[es] it to pieces, so we have both.

Is there any tech you would uninvet? I regret the loss of personal space and privacy that comes with our phones. People send work messages at 9.30pm, then get upset if you don’t get straight back to them. An etiquette hasn’t been lost. You wouldn’t point a big SLR camera in someone’s face but with camera phones people think it’s OK to photograph and film people whenever they want. It’s disrespectful. It’s annoying when people record gigs because they’re watching through their phone and they’re not present, they’re not with you. Then all they’ve got is bad footage they’ll never look back on.

What surprising tech are you a fan of? I have a Mutt motorbike. It’s a Triumph bike that’s reconfigured, redesigned and upgraded. I’m a rocker so mine’s called The Blackest Sabbath. It’s 125cc, and it’s fantastic for pottering around east London. I love electric bikes – I have two. For my big 5-0, I had a bike shipped from a company called Valltree in Australia. They make beautiful bikes that look like they’re from the 19th century. I got my other one in Germany on tour. It’s red. It’s more of a gadget bike. My wife hated the idea of electric bikes, and I was like, ‘Just go on it’. She fell in love with it so when we’re in London we go round Victoria Park on our electric bikes and buy ice creams.

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ON TEST SMART SPEAKERS

AMAZON ECHO (4TH GEN)

BEST FOR APPLE LOVERS
Zapping its discontinued smart speaker with a shrink ray, Apple’s bulbous smart speaker spits out sound that defies its dinky frame. But if it’s not Apple Music, streaming is limited. You can play Spotify via AirPlay 2 but it’s through your phone rather than Siri. Hold your iThing near and you’re connected in seconds. Expect compatibility with smart home devices rocking a HomeKit stamp. But there’s not as much choice as the competition, and if you’re Team Android, forget it. £99, apple.com

GOOGLE NEST AUDIO

BEST FOR AUDIO
Google’s gone for a different cuboid design and it puts a focus on sound. There are no visible buttons but it does feature responsive capacitive touch controls. When Google Assistant is audibly summoned, LED lights show from under the speaker’s recycled plastic skin. The sound is good but not room-filling. But with lots of streaming platforms and Chromecast built-in, it lives up to its ‘audio’ name. £89.99. store.google.com

LUCY HEDGES

APPLE HOMEPOD MINI

BEST ALL-ROUNDER
We weren’t the only ones to pile on the pounds in lockdown, with the Echo’s extra girth and departure from its tubular predecessors. You’ll still bark commands at Alexa but there are buttons to prod, including one to mute the mics. The light ring showing Alexa is listening is relocated to the base. You’re spilt with gadget compatibility and streaming options, while sensors triggering Routines and devices around the house, ups its appeal. It’s one heck of a clever kitchen timer. £179.99, amazon.co.uk