

# Innovative Products 2008

by Patrick McCombe

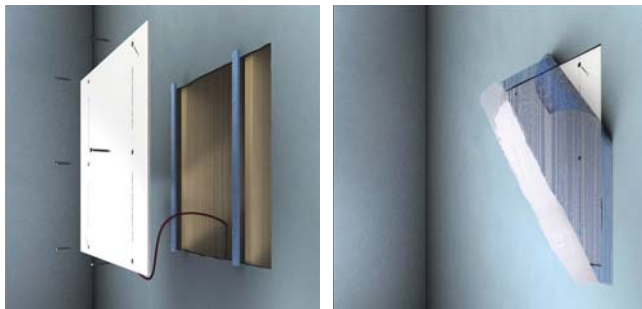
Our annual pick of products designed to help you work smarter, faster, and better

## INTERIORS

### Drier Drywall

Quiet Solution and Georgia-Pacific have teamed up to produce a great product for basement home theaters. *QuietRock DensArmor Plus 528* is coated with a fiberglass scrim that makes it much more moisture-resistant than paper-faced drywall — plus it has a sound-attenuating core. According to the makers, the 5/8-inch-thick panels have an STC rating of 50 and can be cut with conventional drywall tools. Their suggested retail price is about \$100 per sheet.

Quiet Solution, 800/797-8159, [www.quietsolution.com](http://www.quietsolution.com)



### Hidden Speakers

Unless they're living in a dorm room, most folks don't want speakers cluttering their living space. ACP's *Onsia Sound Panels* install inside the wall, behind a picture frame, or in a drop ceiling. The panels don't need grilles because sound emanates from a vibrating panel rather than a traditional speaker cone. In-wall 50-watt versions sell for \$150, 25-watt ceiling models for \$100, and 25-watt picture frames for \$109.

Onsia, 800/434-3750, [www.onsiaideas.com](http://www.onsiaideas.com)

### Well-Connected

Wall-mounted flat-screen televisions have become as common as commercial breaks, but how do you deal with the cable, audio, and electrical connections behind them? The best way I've found is to use a Pass & Seymour *Recessed TV Box*, which accommodates standard devices and wall plates. It sells for \$45 to \$55.

Pass & Seymour/LeGrand, 800/611-7277, [www.passandseymour.com](http://www.passandseymour.com)



### Tough Wrap

Typar's *StormWrap* was perhaps the coolest thing I saw at this year's Builders' Show. The housewrap can stop a 2x4 traveling at 34 mph; at the show I watched it stop a baseball fired from a pitching machine (other housewraps offered virtually no resistance). The secret? A matrix of fibers that acts like a big net so projectiles can't penetrate. According to the maker, the product installs the same way as conventional wraps. It costs about three times as much.

Typar, 800/284-2780, [www.typar.com](http://www.typar.com)



### Clever Cladding

There's a lot to like about *Microposite Siding*. For starters, it weighs half as much as fiber-cement siding — and since it's made from plastic, it can't rot. The 7/16-inch-thick clapboards come in exposures of 4 to 7 inches and are reversible, with a smooth side and a wood-grained side. The company declined to provide pricing but said it's comparable to that of other "premium sidings."

Microposite, 888/724-1160, [www.microposite.com](http://www.microposite.com)

### Rain-Screen Trim

When it comes to installing siding over a rain screen, it's the details that can cause headaches. Now there's one less to worry about. Designed with an extra-deep mounting flange, Primex's PVC rain-screen trim products accommodate the air space behind rain-screen siding and bring the trim in line with the siding plane. They come in white, brown, and gray for just about any electrical or mechanical penetration you're likely to come across. Prices range from \$5 to \$30.

Primex, 877/881-7875, [www.primex.ca](http://www.primex.ca)



### Easy Rekeying

Skip the end-of-project hassle of swapping locks and tracking down duplicate keys by using the *Smart Key* feature now available on Kwikset locks. To rekey without disassembling the lock or cylinder, the user inserts the current key and a special tool and turns the cylinder a quarter turn, then removes them and inserts a new key. Once the new key is removed, the lock is changed. Prices start at about \$30 for a single-cylinder deadbolt.

Kwikset, 800/327-5625, [www.kwikset.com](http://www.kwikset.com)

### Do-It-All Control Panel

Installing a standby generator typically requires a second load center to house the emergency circuits; when utility-provided power is interrupted, the generator starts and a transfer switch energizes the emergency panel. The Siemens 200-amp *GenReady Load Center* makes both the second panel and the separate transfer switch unnecessary. It houses the transfer gear, which can be installed with the panel or added later, and has space for 42 circuits, 18 of which can be run off the generator. It costs about \$225 without the transfer switch.

**Siemens, 800/964-4114, [www.usa.siemens.com](http://www.usa.siemens.com)**



### Dependable Hot Water

Despite promises of endless hot water, instantaneous water heaters have an Achilles heel: When demand exceeds capacity, the result can be uncomfortable temperature swings. Grand Hall says its *Eternal* water heater really does deliver nearly endless hot water. With first-hour ratings of almost 300 gallons, the unit uses a multipass heat exchanger to achieve 86 percent thermal efficiency. Model GU26 produces up to 7.4 gpm and costs \$2,500; GU32 produces up to 9.5 gpm and costs \$2,800. Both can be vented through the wall.

**Grand Hall, 877/934-7455, [www.eternalwaterheater.com](http://www.eternalwaterheater.com)**

### Efficient Hatch

Conventional attic hatches are notoriously inefficient, but the *E-Z Hatch* is different. At 22 by 30 inches, the gloss-white panel is insulated with expanded polystyrene to an R-42 rating. It has a triple-seal weather strip and a 12-inch-tall wood frame that doubles as an insulation dam. List price is \$200. Check the manufacturer's Web site for other well-designed air-sealing products.

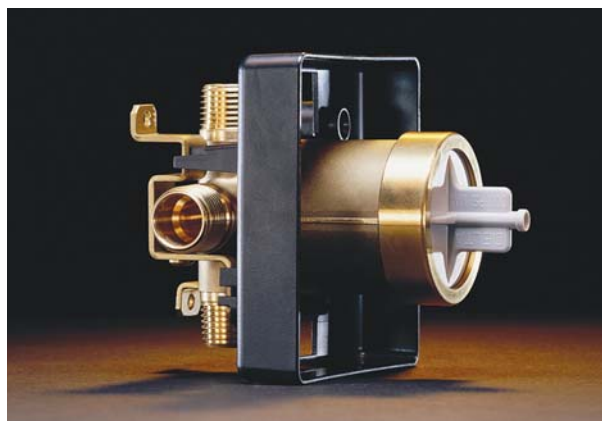
**Battic Door, 508/320-9082, [www.batticdoor.com](http://www.batticdoor.com)**



### Universal Valve

Swapping out a shower valve because your clients changed their mind can be a big pain — but not if you specified Delta's *MultiChoice*. The universal valve body works with any of the pressure-balance and thermo-static shower valves in the Monitor line. Prices start at about \$150 for a single-function pressure-balance valve with tub filler.

Delta, 800/345-3358, [www.deltafaucet.com](http://www.deltafaucet.com)



### Graffiti-Friendly

Got any clients with aspiring artists in the household? There's a new medium at their disposal: Amana's *Jot* refrigerator. The appliance features a dry-erase finish, an automatic ice maker, and 17.6 cubic feet of storage. It costs about \$550.

Amana, 866/616-2664, [www.amana.com](http://www.amana.com)

### Flood Control

An overflowing toilet isn't just a messy inconvenience — it can cause thousands of dollars in damage. The *H2Orb*, a clever little gizmo by AquaOne Technologies, uses two wireless sensors — one in the tank and one on the bowl — to make sure the toilet isn't overflowing or wasting water. If it detects a problem, it closes a supply-line valve and sounds an alarm. Available in early August, it will cost about \$90.

AquaOne Technologies, 866/598-3474, [www.aquaone.com](http://www.aquaone.com)

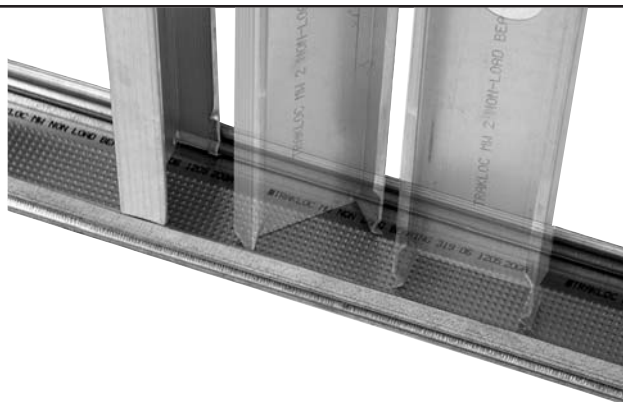




## Quick Steel Framing

Because its telescopic studs install without fasteners and don't have to be cut to length, the *Trakloc Steel Framing System* goes up 50 percent faster than conventional steel framing, says the manufacturer. It costs about 25 percent more than conventional light-gauge metal framing.

**Trakloc, 866/787-2556, [www.trakloc.com](http://www.trakloc.com)**



## Fast Footwork

Skip the placing, mixing, and curing of concrete post footings; instead, use a plastic alternative from AG-CO. The 10-inch reinforced *Deck Footing Pad* provides more than 1,000 pounds of bearing when used in soil with 2,000-psf capacity. The product looks like a viable solution for projects where site access is a problem or time is especially short. Each pad costs about \$8.

**AG-CO, 800/522-2426, [www.ag-co.com](http://www.ag-co.com)**

## Two in One

Most insulating sheathings offer little racking resistance, but new *Styrofoam SIS Structural Insulated Sheathing* — which combines polyisocyanurate insulation and fiberboard sheathing in one product — satisfies ICC racking and shear rules for proprietary sheathing materials. It's a weather-resistant barrier, too — provided that seams and penetrations are properly sealed or flashed. Available in thicknesses of 1/2 inch (R-3.0) and 1 inch (R-5.5), panels come in 8-, 9-, and 10-foot lengths. The company says prices compare to those of OSB or plywood sheathing plus a separate WRB.

**Dow, 800/232-2436, [www.dow.com](http://www.dow.com)**



## Good Grip

You'd think it would be hard to improve upon the humble anchor bolt, but Simpson says its testing shows that *SB Anchor Bolts* provide greater strength with a shallower embedment — meaning that concrete footings and foundation walls can be smaller than with other fasteners. According to the company, the bolts' unique shape puts less stress on the concrete. They come in 7/8-inch-by-24-inch and 1-inch-by-30-inch versions, for \$18 and \$28 respectively.

**SimpsonStrong-Tie, 800/999-5099, [www.strongtie.com](http://www.strongtie.com)**

