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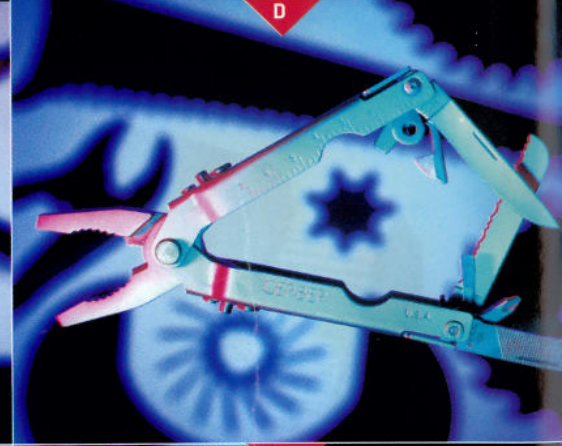
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Hot
Cool
OK
Crap



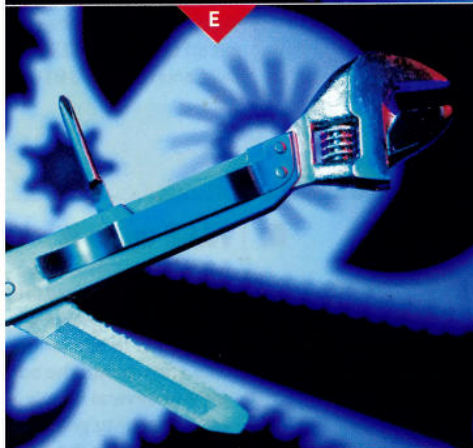
B



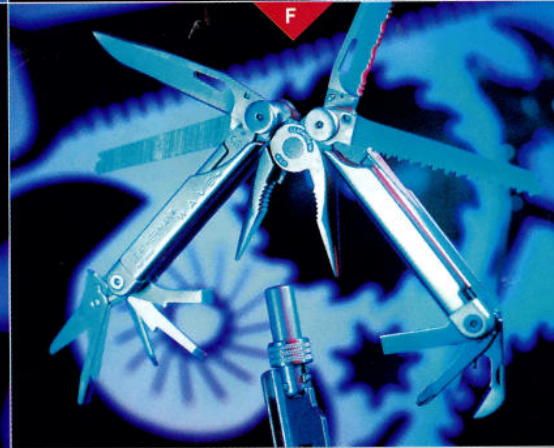
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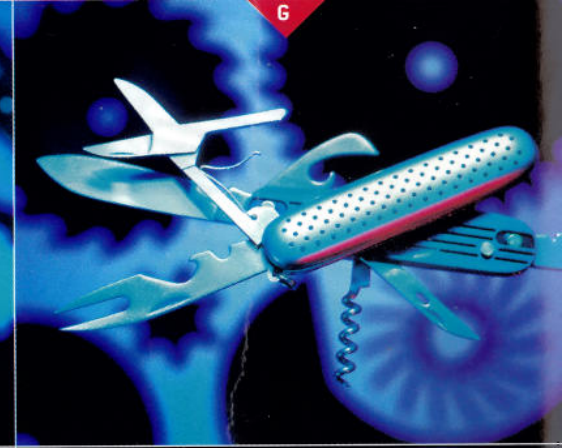
D



E



F



G

IT'S a fantasy. There you are, wandering along the street, when suddenly a lovely blonde in a dirty great ute pulls up alongside.

"Excuse me," she says, "but my tray is packed full of freshly caught fish. How ever will I ever gut them?"

Luckily, you have a multi-dimensional, poly-useful-yet-one-piece toolkit on you, and the time has come to use it. With just a flick of the wrist, your tool [quiet back there] is ready to gut fish, take stones out of hooves, shove up shelves and open stubbies. You are what you always wanted to be: handy.

A] Schrade Tough Tool \$144.95

CLAIMS 21 functions, but when these include "lanyard attachment" and "measuring gauge" you know they're desperate. Designed by some bloke on a doughnut break, this is essentially a pair of pliers with the handles fattened up to cram all the tools into them. You do get a couple of serious-looking blades and three screwdrivers, and the grip feels comfy, but it's as compact as a limo with a swimming pool and the 250g weight will pull your best daks out of shape. ★★★

B] Victorinox Cyber Swiss Champ \$299.95

MORE a one-piece emergency kit than a working-man's tool, this is surely about as far as the pocketknife design can go. Once all 51 tools, including chisel, pruning blade, fish-scaler and screwdriver kit, are folded out, you can practically climb into it. The blades don't lock out, and with a handle as fat as this, user safety is a bit of an issue. That said, any product featuring a "pharmaceutical spatula" can't be all bad. ★★★

C] Victorinox Swiss Tool \$169

WHATEVER it is the Swiss army actually does, it obviously involves using a rugged tool like this as well as pretty-boy pocketknives. Smooth, characterless and efficient, the Tool only weighs about as much as a grand piano. Does practically everything the Leatherman does, but with less grunt, balls and style. ★★★

D] Gerber Bullnose Multi-Plier \$169

THE pointlessly complicated pliers-release mechanism is a bastard to work – the man responsible should be found and shot, or at least nipped in the scrotum. Compared

to others in this range, and for this price, the Gerber seems cheap and rattly. Plus, the tools all open on the *inside* of the handles. For \$169, you get comfortable grip and 13 tools, including four screwdrivers, a file and a serrated sheep's-foot blade, but you wouldn't want to try it out down on the farm when Hurricane Mary's just been through. ★★★

E] Gowings four-in-one wrench \$24.95

INCLUDED here for its ability to give good, adjustable wrenching; an undervalued asset in today's world. Not as comprehensive as other tools, this still contains two screwdrivers, a steaming great knife and a hacksaw, and it gets to nuts no pliers can come at. ★★★

F] Leatherman Wave \$159.95

IF THERE are bits falling off the space shuttle, it's because NASA's lost all its best guys to Leatherman. The excellent Wave has four big blades that work even when the tool's closed, and the handles have now been rounded to provide a pinch-free grip. The action is lounge-lizard smooth and the locking mechanism is secure and simple. There's even an adaptor tool available, which clicks onto the main body for extra Phillips-head screwdriver action. ★★★★★

G] Richartz Ultimate \$119

THE ultimate *what* is what we want to know. The gimmick here is that the Richartz comes apart to become a knife and fork, which might be useful and practical and so forth, but just makes it seem flimsy. There are also a pair of scissors and a corkscrew, but honestly, bring along camping cutlery and get yourself a proper tool. ★

Photos > Richard Mortimer