

# Ignore whistles, bells

When it comes to product selection in a new home, nearly every new home buyer leaves all the decisions to the builder. But that doesn't mean you can't be educated about what goes in, on and around your new home and select the products with your builder, says Richard Binsacca, new products editor of Builder magazine.

Although many products installed in a speculative housing project are dictated by the type of buyer the builder hopes to attract, you should still be aware of the quality of the products relative to the price of the house. Almost all builders offer upgraded product packages.

"Buying a new home is one of, if not the, biggest investments you will ever make," Binsacca said. "Yet

most buyers make that decision based on nothing more than esthetics and location. Ignore the latter for now and think about how far good looks really go. The attraction starts to wear thin if the windows are drafty, the linoleum floor peels and the siding fades."

Basic home appliances and building products can be easily researched at consumer-targeted showrooms, do-it-yourself home centers and in home-improvement magazines. Binsacca cautions against upgraded products for the sake of getting more whistles and bells.

"NEW HIGH-TECH toys with a lot of flashing lights and push-button controls often mesmerize buyers

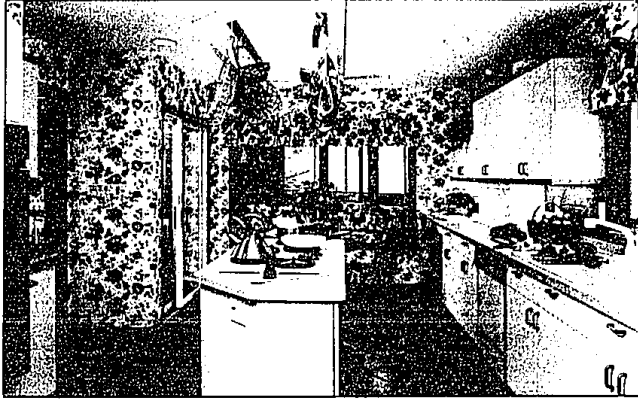
without really doing more than their standard counterparts," he said. "Technology should be functional as well as attractive and fun."

"For instance, what does a touch-control dishwasher do any better than a conventional, turn-the-knob model? Probably not much. But if the upgraded appliance offers better performance (varied cycles, a more powerful spray, better energy efficiency) then it might be worth it."

Binsacca says one high-tech product worth buying is a thermostat. Electronic programmable controls for the heating and cooling system can reduce your energy consumption by allowing you to schedule the system to operate at peak efficiency.

But even in energy-conscious areas, where builders make a point to offer an energy package, many buyers don't think about it beyond the sales brochure. High-efficiency furnaces, heat pumps and air conditioning systems are a bit more expensive but worth the money, Binsacca said.

You should be aware of the quality of the products chosen for your new house.



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