

THE DIGITAL HOME

THE TECH CHALLENGE

Move over,
George Jetson.
Our homes
and cars
are becoming
wireless
wonders

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We all know that digital technology has transformed business. But what has it done for you lately? People have embraced computers at home a lot faster than they ever did television. Still, using a computer at home is more of a chore than not.

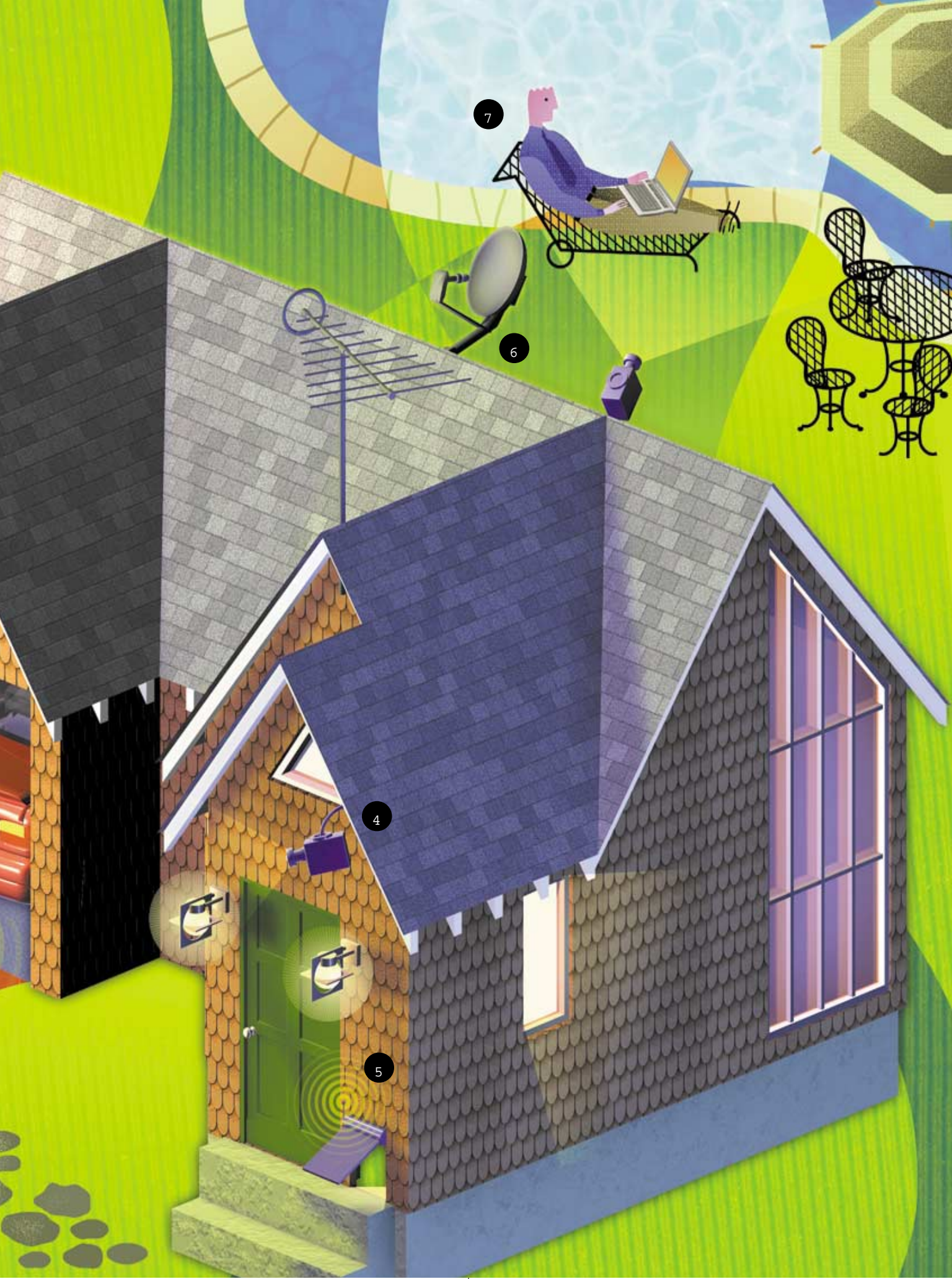
Can technology deliver the digital home anytime soon? Wireless is key. In-home networks already are well along, and a breach in the broadband bottleneck in the next two or three years could breathe life into a host of gizmos waiting to strut their stuff. A day in the life of a digital household could look like this:

As Jane Q. Public comes home, about the only thing that doesn't respond to her arrival is her work-at-home spouse, John. Connected poolside to the family's wireless network (7), he's wrapping up the day's last e-mail. The driveway sensor (2) verifies that it's Jane's car and opens the garage door. The front door unlatches, prompted by a key-fob transmitter (1). With an ID sensor on his collar and his own door (5), Fido can beat Jane to the couch.

What if it weren't Jane coming up the drive? John would have been alerted by a front-door cam (4) that announces unfamiliar visitors or by the mailbox (3), which proclaims "You've got mail" after the letter carrier makes his rounds.

What's wrong with this picture? A satellite dish (6) pulls in digital high-definition TV from the likes of HBO. But because neither satellite nor cable carry digital broadcasts from local stations, a decidedly retro TV antenna sprouts from the rooftop of the digital home.





7

6

4

5



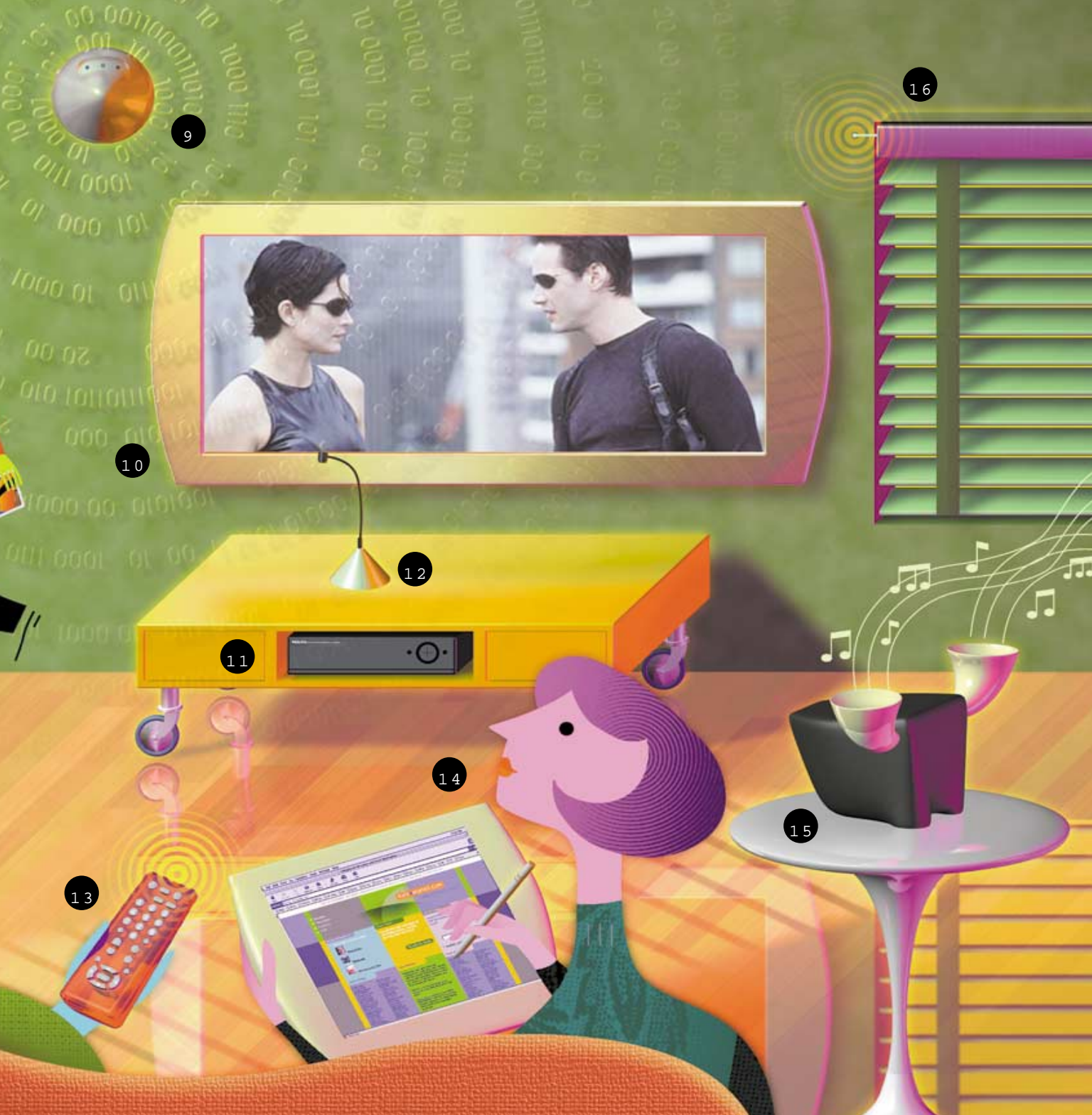
INSIDE THE HOUSE

Evenings are family time in the Public household. Although the family's pursuits may be solitary, all converge on the "data closet" (3)—command central for the family's technology. The closet houses the data and entertainment servers that connect the Publics to the telephone net, the Internet, the outside world—and, often, to one another.

Inside the house, the connections are handled by an unobtrusive antenna (9) that blankets the surroundings to wirelessly receive and transmit commands and data. The one hitch:

It's not powerful enough to move video around the house. So the rooftop antennas and cable TV, DVD jukebox (6), and personal video server (11) are all wired to the wide-screen plasma display (10). The devices are wired separately to television screens in all the other rooms. (John plans to rewire this old house with a single cable and ports in every room, but he's still waiting for Jane to give him a budget.)

The ether, however, is good enough for everything else. John uses voice commands to change channels or pause the movie to pick



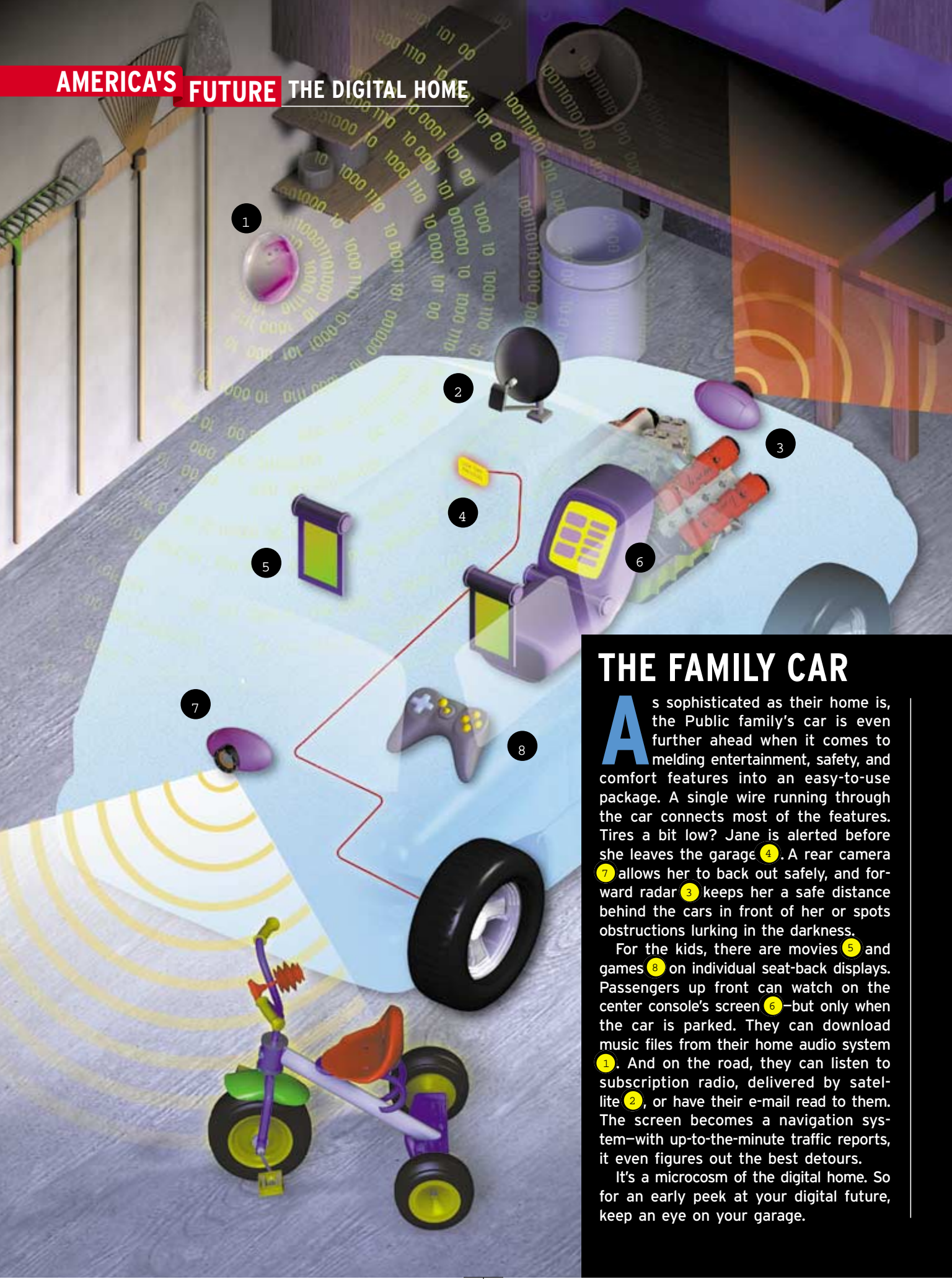
up a phone call on his wireless headset (8), even if the call comes in on his cell phone (4). His headset, or the communal mike on the table (12), can handle such routine household chores as closing the blinds (16) and dimming the lights to watch Saturday afternoon football.

Jane is more comfortable with the hands-on approach. Catching a tune on the Internet radio (15), she uses her tablet computer (14) to have the network capture the music. Later, when she returns the tablet to its docking station (1), the song will be added to the

playlist that's automatically downloaded to her car stereo for her morning commute. John could get this week's magazine loaded into his e-book (5) if only he could remember to dock it.

Even little Johnny gets onto the network. He prints out candid (and usually unflattering) snapshots across the room (2) by pressing the "print" button on his new digital camera (7).

What's with that relic, the remote control (13)? It's a bit old-fashioned, but useful if the rest of the system crashes.



THE FAMILY CAR

As sophisticated as their home is, the Public family's car is even further ahead when it comes to melding entertainment, safety, and comfort features into an easy-to-use package. A single wire running through the car connects most of the features. Tires a bit low? Jane is alerted before she leaves the garage (4). A rear camera (7) allows her to back out safely, and forward radar (3) keeps her a safe distance behind the cars in front of her or spots obstructions lurking in the darkness.

For the kids, there are movies (5) and games (8) on individual seat-back displays. Passengers up front can watch on the center console's screen (6)—but only when the car is parked. They can download music files from their home audio system (1). And on the road, they can listen to subscription radio, delivered by satellite (2), or have their e-mail read to them. The screen becomes a navigation system—with up-to-the-minute traffic reports, it even figures out the best detours.

It's a microcosm of the digital home. So for an early peek at your digital future, keep an eye on your garage.