THE ARTICLE

Over one million partygoers saw in the New Year in New York's Times Square on Monday night and witnessed one of 2008's very first efforts to conserve energy. The traditional New Year's Eve ball, which has brought in New York's new year for the past 100 years, went green. The ball was first dropped from a flagpole at One Times Square on December 31st, 1907. It was made of wood and iron and contained one hundred 25-watt light bulbs. A century on and the new energy-efficient ball was fitted with 9,576 light-emitting diodes, which use about the same amount of electricity as 10 toasters. Although it is twice as bright as earlier balls and can produce a kaleidoscope of 16 million colours, it needs considerably less power. Anyone wanting a similar decoration to celebrate the next New Year will need a cool $1.1 million to buy one.

Technology was a key part of the festivities in New York on Monday. Tim Tompkins, the president of the group in charge of the Times Square celebrations, said: "Times Square has always been an arena where the latest and greatest cutting-edge technology is unveiled and showcased." A representative from Philips, the company that made this year's ball said: "The whole world looks up to New York's New Year's Eve. I'm proud to be able to save energy and show off this technology to the world with such a special event." Another innovative use of technology used on Monday night was a virtual wall of Internet confetti. People from around the world typed their New Year wishes on a special Internet site. The messages were then printed on one ton of multicoloured paper, which floated down on revelers in the streets.