

# Mobile Entertainment Reigns Supreme at CTIA 2007

March 31 2007

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If there was an overriding theme to the Spring edition of the 2007 CTIA trade show, it was entertainment. What buzz existed was all about phones that show movies, television shows, or play music in one or another format or means of delivery.

The Apple iPhone, despite its near total absence from the show, was a primary focus, not because of the phone itself, but because of how other phone makers were positioning themselves in response to its non-presence.

But it wasn't all about the iPhone. There were plenty of makers of devices that would enable the bandwidth for music or videos; there were new designs that appeared to be created solely on the basis of looks; and there were products that enabled the delivery or storage of music, videos or photos.

Of course, there were products aimed at the enterprise, such as Motorola's MC35 and the Palm Treo 700P. There were also wireless VOIP (voice over IP) phones, multi-mode phones, and some early examples of WiMax devices. But the biggest deal by far was entertainment.

Samsung's Upstage, which will be sold in the United States by Sprint, is the clearest effort at a shot across Apple's bow. It's not a pure touch-screen device, but it costs a third as much as the iPhone, and it purports to do the same things.

What makes this phone unique is that it has two faces. On one side is a large screen that's designed to show photos, music information, video and images such as album covers and data. On the other side is the phone keypad and a small screen similar to yesterday's cell phones. If you need to enter information for the large screen, you need to keep flipping the phone over. Apparently this is a new take on the idea of a flip phone.

Motorola is also doing all it can to come up with cool competitors to the iPhone, although one way or the other its new devices will remind you of the ubiquitous RAZR. In fact, one of the new devices is an upgraded RAZR that will be offered by Verizon and offers a music player, Micro SD slot, high-resolution (for a phone) camera and the ability to shoot video clips and display video from Verizon.

Motorola was also showing its new MOTORIZR in several iterations. There's one that runs Linux, one that has advanced music capabilities, and one that's got a soft covering.

I looked at the T-Mobile version, and it's blue, with that rubberized covering that I think feels creepy. It's about the size of the MOTOKRZR (meaning smaller than the RAZR), but when open the looks are very similar. Motorola was also showing an engineering prototype of a phone with a curved sliding track, which looks cool, but may or may not actually see the light of day.

Motorola was busy on the enterprise front, first with the announcement of its MC35 device that's designed for field use and with its Q2. The Q2, which will be sold by Cingular/AT&T was notable if only because the various companies involved either denied or agreed (sometimes simultaneously) that the product existed.

Cingular/AT&T, however, did say that the Q2 (which of course might not exist) was aimed at the executive market, but would run the same

software as the MC35. Motorola, meanwhile, was busy denying that the MC35 would be delivered with Good Technology's mobile office software while Cingular/AT&T, which will actually be selling it, said it would.

Motorola spent a lot of time in spin control on this one, but since Cingular/AT&T was the company doing the selling, and since at least one person present had a Q2 on hand, the spin wasn't very effective.

The technology needed to enable all of this bandwidth was another big deal at CTIA. For example, SkyCross, which makes innovative antennas, and Kleer, which makes semiconductors, announced an agreement to produce active antenna systems to allow the delivery of high-bandwidth, high-quality audio for phones.

However, the coolest SkyCross product was an antenna system for satellite phones that would actually work with a pocket sized phone. This is best described as an itty-bitty satphone antenna, meaning it was about two inches long and about the diameter of a pencil. It's designed to work with a geosynchronous satellite system.

Considering that other satellite phone antennas are about a foot long and the diameter of a shotgun barrel, this is pretty remarkable. Skycross said the new satphone antenna was designed for satellite delivered music.

Motorola's MC35 is notable because it's more than just a rugged smart phone. It also supports Wi-Fi. According to the Wi-Fi Alliance, there were about a hundred Wi-Fi phones of some sort at the CTIA show this week.

Most of them were designed for use with corporate networks or services such as Skype. However, Paragon Wireless was showing its new Wi-Fi, VOIP and GSM phone in private showings at the show. This phone,

which is much thinner and features capabilities earlier versions did not have such as a camera, is intended for corporate users who want to stay in touch.

Location-based services were starting to show up in a number of permutations at CTIA. MapQuest, for example, was showing their newly developed "Send to Cell" service that will take the MapQuest maps you normally use, size them properly for a cell phone screen, and then send you a link so you can download them to your phone. Click on the link, and you get the turn by turn directions and the color maps that you get when you go to the Web site on your computer.

You will need to have your data service enabled to use this feature, but MapQuest says it should work with nearly any cell phone.

Navteq, meanwhile, was offering two million dollars in prizes for new location-based applications. This is the company that has the geographic information database that nearly every navigation vendor uses.

Telmap, an Israeli company in town for CTIA was showing its turn-by-turn navigation for cell phones. The company worked with MapQuest to create the application, which works on GPS equipped handsets. In addition to working as an automotive navigation device, you can also use it for pedestrian navigation.

Despite Good's existence or non-existence on Motorola's phones, mobile e-mail was kind of a big deal. BlackBerry was hyping the 8800, introduced earlier this year by Cingular/AT&T. Sotomayor Wireless announced a new SMB mobile e-mail service that will roll out later this quarter. Emoze, which for reasons that remain unclear was giving away leather cowboy hats, announced a free push e-mail service.

But the real buzz at the show involved entertainment, or services that

some might think of as entertainment. For example, Cingular/AT&T announced a new live video service that delivers live WWE wrestling events to your phone.

Fortunately, the company was having technical problems with its cell sites in the area, and we were spared the experience. Unfortunately, the WWE content will surely make its way to cell phones regardless. Perhaps the decline of civilization isn't as far off as we might have thought.

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