

HP to Fill Gap in its Gaming PC Lineup

April 6 2007

Hewlett-Packard execs said the company will be devoting more attention to the gaming market, and hinted at a new line of gaming PCs that will fall between the Pavilion and high-end Voodoo lines.

Hewlett-Packard announced new plans to capture more of the gaming market Wednesday evening, hinting along the way at what could be a new brand of gaming PCs that would fall between the Pavilion and high-end Voodoo lines.

"Gaming is a large and exciting market for us," said Shane Robison, executive vice president and chief strategy and technology officer for HP, during the special event in San Francisco.

Robison went on to characterize his company as "a quiet leader in this space for quite a while," but Wednesday's proceedings seemed to hint that HP was no longer satisfied with that role.

Indeed, with its recent acquisition of VoodooPC last September , HP clearly wanted to compete on the boutique PC level with the likes of Dell (who acquired Alienware in March of '06) and others such as Falcon Northwest.

"Our acquisition of Voodoo clearly put us on the map," said Robison. "We gained a lot: the No. 1 lifestyle gaming brand, we got the Voodoo DNA in the company, and we got a group that really understands gaming."

While no specific branding plans were revealed Wednesday evening, Rahul Sood, founder of Voodoo and now CTO of HP's Global Gaming Unit, admitted that there was clearly a large and rather obvious gap between the company's highest-end gaming PCs (Voodoo) and the next step down (HP, or Pavilion).

Using the tried-and-true car manufacturer analogy, Sood compared HP's current brand positioning - Voodoo, Pavilion, Compaq - to the Maybach, Mercedes, Smart, Chrysler example. "Mercedes is where we're not playing," he told the audience, adding that the company did not want to downgrade its Voodoo brand in any way.

"We want to keep Voodoo elite and highly desirable," Sood said, and would only add that HP would be filling in the gap later this year with an array of computing devices including desktops, laptops, and handhelds.

Sood also emphasized that the company's approach to the gaming market was to compliment the existing console ecosystem instead of directly competing with them head-to-head.

The company took the opportunity to demonstrate some of the new technologies that could soon be commercialized for gaming purposes. While Sood said that none of these technologies had been designed specifically with gaming in mind, concepts such as mscape - a way to lay multimedia digital experiences on a physical landscape - definitely had applicability to the gaming world.

Other demonstrations included Pluribus, a technology that combines multiple inexpensive projectors to quickly create a scalable "super-projector" capable of high resolution, as well as Panoply, another multiple-projector technology that creates a seamless, curved display that can fill a gamer's field of view.

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