

Big Japanese brands readying 3-D flat-screen TVs (Update)

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(AP) -- Japan's big-name electronic manufacturers are readying flat-screen TVs that can show high-definition movies and video games in 3-D for launch next year.

At the country's biggest consumer electronics show, which opened Tuesday just outside of Tokyo, all the major makers had large 3-D prototypes on display. Visitors to company booths at the CEATEC show donned special electronic glasses and watched as soccer balls flew toward them in sports clips and virtual heroes dodged deep into the background of video games.

Sony Corp. and Panasonic Corp. have both said they will bring their first models to market next year. Details about what will be available to watch on the new TVs are still sparse, though the companies said they want to begin with movies and games.

"Content is the most important thing," said Masanobu Inoe, a Panasonic engineer who worked on his company's new 3-D plasma sets.

The companies are working on standards for broadcasts and discs, which may end up as an enhancement of Blu-ray, the high-definition format designed to supersede standard DVDs. Sony, which also runs a large movie studio, plans to release selections from its holdings.

"They will be in a standard format that can be viewed on other companies' TVs as well," said Sony spokeswoman Satsuki Shinnaka.

Some companies such as Sharp Corp. displayed 3-D sets but are waiting until more content and TV broadcasts are available before they set a product launch date.

Most 3-D technology involves showing two images, one for each eye, that viewed together are seen as a single three-dimensional scene.

Movies have been shown for decades using an older technology that requires bicolored glasses to filter out an image for each eye. The new generation of 3-D TVs uses a technology that rapidly flickers between two images, together with electronic glasses that allow each eye to see only one. Without the glasses, images on the screens are blurry and a bit nauseating to watch.

Toshiba Corp. also introduced a new TV, slated to go on sale later this year in Japan for about \$11,000, that includes a high-tech chip it developed together Sony and IBM Corp.

The 'Cell' chip, which is also used in Sony's PlayStation 3, allows the TV to show and record eight channels at the same time. A prototype, due for release sometime after next year, can convert standard images to 3-D images for viewing with glasses.

Other companies including South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. and Hyundai have already launched 3-D TVs with lower specifications. Cable stations in Japan broadcast short clips in 3-D a few times each day.

The coming wave of 3-D TVs has been enabled by new technologies, but is also driven by manufacturers searching for ways to spur sales and differentiate themselves from a host of low-end TV makers cranking out flat-screen models at low prices.

But in a keynote speech to start the show, Panasonic President Fumio Ohtsubo said his company would not lose sight of products for lower-income countries, where markets are rapidly expanding.

"In each region, we want to create a new 'volume zone' of products that people want," he said.

[Active Shutter 3D Technology for HDTV](#)

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