

Don't dump your new TV for 3-D television set just yet

January 15 2010, By Brier Dudley



Attendees watch 3D entertainment at the Sensio media display during a press event for the 2010 International Consumer Electronics Show on January 5 in Las Vegas, Nevada. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology tradeshow, runs from January 7-10.

With my ears still ringing from the roar of a thousand TVs on the floor of the International Consumer Electronics Show, I'm going to use this week's column to answer a few questions readers asked about new products at the annual gadget bazaar.

Question: I just purchased a 46-inch HD LCD TV and now am hearing about 3-D television making a big splash at the CES. I feel like I got a pretty good deal, but do you think it would be in my best interest to return it and wait for 3-D? I have no idea what prices will be, as I paid around \$900 for mine.

Answer: I'd keep the LCD and not worry much about 3-D yet. Most won't be out until later this year and they'll generally be more than twice as expensive as the TV you bought. Also, 99 percent of the stuff you'll watch in the next few years won't be 3-D.

On top of the \$2,000 or so you may spend on a 3-D set, you'll have to pay extra to buy or rent 3-D movies, and the 3-D broadcast networks coming this year are likely to carry additional cable charges.

To help phase in 3-D, Sony plans to start selling sets labeled "3-D ready," meaning they can be upgraded to 3-D later by purchasing an adapter for about \$200 and goggles for \$100 to \$150, according to a representative at its CES booth.

Prices of 3-D sets are likely to come down after the initial buzz. In the meantime, you might want to keep your eyes out for demonstrations of 3-D sets at retail stores and decide for yourself if the hype is justified.

I've got to say, I'm not in a big rush after seeing a few demos. It's neat, but the bang for the buck that high-def provides over standard-def is still greater, I think.

Q: I'd like to know what you think about the HP/Microsoft tablet that was shown in Steve Ballmer's keynote Wednesday?

A: I'd like to know more about it, but the companies aren't saying much. I asked Ballmer and Hewlett-Packard's chief technology officer about pricing, and they both declined to comment. The HP exec, though, did say it's going on sale this year.

It won't be the only Windows 7 touch-screen slate computer this year.

HP will probably introduce multiple versions in the category, and other

PC makers are taking advantage of the software's built-in support for touch input to build slate-type systems with touch screens in the 7- to 12-inch range.

A handful of Chinese and Taiwanese companies were showing Windows 7 slate PCs at the show, although they weren't as slim and sleek as the one Ballmer demonstrated.

I'd love to have one as a super-duper media remote control and Web browser at home if it's not too expensive, but I wouldn't want one for work.

Q: Do you see any downward movement in the price of DDR3 Tri channel RAM?

A: Samsung, the biggest manufacturer, does. I floated your question by a Samsung DDR3 manager in the company's booth. They aren't supposed to talk about pricing, but the gist of the answer is DDR3 (a kind of memory technology) is now becoming cheaper than DDR2, which is going to become a "legacy" product.

Basically, DDR3 2GB is now the sweet spot.

This person said prices lately may reflect elevated expectations of economic growth. She expects DDR3 prices to decline this year.

Research firm iSuppli recently predicted DDR3 will overtake DDR2 in volume in the second quarter of 2010, pushed by Intel's newest processors that require DDR3.

If prices go down, that would be a good thing. DDR3 is at least 50 percent faster than DDR2 and uses much less power. Samsung claims it uses more than 60 percent less.

Q: What will be the first laptops available to have the new Intel iCore chips such as the i3 and i5?

A: Asus released one with an i5 before the show and a representative at its booth said additional models with the i3, i5 and i7 will be available by February. HP and Dell are now i5 laptops, and Dell plans to sell i3 models shortly.

Q: When will wireless networking be built into TVs so they can connect directly to the Web, through a home network, without buying adapters and other extra hardware?

A: Mainstream TV makers are releasing wireless sets by spring. But the ones I saw provide a "walled garden" experience through a set of Web widgets connecting directly to services like Netflix or Pandora, as opposed to an open browser.

One alternative is to buy one of the tiny new media PCs designed to fit behind or below a TV for \$200 to \$500, as opposed to \$1,500 or more to replace your TV with a new Wi-Fi model.

Q: What were the coolest things you saw at the show?

A: Most amazing to me was the explosion of phones, tiny computers and other [gadgets](#) using phenomenal new hardware platforms from Qualcomm, Marvell and Intel.

They're making tiny clusters of semiconductors that can handle high-definition video, 3-D graphics, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, mobile broadband and powerful operating systems.

Because of this advance, the 2010 CES may be the turning point after which we'll just expect new gadgets to have broadband video on tap,

console-grade video games and voice control.

Despite what I said above about 3-D TVs, I was also really impressed by a prototype 3D OLED [TV](#) in Sony's booth.

The set was 24.5 inches diagonally and 7-mm thick and had dazzlingly crisp color.

In a demonstration with a baseball video game, pitches did the "coming at you" 3-D thing, but the depth effect was increased by a layer of stats and informational graphics. They appeared to be displayed on a clear, flat plane in the foreground.

It was like looking through a window into a ballpark.

A Sony representative said it will be several years before 3-D OLED sets come to market. They'll probably also cost more than season tickets to the real thing -- where you'll be watching the instant replay on your high-def 3-D phone.

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