

'Avatar' inspires a high-tech fair in glorious 3D

March 4 2010, by Audrey Kauffmann



People watch a 3D TV set using special goggles at the CeBit 2010 fair in Hanover on March 2. Hot on the heels of the stunning success of James Cameron's 3D adventure "Avatar," the world's top high-tech fair this year was definitely best viewed through 3D glasses.

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"It's completely crazy this year. 3D is all everyone's talking about," said visitor Amanda Grossbauer, 52, as she peered hesitantly through her special glasses at a 3D display at the CeBIT fair in northern Germany.

Although "Connected Worlds" was the official theme of this year's fair,

which drew just under 4,200 high-tech firms from around the world, the buzzword on everyone's lips was "3D" -- in games, on the Internet and in the cinema.

The games drew the biggest crowds. At the NVIDIA stand, a young Michael Schumacher wannabe piloted his Formula One car around a virtual 3D track spread across three screens, making it seem he was really in the hot seat.

Among the most popular gadgets was Carl Zeiss's "Cinemizer Plus", which allows the user to view 3D images from a smartphone via glasses connected to a special converter shaped like an iPod docking station.

No glasses? No problem with the new groundbreaking technology developed by German firm EyeT Communications that creates 3D pictures from 2D by projecting eight images at very slightly different angles.

"3D without glasses is the future," Frederik Zilly, a scientist working in the sector told AFP.

"With glasses, an image is sent to one eye while the glasses act as a filter on the other eye. Without glasses, it's a whole lot more complicated."

The Fraunhofer Institute was also seeking to consign the old red-green glasses to the dustbin of history.

It unveiled a computer screen with two tiny cameras that monitor the user's eyes and recreate a 3D image for him or her on the screen, that can then be manipulated with one's fingers.

Whether for business or for pleasure, it seemed that everything at the CeBIT was designed with 3D in mind.

For the business world, Innovatix has produced a mini-projector mixing holographic images and 3D. For fun, Hyundai, Sony and other big firms showcased their latest 3D televisions and gadgets.

But even in the world of surgery and industrial design, 3D was the medium everyone was talking about.

Nevertheless, 3D started with entertainment and the public still flocked to the stands with gadgets that enhanced the 3D experience.

Stan (Stereoscopic Analyser), also from the Fraunhofer Institute, was a big favourite. It enables users to take normal 2D film and transforms it instantly into 3D images on a screen.

The Internet too, is rapidly becoming three-dimensional, with a combination of 3D and HTML, named "XML3D", enabling surfers to view web pages in 3D.

Nevertheless, experts warned there were still several obstacles to overcome before the technology is widespread. It is still difficult to zoom in 3D mode and images and films in 3D take up a vast amount of memory.

But Hartwig von Sass, a spokesman for the CeBIT, said he could easily understand the public's obsession with the technology.

"The crowds go wild for 3D because it's impressive. If the technology can be made quicker, it will rapidly take over everywhere," he said.

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