

3-D TV is no longer just a vision

March 3 2010, By Nathan Olivarez-Giles



The most-hyped home electronics product in years -- 3-D TV -- has arrived. Quietly. On Thursday, Amazon.com began selling Samsung 46-inch and 55-inch TVs that are capable of showing 3-D programming.

The prices for the LED-backlit sets are \$2,600 and \$3,300, respectively -- a premium of as much as 20 percent over Samsung's comparable, non 3-D sets.

Sears.com, Onecall.com and other retailers also have the Samsung 3-D sets available for pre-order.

A spokesman for [Best Buy](#), the largest home electronics chain in the U.S., said the 3-D sets will be in its stores by mid-March.

But one big thing is missing: content.

No 3-D Blu-ray discs will be released until this summer, and although DirecTV has said it would have dedicated 3-D channels on its satellite service, no launch dates have been announced.

ESPN and the Discovery Channel said they would create 3-D channels.

But at this point, viewers who buy 3-D TVs will have to settle for regular, 2-D programming.

"If you're buying a 3-D TV right now, you'd be buying it with the expectation that it would be future proof," said Paul Gagnon, an analyst with DisplaySearch.

"But without content, it might take awhile to convince millions of people to pay the premium for the technology."

The 55-inch Samsung 3-D set costs \$500 more than the company's comparable 2-D set.

"A \$500 premium for the Samsung sets seems a bit high for most consumers, I think," said Richard Doherty, research director at Envisioneering Group.

"You'll get the early adopters and the home theater crowd, but I don't think everyone will be pricing their 3-D TVs \$500 over the regular LED TV."

Consumers willing to wait a few months will get lower prices.

Vizio Inc., known for its discount pricing, has announced that its 3-D sets will be available in August.

The Irvine-based company will offer three sizes: a 47-inch set at \$1,999, a 55-inch model at \$2,499 and a 72-inch set at a price to be determined.

The Samsung sets are not being sold with the glasses required to view 3-D programming. [Samsung](#) declined requests for an interview. Amazon and Sears representatives said they had no pricing information on the glasses.

The 3-D TV technology was the star of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas last month, with manufacturers trying to outdo one another in features for their sets.

The 3-D craze in home TV was sparked by the format's success in movie theaters in recent years.

In December, the industry adopted a standard for 3-D Blu-ray players and discs.

Sony Corp. has begun showing its 3-D TVs in its SonyStyle stores nationwide.

But its sets won't be available to consumers until early summer, said company spokesman Greg Belloni.

"It's always great to be first. We've been first on a lot of things, but right now we want to make sure that we have the best-quality products possible and not something that will have to rely on firmware updates," Belloni said.

Sony's 3-D Blu-ray players will beat its sets to market -- the players will be in stores next week.

The company's PlayStation 3 gaming consoles will also be capable of

showing 3-D Blu-ray discs but not until they get free firmware updates via the Internet, scheduled to be available in the summer.

A report released Friday by the analyst firm NPD Group on consumer attitudes toward 3-D TV found that about a third of consumers were somewhat interested in 3-D TV, but the cost of a set and glasses was a concern for more than 60 percent of people surveyed.

The inconvenience of wearing 3-D glasses was cited as a downside by 53 percent of those polled.

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Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

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