

A single 3-D glasses standard might help 3-D TVs catch on

September 2 2011, By Jonathan Takiff

With 3-D TV sales not meeting their grandest expectations, set makers have decided it's better to stand together, then fall apart. They're now rallying behind a standard for 3-D active shutter glasses, though the fruits of their "Full HD 3D Glasses Initiative" will not be savored by consumers until sometime next year.

As it currently stands, [active shutter](#) glasses sold to work with a Panasonic set will not be useful if you've taken 'em over to a friend's house to watch, say a ESPN 3-D basketball game, and he's showing it off on a Samsung or Sony 3-D set. This incompatibility is a major turn off for customers (as is the price of the battery-powered shutter glasses - now looming between \$50 and \$130) when they go shopping for a new set.

Adding more insult to injury is the confusion caused when the salesman starts pitching that there's another way to do 3-D TV - with "passive" (battery-free) polarized 3-D glasses that don't "blink" at you (alternately opening/closing left and right LCD lenses, in synch with the picture).

LG, [Vizio](#) and Westinghouse are now pushing 3-D sets with passive glasses and hail the experience as "superior." Yes, the glasses are lighter and the pictures look a bit brighter (in part because the glasses aren't as tinted). Plus, there's no battery recharging or replacement to worry about. But the [image resolution](#) with passive technology is compromised - bringing back the visible black scanning lines in even a 3-D Blu-ray movie presentation that we thought was a thing of the [analog TV](#) past.

Oh, and image resolution with passive 3-D is cut even more when watching 3-D channels on cable and satellite. But the good news is, if your kid sits on a pair of passive glasses and crushes them, you can get another set for \$5, or just use the ones you picked up for free at a RealD or Disney 3D movie presentation.

Earlier this month, Panasonic, Samsung, Sony and movie/[home theater](#) glasses maker xPand 3D announced their mutual support of the initiative. Now, four more manufacturers have climbed on-board - Royal Philips, Sharp, TCL Corporation (RCA brand in the U.S.) and Toshiba.

Their goal is to produce standardized active shutter glasses that are triggered by a 3-D TV via Bluetooth (radio frequency) signals. Today, only Samsung produces such glasses/sets - and also can boast of having the lightest model of rechargeable glasses, the SSG-3700CR.

The rest of the "Full HD/Active Shutter Glasses" camp deploy infrared light signaling from the TV set that can mess up momentarily when someone walks between a glasses-wearer and the TV. Worse - IR glasses often perform badly and strobe erratically under the fluorescent lights in stores. That gives would-be buyers a great reason to walk away, convinced 3-D "stinks" and "gives me a headache."

Hopefully, if most TV makers are soon producing 3-D glasses to the same spec, the price per pair will come way down, eliminating another bone of contention. At present, the plan is that these standardized 3-D glasses also will be backwards compatible with current IR-signaled 3-D TVs in some fashion. I'll believe that when I see it. So called "Universal 3-D" glasses currently available from xPand and Monster have not proven idiot- (or even smarty-) proof.

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