

Samsung, Panasonic start selling 3-D TVs this week

March 9 2010, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer



Sony's 3-D televisions are introduced as a model watches with its 3-D glasses included in the TV set in Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, March 9, 2010. Sony Corp. said Tuesday it will start selling 3-D televisions in June, joining a competitive industrywide push to convince consumers to embrace the technology for their living rooms. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

(AP) -- Samsung and Panasonic will start selling 3-D TVs in U.S. stores this week, inaugurating what TV makers hope is the era of 3-D viewing in the living room.

Samsung Electronics Co. announced Tuesday that it is selling two 3-D sets. Combined with the required glasses and a 3-D [Blu-ray player](#), the prices start at about \$3,000 for a 46-inch screen.

[Panasonic](#) Corp. has said it will sell its first 3-D set Wednesday.

The push into the living room comes as moviegoers have shown considerable enthusiasm for the latest wave of 3-D fare in the theater. This weekend, "Alice in Wonderland" grossed an estimated \$116.2 million at the box office, beating the first-weekend receipts of "Avatar," the winter's 3-D blockbuster.

Although it's clear that 3-D sets for the home will appeal to technology and home-theater enthusiasts, it remains to be seen if the TVs will entice regular consumers to spend \$500 or more above the price of a comparably sized standard TV and Blu-ray player.

The 3-D effect requires viewers to wear relatively bulky glasses that need to be recharged occasionally. They're not like the cheap throwaways that have been used in theaters since the 1950s. When you're wearing these 3-D TV glasses, room lights and computer screens may look like they're flickering, making it difficult to combine 3-D viewing with other household activities.

And for now, there isn't much to watch in 3-D. Samsung is including a 3-D copy of "Monsters vs. Aliens" on Blu-ray discs with its packages, in a deal with the studio, DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc. Its CEO, Jeffrey Katzenberg, said that it would convert its "Shrek" movies to 3-D for Samsung TV buyers later this year.

"We continue to see this amazing level of enthusiasm and excitement for 3-D. The rate of adoption for this into the cinema has been a rocket ship these last couple of months," Katzenberg said.

Eventually, sports and other programming that will benefit from a more immersive experience should be offered in 3-D. ESPN has said it will start a channel that will broadcast live events using the technology, starting with FIFA World Cup soccer in June.

Samsung, the world's largest maker of TVs, has high hopes for 3-D. Tim Baxter, the head of the company's U.S. electronics division, said he expects 3-D to be in 3 million to 4 million of the 35 million TV sets that all manufacturers will sell in the U.S. this year.

Sony Corp. said Tuesday it will start selling its 3-D televisions in June. It hopes that 10 percent of the TVs it aims to sell in the next fiscal year will be 3-D units.

Both Sony and Panasonic appear to be positioning their 3-D sets at a higher premium than Samsung. Panasonic hasn't yet revealed what its sets will cost, but it's using only high-end plasma screens, for maximum image quality. And rather than selling 3-D sets broadly, it's going only through Best Buy Inc.'s Magnolia Home Theater stores.

Samsung's two new sets will be followed by another 13 3-D capable models in the next two months. Soon, 3-D packages with plasma sets will be available for about \$2,000, Baxter said.

The TVs going on sale this week aren't the very first ones that are 3-D capable. A few years ago, Mitsubishi Corp., started selling 3-D rear-projection sets. But this is the first time consumers can get flat-panel sets that come with an easy way of accessing 3-D content through Blu-ray players.

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Citation: Samsung, Panasonic start selling 3-D TVs this week (2010, March 9) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-samsung-panasonic-d-tvs-week.html>

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