# Attack of the 3-Dimensional images!

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Like the Goths sacking Rome, the 3-D invasion has arrived. No longer a kitschy gimmick, the technology has matured, and the leading consumer manufacturers are banking on it. Indeed, 3-D was the unofficial theme of CES 2010—3-D demos littered the show floor, and all the big players (with notable exceptions) unveiled 3-D products. Could 2010 be the year that 3-D finally takes off?

Arguably, the toast of the show was Toshiba with their all-in-one “Cell TV.” Along with an impressive array of features—built-in 802.11 wireless, an integrated Blu-ray player, a monster refresh rate (480 Hz), and a 1 Terabyte (TB) hard drive, the Cell TV sports 3-D “Trivector” technology. This interesting tech purportedly upconverts 2-D to 3-D—meaning that you can watch old shows in 3-D. Just don’t expect miracles—ever seen SD images upconverted to HD? It’s hit or miss. Expect the same with upconverted 2-D images. JVC had similar conversion tech on display. In both cases, I noticed added depth, but little else. But consider the “upconversion” a bonus—“legitimate” 3-D content is the main event. And the effect is striking.

Panasonic unveiled a range of 3-D initiatives. At their press conference, they unveiled their HD 3-D Viera Home Theater System (including the Viera Plasma V Series). They also announced a partnership with Direct TV to roll out 3D channels. Direct TV CEO, Michael White, promised three such channels by June ’10. Even better, Fox Sports will be broadcasting the 2010 MLB All-Star game in 3-D.

Not to be outdone, Samsung

embraced 3-D in a big way. Most of their new TVs are 3-D- ready, including an LED model less than .3'' thick, and a 3-D Plasma series. The biggest news came from Samsung's content partner, Dreamworks. CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg (of Disney fame) announced that 3-D Blu-ray would be coming this year. The HD 3-D Blu-ray Industry Standard was finalized last month and thus, the first commercial 3-D Blu-ray movie will be Dreamworks' *Monsters vs. Aliens*. One suspects that *Avatar* won't be far behind (and the Blu-ray will be accompanied by as much fanfare as its theatrical release). How do you play this content? Samsung had an answer for that—their BD 6900 3-D Blu-ray player.

LG joined the fray as well. Their new Infinia TV Line is partially 3-D-ready (the 47'' and 55'' models), and they showcased what is purportedly the world's first one body 3D projector. Though it was released a year ago, Nvidia's 3D Vision still commanded attention. The 3-D active shutter glasses (as opposed to cheap passive glasses) add considerable depth to certain PC games.

The preceding is just a small sampling of the overabundance of 3-D tech at CES 2010. Will the tech gain a foothold? The first barrier (as in every new tech) is cost. But there will always be "early adopters," and if the tech provides value (perceived or otherwise) to the consumer, costs will come down. The other question is one of aesthetics and comfort. Will consumers sit for hours on end wearing special 3-D glasses? Granted, the glasses I tried were comfortable enough, but will consumers see them as a hindrance? One things for certain—the industry is onboard for 3-D, and its prospects have never looked brighter.

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