

Electronics show promises much

SAM RAO

Las Vegas, Nev.

THE biggest technology trade show in the US—the Consumer Electronics Show (CES)—was held in Las Vegas between January 5 to 7. The CES is an annual event aimed at defining the product of the year and trends of the consumer's alike.

Last year's CES drew over 24,000 international attendees from 110 countries. International attendance for this year also drew a similar response.

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), CES presenting organization, represents over 2,000 corporate members involved in the R&D, manufacturing, distribution and integration of audio, video, mobile electronics, wireless and landline communications, information technology, home networking, multimedia and accessory products, as well as related services. Combined, CEA's members account for more than \$122 billion in annual sales.

The electronics market is defined in terms of "what's hot" for the coming year at the CES event. The Innovations Design and Engineering Awards Showcase at CES, in 30 categories, has become a hallmark for excellence in consumer technology. The awards range from a series of products, ranging from overall best of innovations, computer accessories, and digital imaging and displays.

This year desktop network devices and portable digital media ruled the show. Also highlighted were electronic gaming, home networking and theater as well as personal electronics and portable electronics. Software and embedded technology and wireless communications were also a big draw.

On January 4, several companies unveiled gadgets for a media preview. Most companies honed into the 'enhanced living room experience' with portable entertainment centers. Perhaps the most eagerly awaited event was the unveiling of Windows Vista by Microsoft chairman Bill Gates.

It seemed evident that the PC will soon replace the Television as the living room entertainment center of choice.

This is especially true given the sophisticated browsing, multimedia and streaming video technology on the internet, which are now the rule for most markets with broadband connections. With flourishing sales of flat-panel TVs and portable viewing devices, another dimension is added to entertainment.

Abhay Jain, CEO of San Jose-based Jinvani Systech Inc., which uses embedded technology and software in their products said, "Software is one aspect which can bring the chipset and device together. And with availability of open ware software—essentially free—more and more independent houses are incorporating it into their systems. Major players like Microsoft, Sony, Toshiba have been pioneers in this arena for a while, with more independent companies from all over the world also looking for market share. You can definitely say the whole electronics world comes to CES in Las Vegas."

In his keynote address, Bill Gates, spoke about the coming "decade of digital lifestyles and digital workstyles," when all digital tools become mainstream and a very different work style will be achieved. Gates unveiled the Windows Vista program, with a fresh, user friendly interface and "Flip 3d" technology, which revolutionizes organization and viewing on screen.

Paul Otellini, the chief executive of Intel Corp., the world's largest chipmaker, delivered his vision statement of Intel's diversification plan to overhaul its brand from depending mostly on microprocessors for PC to also focus on other consumer devices. Michael Dell, CEO of Dell Inc, also spoke on the inaugural day, along with Howard Stringer, CEO of Sony. Japan's Toshiba Corp. and Sony Corp will sell their high definition DVD players in the US this year, while still locked in a standard format issue similar to the VHS and Beta for video industry several years ago.

Palm Inc. also announced that Treo-line mobile phone would be powered by Microsoft software, a device that could help Palm Inc. compete versus the popular Blackberry handheld model.

Search Engines expand to Home Entertainment on PC

Following the trend announced by major players in the electronics industry, heavyweights, Google and Yahoo, announced that they intend to offer services beyond Internet browser option or search mode and become major players in rich content delivery to the PC and home entertainment business.

■ Yahoo Go!

Yahoo's "Yahoo Go!" initiative will be available on cell phones to computers connected to television sets. A la AOL's marketing strategy of the past, Yahoo plans to offer free software to attract users and expect Yahoo GO! to compete with Microsoft's Windows Media Center.

Yahoo plans to offer free advertising-supported video at first, but will start selling downloads later this year

■ Google Enhanced Content

Google co-founder Larry Page announced a way to allow content producers to charge fees for Google users to watch programs on their PC's—either as downloads for later viewing or as streaming files. Google also announced a deal with CBS Television and the National Basketball Association (NBA) to sell programming through its service. CBS is expected to charge \$1.99 for episodes of current prime-time programs and possibly less for older programs. CBS has said that its deal with Google leaves open the possibility of more alliances with other streaming video channels.

Desk top entertainment gets better via AMD and ST Microelectronics

Imagine a single interactive tabletop box that can deliver a combination of world-class, high-definition TV, cable and satellite service through the interactive experience of the Internet. This network-connected "box on top of the set" was announced on January 4 by Sunnyvale-based AMD and Geneva-based ST Microelectronics. According to Iain Morris, senior vice president, Digital Consumer Media and Pervasive Computing, AMD, the company wants to "change the way consumers experience home entertainment" with this innovation.

Intel ties up with Eros for on demand Bollywood movies

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SHORTLY following its announcement of moving beyond the personal computer market, Intel last week announced a tie up with the largest distributor in Bollywood, Eros International (India).

With this announcement, customers can get B on Demand Eros' digital content portal, and future digital video services on-demand over the Internet. The facility makes use of Intel Viiv technology, which is designed to make it easier for people to download, view, manage and share digital entertainment on a wide variety of viewing screens and networked devices such as portable media players, digital TVs and routers.

Eros International's content library of Bollywood movies and entertainment will be available over broadband connections to personal computers using the Intel Viiv technology. The clients include the 50 million consumers in South Asia as well as the millions around the world, connected via broadband internet. This arrangement is also not exclusive as Eros will make its digital content available on PCs from other leading manufacturers by the Summer of 2006.

"Our effort with Intel will give us the opportunity to serve an even broader audience worldwide, enter new markets and gain new revenue streams while exploring a variety of exciting new digital entertainment and distribution technologies," said Kishore Lulla, Eros chairman and CEO. "We've been a market leader in traditional media distribution channels such as cinema, DVD and pay channels with more than 1,500 top titles and new acquisitions and productions every year. Digital entertainment is the next logical extension and a huge growth area, and Intel Viiv technology will play a very important role in accelerating our online distribution initiatives."

"Our work with Eros exemplifies our mutual objective to deliver world-class entertainment all over the world," said Kevin Corbett, vice president of Intel's Digital Home Group and general manager of the Content Services Group. "Our goal is to give virtually anyone anywhere in the world the same easy access to the broadest possible library of information and entertainment content from the comfort of their living room. Eros is a big part of this vision as one of the leading content distributors for the Indian film industry that will allow consumers access to blockbuster titles days after their theatrical release in India."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ismail Merchant to get Achievement honor

■ Filmmaker Ismail Merchant will be given the Lifetime Achievement honor posthumously at the 2006 Asian Excellence Awards on January 19. Actors who have worked in various Merchant/Ivory productions, including Naomi Watts, Ralph Fiennes and Natasha Richardson will pay tributes to the late film producer. The event will be hosted by actor Kelly Hu and comedian Bobby Lee.

The event will be aired on AZN Television on January 29, 8 p.m.

South Asian bridal show on January 29

■ A South Asian bridal show featuring live entertainment, fashion shows, etc. is being presented by Ravissant and Unique Elegance on January 29 at the Hyatt Regency in Irvine. The show will offer planning for a wedding right from designing wedding outfits to photographers, to cuisine and entertainment options. For booths and sponsorship call Sheryl Rozzelle at 949-291-9966 or Mehul Kotecha at 562-402-6359



An American Buddhist at a Tibet Day Booth in Cupertino, California. Sam Rao

India Christian assembly prays for disaster-hit

■ The India Christian Assembly of Norwalk, California last Sunday offered prayers for the victims of disasters that have occurred all over the world.

"We prayed for India and the world. We

prayed for the survivors of the tsunami, hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in South Asia," said Rev. Dr T. Valson Abraham at the service. The program included prayers and songs in a variety of languages—from American Sign Language to Samoan, Japanese, German and Malayalam.

The India Christian Assembly was

founded in 1987 by Pastor Abraham to accommodate the culture-specific needs of the growing Indian Christian community in Southern California. "Although this community would attend American churches, they did not feel a sense of belonging," he said.

The India Christian Assembly meets every Sunday evening from 5-7 p.m. at the United Methodist Church at 13000 San Antonio Drive in Norwalk.

Planetarium shows for visitors at UCLA

■ The UCLA Division of Astronomy and Astrophysics is presenting Planetarium shows every Wednesday until spring. The shows given by UCLA professors, post-doctoral researchers, and current graduate students, include a 30-45 minute sky show, followed by a 15-20 minute presentation on a special topic. Following the planetarium show, visitors are invited to look through the telescopes at celestial objects. The shows are free and open to the public and no reservations are required. The timings are between 7-9 p.m. For details call: (310) 825-4434, email: planet@astro.ucla.edu

