

## ***Feature Article***

### **Ruminations on CES 2005**

By Logan Enright

Small shiny objects under bright lights, the world's largest TV, and retro turntables and HiFi combo units come immediately to mind from the opening day of CES, 2005. The Consumer Electronics Show, held each January in Las Vegas, is the trade show for the world of gadgets small and large. Local TV news reported that \$140M was infused in the local economy by CES attendees and exhibitors this year.

This year's show marked the first year without the Comdex Expo in competition. CES always lived in the shadow of the immense computer show, which has called it quits, at least for now.

A rare snow fell on the Strip Friday morning, which some say is a sign of good luck in Vegas. Speaking of the white stuff, Motorola built a snow board run in the parking lot of the Convention Center and featured experts doing flips off the 100' high contraption. They used man-made as the real stuff did not stick.

If you measure by booth size, it seems LG and Samsung, in the Central Hall, are the new giants of the business. These two companies, who were little known a decade ago, occupied about 25,000 square feet each at the show! A 102" plasma from Samsung, advertised as the World's Largest TV, was on display but is not deliverable. Their 80" inch at \$50,000 is shipping, said a Samsung person. LG, formerly Lucky Goldstar who now owns the Zenith name, had street musicians perform by banging plastic tubs loudly and shouting "LG means Life's Good".

High Def plasma, LCD and DLP devices were just everywhere. Prices are dropping precipitously on plasma, and LCD displays are getting larger and are looking great! Benq introduced a 40" and a 46" LCD at 6 and 8K respectively. Viewsonic showed their HiDef 50" VPW5500 AliS enabled plasma featuring ClearPicture 1000 cd/m2 of brightness.

On the CES in-room TV channel serving area hotels, Gary Shapiro, CEO of CEA (the trade association responsible for CES), said one key issue this year will be distinguishing mere digital displays from high definition displays. There will be some confusion in this area.

For PDA fans, the Treo 650 with faster processing and improved keyboard over their popular Treo 600, is their new integrated cell phone/Palm. Benq has also introduced a "Treo killer" which will ship in Q2- or Q3. HP introduced their new Windows CE Pocket PC with a very impressive large display which

accommodates landscape as well as portrait mode.

In the audio world, it seems that he with the most trade-marks embossed on the front panel of components wins. I counted 12 of these logos on the front of a Denon amp: HDMI, THX, RDS, Dolby Digital, etc.

Other noteworthy cool toys: The Apex integrated digital server with 6" LCD, which holds 25Gig (80 movies) on an internal hard drive. Creative Labs showed an MP3 player the size and shape of a disposable lighter. Apple announced the shipment of their 10 millionth Ipod. Casio and others continued to miniaturize their digital cameras, offering more pixels on a unit which could get lost in your pocket. I tried to imagine how I would use an IP-addressable oven. And how about an electronic wine tasting tool which reads out tannins and taste qualities?

The halls were loud with demos of surround sound speakers and live presenters. CES used to have a policy or unwritten rule, which seems to have vanished, that loud demos are held off-premises in hotel meeting rooms. I used to mention this to NAB, NSCA and InfoComm exhibitors, hoping they would follow CES' lead in this area.

Despite the noise level, CES is always a gas. This writer was there first in 1977 and has always loved it. This particular year was huge and full of great products. A fabulous place to spend a day or four for the incurable gadget lover.

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