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3D on the NAB Radar

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By Chris Chinnock

I have just returned from a brief trip to NAB, which is a big show with a lot to see. Fortunately, Matthew Brennessoltz, Aldo Cugini, Bernard Mendiburu and Pete Putman were also there to help out with coverage. For this column, I think I'll focus on 3D. The message -- while 3D is not a mainstream topic of conversation at NAB, it is clearly on the minds of a lot of companies there, more than I would have thought. Here's a high-level summary of some of the things I saw. For complete coverage, I am afraid I need to ask you to subscribe to our newsletters (it's tough to do this for free, you know).



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Matt had a chance to attend the Digital Cinema Summit, hosted by SMPTE, which ran over the weekend before NAB opened. There were lots of discussions about 3D movie making, the 3D cinema industry and 3D technology. What caught Matt's attention in particular was Real D's description of their "light doubling" technology for 3D digital cinema. It was what Matt expected -- a polarization-recycling scheme -- but good to have that confirmed now.



There was also a Content Theater set up, with Monday mostly devoted to 3D. I didn't catch all of this, but did witness a live demo of 3D transmitted in a standard video stream, which was displayed on a projector and two LCD TVs. The demo was conducted by 3ality and was quite a hit. This was followed by a replay of three NBA games that were shot with the help of Vince Pace. The footage was quite good, but the tales of acquiring it were also revealing.

Later, I met with NHK, which has now started to broadcast three or four 15-minute segments of 3D content per day in Japan. To support this, they have a crew that goes and shoots 3D every day and is rapidly learning the ropes in this new medium.

I also met a supplier of 3D recording gear who told me they are working with a US supplier to outfit 3D trucks to do about 30 live events this year. Wow!

We also saw several 3D camera rigs and new 3D cameras at NAB, with perhaps a half dozen other suppliers I didn't have time to meet personally. However, coverage of these suppliers and technologies will be included in the next issue of *Large Display Report*.

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TDVision gave a very nice briefing on their 3D encoding scheme that will allow 3D movies to be written to a Blu-ray disc in a proprietary format. The main advantage here is that the disk will play in any Blu-ray player in 2D or 3D. In 2D, the extra 3D information is ignored and if you have a 3D-capable TV with a TDVision decoder, you can see the movie in 3D. Unfortunately, if you have a 3D-capable TV with an incompatible decoder from another manufacturer, you are out of luck. Hopefully, the 3D industry has the good sense to avoid a format war.

We also saw the Hyundai and SpectronIQ 3D LCD TVs, which can play 2D or 3D content. Both feature an x-pol assembly laminated to the panel that rotates the polarization for alternative rows, allowing simple passive glasses to separate the two images.

The Hyundai TV is on sale now in Japan for about \$5,000 and the Spectron IQ set is expected this fall at around \$6,000. I plan to take a look at the retailing of these Hyundai sets while I am in Japan next week.

And, we announced the official launch of the [3D@Home Consortium](#) to a room full of new members, interested parties and members of the media. We revealed a cast of 22 international companies led by Samsung, Philips and Disney. Look for more companies to join this effort in the near future.

I am particularly happy to see the enthusiastic embrace of this industry-led consortium. They see the value in working together to remove the roadblocks and speed adoption of 3D into the home. And getting this content to the home - the job of the NAB crowd, will be critical. That's why I was also pleased to see attention and resources from major NAB companies turning in this direction. Maybe 3D TV will indeed be the next big thing.

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