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TECH CHECK

with Jim Goldman

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3D TV Revolution is Upon Us

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By: Jim Goldman

Silicon Valley Bureau Chief



I was going to hold off on writing about this until we get an upcoming series on the air, but since that's still weeks away, and **Sony** [SNE 26.29 ▼ -0.10 (-0.38%) 📉] made a **big 3D announcement today**, I wanted to share some thoughts and experiences about some of the technology in the pipeline.

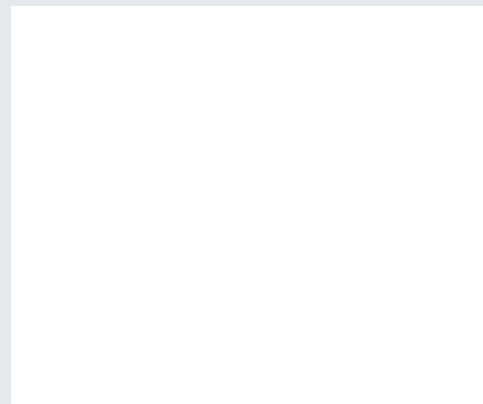
Earlier this week, I had a chance to visit the folks at USC's Entertainment Technology Center, the so-called **ETC@USC** where I got a look at some of the cool, new 3D technologies coming to market. The demo takes on all the more significance given Sony CEO Howard Stringer's comments today that new Sony TVs are on the way, along with a new 3D channel coming to Europe's Sky.

It's true that many TVs can already handle a 3D signal, and we all were mesmerized by LG's Consumer Electronics Show demo. But Sony's big push into the arena might be the stamp of approval the industry - and *maybe* more importantly content providers - have been waiting for. Sony's news follows director James Cameron's partnership with Panasonic on a 3D TV initiative, and it's clear this is where the industry is moving. And quickly.

David Wertheimer, a former Paramount Digital president, now runs ETC@USC, and while I'm saving the crux of our interview for our upcoming coverage, I wanted to share some of his comments about these trends: *"I think you will begin to see 3D rolling out in a big way in 2010,"* he tells me. *"It will begin to make its way into the major retailers. You'll probably see discs and other kinds of ways of getting 3D...I think you are going to see 3D migrating into the home beginning in the tail end of this year, but there will certainly be a big push in 2010."*

The experience will be significantly different from what TV watchers enjoy today: *"Buying a 3D TV gives you a really great HDTV,"* Wertheimer says. *"So you can watch 90 percent of your content in 2D, and have a really great television experience. If there is a movie you want to watch or sporting event or a live event or games, than you play them in 3D. You just flip into 3D mode and now you are playing in 3D."*

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Sean Maloney, **Intel's** [INTC 19.48 ▼ -0.24 (-1.22%) 📉] EVP and chief sales and strategy officer, tells us Intel's 3D partnership with Dreamworks has been a boon to both companies. *"If you look at 3D, it's probably the biggest single transformation because it will impact not just the movie and the content itself, but also the cinema houses, it will impact the TVs at home, because this is going to move into homes over a period of time."*

It's not just Intel either: It's nVidia, and **Advance Micro Devices** [AMD 4.28 ▲ 0.06 (+1.42%) 📈] and a host of other big names that stand to benefit from all this. Think of the increases in bandwidth, and how this might benefit the likes of **Cisco Systems** [CSCO 21.55 ▲ 0.38 (+1.79%) 📈] as it tries to own the networks delivering all this content to the home.

We'll get into this in a far deeper way in a few weeks, but let me just say that seeing 3D TV this week is even that much more jaw-dropping and eye-opening than the first time I saw HDTV all those many years ago. The experience on the television, at least for me, is infinitely better than the ones I've enjoyed in movie theaters. And seeing live-action 3D seems far more compelling than 3D animation. Theater 3D has just fallen short for me; but the imagery I saw on TVs this week was so crisp, so real, and just so fun to watch.

I watched a football game, the U2 concert, a Miley Cyrus concert and each was perfect. All of the footage was captured by **3ality**, a company based in Burbank, one of the real pioneers in all this, and the company that's trying to become the go-to stop for all things 3D production. *(More on them coming up in our coverage.)*

3D TV won't replace all your TV programming. Some programming will, and some won't, be in 3D. And yes, you still need the glasses, but even those are improving. We'll focus on this in some upcoming coverage, but watching 3D on a 2D screen just won't do it justice, just like trying to explain visually the differences between non-HD and HD programming on a regular TV didn't work.

I encourage you to get out and see a demo of all this. It really is THAT cool.

Questions? Comments? TechCheck@cnbc.com

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