

masterimage brings glasses-free 3d to mobile

MobilizedTV first wrote about 3D for mobile phones in 2008, but MasterImage 3D stood out at NAB 2010 with its compelling autostereoscopic (glasses-free) display for mobile phones.

True, shortly after MasterImage 3D announced (and showed) its 3D display, and just before NAB, Sharp Electronics made an announcement about its plans to offer glasses-free 3D mobile displays. But MasterImage 3D is already there: its auto-stereoscopic 3D display was commercialized in February 2009 for the Hitachi Wooc H001 (see photo) by Casio Hitachi Mobile Communications, and was enabled by MasterImage's glasses-free 3D display. Available only in Japan and for a limited time, 300,000 units of the Hitachi Wooc H001 were sold.



MobilizedTV wasn't the only one to be impressed. At the end of April, The Entertainment Technology Center @ USC, ("which brings together the top entertainment, technology and consumer electronic companies to evaluate what consumers really want, which is then translated to the companies that make technology products") brought MasterImage 3D, into the fold as a Consumer 3D Experience Lab project sponsor.

As a 3D project sponsor, MasterImage will participate in ETC@USC's 3D initiatives, including testing 3D products, 3D consumer adoption research and the impact of 3D technologies as it relates to human eyesight and the visual system. The 3D project will also focus on compatible and full resolution viewing tests, subtitling and EPG methods as well as examine the challenges faced when selling 3D products, opportunities for retail, marketing in 3D, and overall industry education of 3D. (Click here for Mark Schubin's very informative two-part primer on the physical realities of watching 3D on a mobile phone.)

How does MasterImage 3D do it? According to company COO James Bower, its patented TN-LCD-based autostereoscopic technology allows for direct viewing of 3D content on flat screen displays (TFT-LCD, PDP, OLED). "Our 'Cell Matrix Parallax' display modules allow for the highest brightness and no crosstalk (ghosting)," says Bower. "The displays offer both portrait and landscape modes in 3D and can also switch between 2D and 3D modes."

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MasterImage 3D has also developed and patented a manufacturing process for precise alignment between its 3D module and the display. "Our equipment aligns each pixel of both panels with a maximum tolerance of 2 microns to ensure the highest manufacturing yield," says MasterImage 3D CEO Younghoon Lee. "MasterImage has an almost 100 percent production yield, which keeps costs low comparatively."

Other features include a high brightness level and wide viewing angle, reverse-compatibility with existing 2D content, and compatibility with all existing flat display technologies. In addition to mobile phone screens, MasterImage 3D aims its auto-stereoscopic displays at 3D TVs, gaming, medical, education, MP4 players and other possible uses.

The company is gearing up to deploy millions of auto-stereoscopic units with multiple manufactures worldwide. Founded in 2004, MasterImage 3D was recently acquired and capitalized by U.S.-based Symphony 3D Holdings and is headquartered in Burbank, California.

The Entertainment Technology Center @ USC, founded in 1993 with the help of George Lucas, is a non-profit organization within USC's School of Cinematic Arts. The ETC strives to show how technology impacts the next generation consumer, which will improve the consumer experience and will uncover new revenue streams for entertainment-related products. Along with USC's School of Cinematic Arts, current ETC sponsors include: The Walt Disney Company, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Fox, Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros. Entertainment, Alcatel-Lucent, Cisco, Deluxe Entertainment Services Group, Inc., Lucasfilm Ltd, TATA Consultancy Services, and Thomson, also LG Electronics, Dolby, Volkswagen of America, Singapore IDA, Thales, Dolby, LG Electronics, MasterImage 3D, Panasonic and RealD.

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