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## Five things to know about 3DTV

Big at CES, but when is it going to be big in your living room?

by Jamie Carter published on 15 January 2009

Forget HDTV, 3DTV is going to be the next big thing according to TV manufacturers and film studios alike, but what's it all about and do you really need it? Here are five things you should know:

### You need to wear glasses

Although CES saw many manufacturers showing 3D monitors for PC that require no glasses, these use basic VGA picture quality - and are likely to be used only for advertising screens in shops. What was really getting journalists and industry types excited at CES was a throng of demos from the big TV brands that suggested that Hi-def 3DTV is just around the corner. The depth and front effects on demo reels at CES were truly amazing - but to get any effect viewers must wear shades. Forget the old red/green combo - 3D plasma TVs require special shutter glasses, while for LCD TVs the glasses are simply polarized.

### You need a new TV

That's right, folks, HD Ready is no longer going to cut it. Having just opened a Blu-ray authoring centre in Hollywood to help the movie moguls switch to 3D production, Panasonic was also showing 3D Blu-ray discs on its 103-inch plasma TV. LG went one better by demonstrating a 60-inch 3D plasma and a 55-inch 3D LCD TV, both of which we were told could go on sale by the end of this year.

That's no great surprise in the case of the plasma - Samsung's £800 PS50A476P1DXXU 50-inch plasma is 3D-compatible and came out over 6 months ago, while Mitsubishi has been manufacturing 3D rear projection TVs for a year - but 3D LCD TVs had previously been thought of as far too expensive to produce. Samsung, Sony, Dolby, LG and Panasonic all showed-off their 3D systems, while Mitsubishi and Nvidia showed a 3D graphics package that requires just a pair of



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glasses and a transmitter to be added to their existing 3D-compatible TVs in the US.

Blu-ray's got you covered

Your existing Blu-ray might already play 3DTV discs. Although Panasonic suggested the opposite, LG was using its existing BD300 Blu-ray player to spin a 3D Blu-ray version of Bon et al's concert film - and asserted that consumers would not need a new player. Panasonic wasn't so positive, suggesting that it was playing 3D content on its giant plasma from a modified Blu-ray player prototype.

3D Blu-ray discs could be out within a year

LG told us that 3D Blu-ray discs should be out this year from the likes of Fox, Disney etc. The Blu-ray Disc Association is less hopeful, though there's no doubt it's high on the agenda. As the movie industry is switching to digital cinema and high definition production techniques, 3DTV is relatively easy to add-on - and perhaps even a money-spinner.

Don't expect it for Christmas 2009

Which ever company's 3DTV system becomes standard on Blu-ray discs stands to make a fortune from licensing, so the chances of a quick agreement between competing member companies of the BDA is unlikely. We won't see another HD-DVD Vs Blu-ray situation - there's no desire whatsoever for a repeat performance of that - but it could take several years before we have a 3D system agreed and ready.

Meanwhile, expect the big brands to release 3D-compatible Full HD plasmas and LCD TVs from autumn onwards.