

Which? reports from the IFA 2008 show

TVs turn to 3D

The IFA 2008 technology showcase was held in Berlin in August – and offered more than 200,000 visitors a look at the latest consumer electronics products that will be in the shops over the coming year.

The show, which housed around 1,200 exhibitors, was a chance for consumer brands such as Sony, Samsung, LG, and Sharp to share upcoming plans. Which? was there for a hands-on first-look test of the latest products.

The evolution of the television set dominated the show. High-definition TVs are getting slimmer, connect to the internet, and some can even show programmes in 3D.



Both LG and Philips showed off 3D flat-screen TVs, which create a three-dimensional effect when showing compatible movies, with no need for special glasses. Philips showed a 52-inch prototype TV screen that delivered a convincing impression of 3D depth, as well as 22-inch and 8-inch 3D TVs.

LG's 3D displays are more modest, with screens more likely to be used in advertising than in the home.

We found that both attempts at 3D technology were limited. On screen, straight lines were blurred around the edges and distorted by quick-moving images on screen. The 3D effect, where the background and foreground appear as different layers with different depths, was jarring.

In our tests, the biggest obstacle was having to be directly in front of



the screen to get the best out of the 3D images – which could make family viewing a problem.

Sony and LG battled it out for the world's slimmest LCD TV title (both pictured left). LG's LG6100 came in at 4.4cm, but Sony's Bravia ZX1 won the contest – at just under 1cm deep.

Toshiba announced that it is focusing on new high-definition TVs that make standard definition pictures look good.

Panasonic revealed more details

of internet-connected TVs that can play both BBC iPlayer and YouTube content.

LG had a prototype touchscreen TV on display (pictured below). The image quality wasn't great, but we found that the touchscreen was impressive, although it was not quite as responsive as Apple's iPhone.



LG also showcased its solution to the problem of screen glare that affects some TVs. LG's ShineOut TV screen reflects sunlight through the rear of the screen rather than the glass surface.

This means that the TV image actually becomes brighter when the sunlight hits the screen by harnessing the sunlight itself, without requiring any extra power output from the TV.



SONY SHOWS ULTRA-SLIM TVs

We first saw Sony's organic light-emitting diode (OLED) TVs at the CES technology event in Las Vegas in January 2008, and the TV sets have lost none of their wow-factor since then.

At only 3mm deep, these waif-like screens redefine the idea of ultra-slim – and we found that the visuals are as impressive as the frame they come in.

We looked at Sony's XEL1 model OLED TV, which is launching in time for Christmas, and found it delivered astonishing detail and vibrant colour – better than plasma or LCD TV screens. However, the limited screen size (11 inches) and the likelihood of a high price tag of over £1,200 make this one for technology fans – for now.



8.2m

the number of British households
with a TV set in 1958

BARB

25.6m

the number of British households
with a TV set in 2008

BARB

Slimmer, high-definition television gets wirelessly connected

Scarlet fever for LG TV sets

LG revealed its updated high-definition LCD TVs at IFA 2008, and we got a preview of the new sets.

The new LG6100 range (pictured, right) updates the LG6000 Scarlet series, and shrinks its predecessor's features into an impressively slim 44.7mm frame.

We were impressed by the picture quality of the 42-inch model we saw at the show, although there was a distracting level of grittiness in the colour reproduction despite its Full HD 1080p credentials.

The LG6100 comes with four built-in HDMI interfaces, as well as a USB 2.0 socket. A built-in digital tuner lets you watch Freeview TV channels without needing to buy a separate set-top box.

Grander still is the new LG7000 series, which has Bluetooth connectivity, allowing you to



wirelessly link to devices such as mobile phones. We tried the Bluetooth connection with a pair of LG wireless Bluetooth headphones, and were impressed by the clear sound reproduction.

The Full HD 1080p playback delivered sharp contours to the images we saw, though the scale of the 52-inch screen did expose some weakness in the colour reproduction.



Both the LG7000 and LG6100 series have 'intelligent sensors' for saving energy – this dims the picture when a dark room is detected. In our tests of the current LG6000 model, we found that the overall energy efficiency was less than impressive, so it'll be interesting to see how these sets compare.

VERDICT Our first look testers were impressed with LG's wireless additions.

Philips' caffeine fix

Philips showed off its Senseo Latte Select at the exhibition – an update to its bestselling Senseo coffee machines.

The Select automatically adds fresh milk to cappuccinos or lattes using a new, integrated removable milk container, so there's no steaming to do yourself, and no UHT milk packages. You insert a Senseo pod for each cup you make, which is simple and fast.

Our testers said it made a very convincing latte. The Select creates a thick, velvety froth, and the real milk makes all the difference. It's available in the UK from September, priced £150.

VERDICT Could serve up the best home coffee system lattes yet.



Wireless for sound

Sennheiser showcased its new MX W1 wireless headphones at the show. Sennheiser says that the headphones use Kleer – a new wireless technology that, compared with Bluetooth, doesn't lose sound quality when it's transmitted.

Our initial tests found that they provided remarkable musical clarity even at 10 metres from the transmitter – though we found that sudden movement caused some audio disruption.

The transmitter can work with up to two sets of headphones at once, so two people can listen to the same music wirelessly at the same time.

VERDICT Sound great, but priced at £400 they're a costly option for headphones.



Showcase

First look products at IFA 2008

Olympus mju 1050 SW digital camera

£259.99

The mju 1050 SW from Olympus can withstand falls from up to 1.5 metres, and take photos at underwater depths of up to three metres – it's a camera designed to survive active family holidays. We liked its tap-based navigation technology that recognises finger taps on screen – it's good for times when you may be wearing gloves, such as on skiing trips. It's available now from high-street stores.



Fujitsu Siemens Amilo 6972 Netbook

£399

We got a world exclusive first look at this small, cheap laptop that weighs less than 1kg and features a webcam and Bluetooth connectivity. We liked the fact that you can change the casing colour with swappable shells, and even use a transparent cover with your own photos. It felt surprisingly weighty, though the keyboard was tactile in use, making typing a pleasure. It's available this month.



Samsung S2 and Q1 MP3 players

S2, £40; Q1, £80

Samsung launched a range of new MP3 players, including the pebble-shaped and glossy S2 (below) and the more conventional Q1 (right). We looked at the Q1, which is available with 4GB, 8GB and 16GB of storage. The 2.4-inch screen was responsive, allowing you to organise your music, view your photos and videos, and access the radio. The Q1 will cost around £80.



Creating a digital library is simple with this ebook reader

Sony's extremely well read

Sony's PRS-505 Reader has opened a new chapter for ebooks. This smart model is on sale exclusively at Waterstone's, priced £199.

Clad in a soft, leather-look case, the Sony PRS-505 Reader looks like a quality diary or notebook. Open it up, and you're greeted with a silver device with a 6-inch screen and a series of navigation buttons.

The screen aims to replicate the look of a printed page and largely succeeds. It can be viewed in bright sunlight and at acute angles with no loss of clarity. Text is sharp and contrasts strongly against a faint grey background.

The Sony PRS-505 Reader is a lot smaller than the iRex iLiad, which we looked at in August (p11). It's 260g without its cover – and less than 8mm thick. Overall dimensions are equivalent to a paperback.



The setup is straightforward, thanks to clear instructions, and the software is easy to use. Once it's installed, you add ebooks to a library on your computer, and sync them to the Reader using a USB connector.

Out of the box, the Sony PRS-505 Reader includes 192MB of storage – enough for around 160 novels. We couldn't test Sony's battery life claims, but the company says it will last for around 6,800 page turns between charges –

enough to read a dense novel around five times.

The device can also handle photos and audio files in MP3 and AAC format. The display can only show eight levels of grey, so photos won't appear in colour, but we could listen to MP3 music files and read an ebook at the same time.

The Reader supports the ePub and PDF ebook formats. The only niggle is that to buy, download and read rights-protected ebooks in PDF format, you need a second piece of software – Adobe Digital Editions. The software itself is easy to use, but the need for two different applications could lead to some confusion.

VERDICT The Sony PRS-505's excellent screen and ease of use overcome any doubts we had about the desirability of digital book readers.

Internet radio in full flow

Digital radio maker Pure has unveiled its first entry into the emerging internet radio market – the £149.99 Evoke Flow. It combines traditional FM radio, DAB digital radio and Wi-Fi technology to stream internet radio and podcasts. Our first impressions are encouraging.

Clad in a piano-black case, the radio is a more squat version of Pure's popular One DAB radio, though significantly heavier. Power it up, and the bright display guides you through the setup process. If it's in range of a wireless network, you enter the



network password using the select-and-choose dial. We found this difficult, as password characters are entered by rotating a dial until the correct letter is highlighted.

Once logged on, the radio will use the network to access Pure's internet radio portal, which it calls 'the lounge'. From here, you can select from a mixture of podcasts, radio stations from around the world, listen-again services from some broadcasters, and ambient 'Pure Sounds', including birdsong and seascapes. We could access a little over 1,500 internet stations and a similar number of podcasts.

Radio quality over DAB and FM lived up to Pure's standards, and the internet radio was good. Audio performance overall was solid for everyday listening, though our expert listening panel has yet to review it.

If you don't have a wireless network, the Evoke Flow is limited to standard FM and DAB digital radio broadcasts.

VERDICT Good-quality audio from DAB, FM and internet radio, and no PC required, but initial setup was trickier than a standard radio.

Honda hits high note with Jazz

Honda's new Jazz has grown up into mini-MPV territory, with even more interior space. It's out in January, but there is no pricing information yet.

Honda hopes the Jazz will appeal to those who are downsizing their car to reduce running costs. The improved petrol engines are particularly suitable for lower-mileage drivers who don't want to pay extra for diesel. The larger 1.4 98bhp unit claims an average of 53.3mpg, or 54.3mpg with i-Shift semi-automatic transmission.

We liked the angled window pillars, designed to maximise side visibility – a concern for an



increasing number of drivers. The car we drove had a panoramic roof as standard. It makes the cabin feel incredibly airy and light. The boot has grown to nearly 400 litres, and the rear seats retain their clever 'double-fold' function while a folding boot shelf improves flexibility.

Safety has been improved, although there are no Euro NCAP results yet. Front, side and curtain airbags are standard. The ride is improved, and it's quieter, making the car feel more refined. Prices range from £9,990 to £13,590.

VERDICT A friendly car to drive – it will be a hit with novice and experienced drivers alike.

Grape expectations

The Arniston Bay wine pouch contains a familiar wine in all-new packaging – a robust foil-lined bag.

Available in chenin blanc chardonnay and pinotage rosé, a pouch holds 1.5 litres – the equivalent of two 75cl bottles. At £9.79, this represents a 59p saving over two bottles of Arniston Bay, which generally cost £5.19 each.

The pouches are lighter than the equivalent wine in glass bottles, making them easier and lighter to transport from Arniston Bay's South African vineyards. This, according to the makers, contributes to an 80% smaller carbon footprint than the same wine in glass bottles – although it may not represent

such a large saving when compared with wine produced closer to home.

The pouch is ideal for when you're on the go. It has a useful handle and there's less chance of breakage, especially as it doesn't roll when transported in a car or if stored on its side.

A tap is provided for serving and this works well, providing a strong flow with no drips.

However, our testers felt that, with a choice of just two wines, the pouch wouldn't cater for lots of different palettes or occasions.

Flattened pouches can't be recycled but take up 90% less space in landfill sites than glass bottles. However, if you regularly recycle glass (in 2007 the UK recycled



around 57% of all glass containers) the pouch could be more wasteful.

VERDICT Good value, robust design, easy to carry around, and ideal for outdoor events. But, it is available only in two varieties.

Google's chrome effect

Search engine Google has launched an early 'beta' version of its first web browser: 'Chrome'. The browser is free to download for testing and aims to reinvent surfing the net.

We like the minimal interface that cuts down on the clutter found on some browser interfaces and the ability to save web applications to your PC. However, it doesn't work with all web applications and it's a little unstable at present. Download it from www.google.com/chrome.



CREDIT CRUNCH COMPARISON

Two new first look products go head to head



£69.99

Pure One Elite

The Pure One Elite stereo DAB and FM portable radio enables you to pause and rewind live DAB radio, view, pause and store scrolling text from the stations, and turns into a speaker system for MP3 players. Pure has performed consistently well in our digital radio tests.

VS



£34.97

Technika DAB 108P

For half the price of the Pure One Elite you can get Tesco's new portable DAB and FM radio player. It's quite basic, but it's amazingly small and automatically scans the airwaves to find available stations – and that may be all you really need from a DAB radio.

Just out

What's Cooking: Jamie Oliver

£29.99

Let Jamie Oliver help you get creative in your kitchen with his new Nintendo DS Game – What's Cooking: Jamie Oliver. The voice-activated guide features more than 100 recipes, an interactive shopping list and cooking games. It's widely available.



Panasonic ES8249 Pro-Curve Shaver

£229

Panasonic's new Pro-Curve shaver (ES8249) claims to have the world's sharpest electric razor blades – angled at 30 degrees to give the closest shave – and the most flexible pivoting head. It also has wet and dry shaving capabilities, an automatic cleaning system and LCD display. It's available now from Amazon, John Lewis and www.shavers.co.uk.



Philips Tresemmé SalonStraight Glide hair straighteners

£50

These Philips Tresemmé SalonStraight Glide hair straighteners heat up quickly and create loose curls or a sleek finish with just one or two passes over a section of hair. The temperature is adjustable, but higher settings produce a better finish. Available from Argos.



Ariel Gel

Ariel is no stranger to our Best Buys when it comes to laundry detergents. Not content with its powders, liquids and liquitabs, Ariel has introduced a new format, a gel, available now. We'll be pitting it against a range of liquid and powder detergents and reporting on how it fared in our January issue.

