

## **CES ... It's a Show, It's Biz, Live with It**



**Open the Gates** – *With more than 13 football fields of show space, CES attendees have to crowd in opening day and walk themselves ragged in hopes of not just seeing all the show but seeing what will win/fail big in the coming year.*

While a few folks have said CES is on its last leg, we wonder if they were at the same show we were this month.

More than 3,100 exhibitors squeezed into a mere 1.861 million net square feet (13+ football fields) of exhibit space and the show drew more than 153,000 attendees.

There was the urban sprawl of the big boys trying to out-glitz each other (even as they experienced record losses or marginal profits).

Microsoft announced that this was their last keynote, last time of exhibiting; and folks immediately said, *“See the show is losing its relevance in a real-time world.”*

These same folks probably said Ballmer couldn't get out of his own way.

Suddenly he's brilliant?

Folks pointed out that really big things in the past have gone on to bomb, die.

You know Palm/WebOS, netbooks, 3D TV, etc.

O.K.:

- Palm/WebOS – It was a year+ between announcement/delivery and nothing changed even though everyone else looked at what they did and leapfrogged them! Of course, Leo didn't help.
- Netbooks – Cheap, weak knock-offs of the Mac Air (that's about it). We liked the idea, but you couldn't do squat with 'em! Google didn't help 'em either.
- 3D TV – Hey we were blinded by them; but once you got past watching a few movies and maybe some football, there was nothing to watch. If content isn't there, why sit in front of the set with glasses on?

This year, we'll probably be caught up in the hype (again) and miss some of the winners, but whose fault is that?

Yeah!

### **Ballmer's Farewell**

There was a lot of noise about this being this being Microsoft's/Ballmer's last showing and probably more folks attended his keynote than normal.

We quickly read one headline that we thought said "**Ballmer Bonzo keynote.**" Read it a second time and it said "**Ballmer's Gonzo Keynote.**" Guess we read too much into it.



**Bear Hug** – *With some stroke of genius, Microsoft changes the form of Ballmer's farewell keynote. This year, Ryan Seacrest jumped into his waiting arms before conducting a Mutt, Jeff "interview" with Steve and it worked...well.*

He did a pretty good job with his scripted interview and probably enjoyed it a whole lot more than his past appearances with teleprompter pitch and cameo guests.

But the last time at CES? Don't count on it.

Bet he'll be at 2013 with a big suite and entourage of 3-400 people supporting partners on the floor.

And, they'll subsidize a whole new generation of computers, tablets, phones, cars, refrigerators, houses and more.

Remember, he has to make the Windows smartphone a rocking success and will need to hype tablet/computer cloud/Win 8 solutions.

He'll have his hands full at CES 2013!

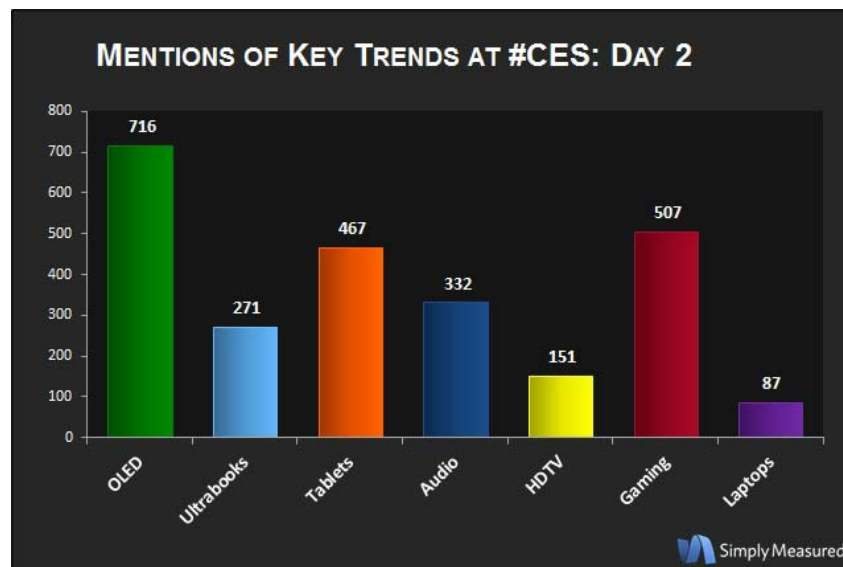
Folks who said CES is in its final stages noted Apple didn't participate.

They should have walked the floor:

- Half a gazillion iPhone cases
- Quarter of a gazillion iPad cases
- Cars with iPhone/iPad support
- Boatloads of tablets, all claiming serious iPad contention
- Truckloads of ultrabooks that even Intel's Pat Gelsinger said were Air "enhancements"

And, they had a couple of hundred people at the show checking stuff out, making certain the company message got thru.

No CES presence?



**All About Noise** – *The blogs, Facebook posts, Tweets were a good way to take the pulse of interest at CES this year with TVs, tablets, ultrabooks and gaming apps gaining top ratings.*  
**Source – SimplyMeasured**

Most folks poured their attention on the usual stuff – TV, tablets, computers and other things.

That other was a lot more important this year:

- Technology in every inch of concept and soon to be released cars that made your eyes and mouth water
- Home automation products, ideas, systems that could be standard in every new home of tomorrow
- Every major mobile carrier and device supplier was there hyping their networks, speed, performance, quality, ideas
- Apps of every shape, kind, purpose including excellent healthcare and fitness apps as well as a lot of great business, consumer, just fun apps

## Big Pictures



**Breathtaking** – LG’s giant OLED screens featured finely crafted video art that wooed even the biggest television cynic. They weren’t alone, as every big set player tried to out glitz the guy next door with more color, more action, more noise, more everything.

Again, big eye-popping TV sets grabbed lots of attention; and the biggest news was LG’s OLED (organic light-emitting diode) 55-in set.

Great looking, but at about \$8K +/- it better look good!

Of course the return of Apex with their low-cost LED screens looked “good enough” and left a lot of change in the bank account.

You had to admire the brave front, show sprawl the TV folks put on at the show after coming off a couple of bad years.

It was still about clearer, sharper images, whispers of 3D, better/smarter TV – you know, watch anything from anywhere, anytime.

They slid over the fact that to make it really smart you needed to plug in something like Roku’s little \$50 USB dongle. Roku has done what the OS folks promised ... hammered out agreements with all the content producers/offers to make it easy to find the entertainment, news.

Like Apple and Amazon, it’s all about the library, relationships.

Something the pay-per-click guys just don’t get with their Google TV.

## **Tablet Tableau**



**Tons of Tablets** – Toshiba had a pretty good looking tablet, but they were far from alone in the new units they introduced at CES. Lots of promises, but there are always the questions: which ones will ship, which ones will last?

If you were even close to showing – or thinking about – a tablet, it was there at CES.

While IDC pointed out the iPad has the \$499 and up category and Amazon has the \$150 and below space, it didn’t stop folks from hoping.

The Google whatever's will have to try to convince folks their ice cream device is best in the \$150 - \$400 price category, and the content garden will suddenly grow.

The problem is, their clouds only have more clouds...gotta' work on that!

Google gives their OS to anyone.

The majors – Asus, Acer, Toshiba, Lenovo, Dell, HP – have to really work at differentiating themselves from the white boxers.

It's probably why so many are pushing Ballmer to give them something to fight with.

## Ultrabooks



**Magic Acts** – *Intel's Mooly Eden did a great job following Gelsinger with a fast-paced set of ultrabook demos--and most of them worked. He also gave the audience a peek at what we can expect with the new light, sleek systems including touchscreens, voice recognition and even better battery life. Guess we'll still be carrying three mobile devices for a few more years.*

Intel and its partners brought out a wide array of really sleek-looking ultrabooks.

We're looking forward to getting our hands on one to use for real work along with our iPad for email.

The units were outstanding:

- High performance quad-core CPUs
- Cool running
- Good set of USB connectors, some with HDMI
- Fast
- Pretty rugged
- Decent battery life

The high-speed processor plus semiconductor SSD (solid state drives) are changing the face of computing. They're a little pricey right now; but by mid-year, they should be in the \$700 - \$800 range.

Bump battery life to six-eight hours, add external HD (personal cloud) and viola!!! dynamite machines.

## Layers Lower

Folks like to focus attention on the big players, but CES is a whole lot more.

There were probably 3,080 booths spread across the acres of thinly covered concrete. Sure, there was some hopeless garbage, but there was also some really cool stuff you wouldn't notice until you hit the outer halls.

Everything was at CES – O.K., nearly everything.

Over in the North Hall Other World Computing (OWC) was wowing folks with their UL-Listed AC/USB outlet.

They also had families of swap-out SSDs that could give almost any Mac or PC – desktop or notebook – a new performance lease on life .

They weren't alone.

The dark recesses, corners of the outer halls hid products, ideas that could change things for individuals and businesses.

All they need is visibility.

## Celebrity Bing



**Eye Candy** – CES has always attracted big names that don't just perform but also use their minds to develop/invest in products, services, companies. This year, you could bump into/squeeze by Justin Timberlake, Justin Bieber, LL Cool J, Will Fox, Ludacris, Xzbit, Will.i.am, 50 Cents and lots of folks we didn't know.

CES is show biz; and this year was no exception.

A lot of the celebs weren't there as window dressing, but actually had a profit interest in helping promote and sell their earphones, robots, apps, games, ideas.

Some are more than eye candy and are active investors, active board members in the companies they represented.

That's going to continue because the companies and products at CES are going mainstream.

### **Higher Plane**

While it wasn't on the show floor, one of the activities we feel deserves more credit is the push Gary Shapiro's team is doing to recognize women in the industry.

Okay, it won't change the business climate. But the association's efforts to encourage more females to become involved in the industry, rise in the ranks, mentor others is one of the reasons it will continue to grow and prosper.

Sure, we're not happy CES makes us miss the December holidays.

Heck, we even get in a couple of days early to attend an associated show -- Storage Visions -- which focuses on how, where we're going to store all the stuff we produce, stream, enjoy, work with.

How else would you know one year ended, a new one began?



**No Meal Here** – *Folks who talk about CES fading in relevance are either just jealous of/ worried about the show's success or don't like hitting Vegas in January. It's not too big to fail but the constantly changing set of educational/technical/business sessions and a stream of new aspirants and now products just keep feeding the market's thirst for more. If they could fix communications, we could actually stay in touch with the outside world.*

Anyone who says that the fact that Microsoft and Apple are no longer displaying and keynoting at CES is a sure fact the show is doomed isn't seeing the industry evolve.

CES gutted Macworld, PMA rolled in to stay relevant, phone/mobile folks are there in spades.

Business and government officials attend because it just feels too important to miss.

Vegas isn't our favorite town (and with everyone in town phone/computer service sucks) but when CES is there what happens in Vegas doesn't stay in Vegas.

People talk. People buy.

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