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1. VIDEO WALLS ON THE RISE

Samsung, Sony and others are hitting the market with scalable microLED video walls. I say scalable in terms of size. They are comprised of modular tiles that can be snapped together to turn an entire wall into video.

The Samsung product, called 'The Wall', has a fine enough dot pitch to allow close viewing while filling our peripheral vision with a scale few have experienced. Filling peripheral vision tricks the brain into thinking it is seeing reality. This is one reason these microLED exhibits are packed with gawkers at the trade shows. It's pure fun. Remember fun?

Issues: they are ridiculously expensive, eat lots of power, generate gobs of heat and totally eliminate any hope for behind-the-screen loudspeakers. Which leads me to point 2.



2. DSP AUDIO IMMERSION AND FAKERY.

Let's just call it 'fake audio'. I know Harman (owned by Samsung) is just one of several audio manufacturers that are working diligently on fake audio in response to the giant video walls that will inevitably find their way into high-performance private cinemas.

Samsung, in partnership with JBL, has already achieved a sense of dialogue coming from characters on the screen by reflecting sound from edge-mounted specialised horn loudspeakers.

The next step will be to steer sound around the room using digital signal processing (DSP) in concert with large speaker arrays. Wave field synthesis is a technique for creating virtual acoustic environment using artificial wavefronts from arrays of individually driven loudspeakers. Sony started showing these at ISE in Amsterdam and at CES. It's cool, and it takes many dozens of tiny speakers working together to project specific sounds in space.

Harman is working on sound steering as well. The result might be believable, but I doubt it will ever match what we can do with acoustically transparent screens with proper loudspeakers placed correctly behind them. New audio steering technologies will guide



us out of the audio quagmire created by microLED walls for a new breed of customer who wants a 'video first' cinema experience. That's new. We've always been 'audio first'.

RIGHT NOW, VOICE CONTROL IS NOT WORKING VERY WELL. FORCED VOCABULARIES AND UNNATURAL SYNTAX ARE NOT WHAT CONSUMERS WANT. THEY WANT VOICE ASSISTANTS TO SIMPLY UNDERSTAND THEIR INTENT.



3. VOICE CROSSES THE VALLEY OF DISILLUSIONMENT

Right now, voice control is not working very well. Forced vocabularies and unnatural syntax are not what consumers want. They want voice assistants to simply understand their intent. Do what I mean, not what I say!

This chasm will be crossed (sorry about the cliché metaphors, but that’s the drive I hear at conferences all too often) when voice assistants have more than sound as input for data crunching. They want context, and context they shall have. Google, Facebook and Amazon all have voice interfaces with cameras. Those cameras are for watching you, your body language, facial expressions, body heat, pupil dilation with the goal of understanding your emotional state, and therefore the context of your voice interactions.

Watch how Samsung’s Bixby evolves now that they have acquired Adam Cheyer’s (Siri founder) company, Viv. Ecosystems will evolve and co-mingle with more flexible application programming interfaces (APIs) thus allowing one assistant to follow us through the day, regardless of which voice system we might be using at the time.

These assistants will become the GPS of our lives, our guardian angels.

4. BK FOR REAL

Sorry, more video.

Samsung’s 8K TV will be a winner. It’s large enough to enjoy a cinema experience yet tight enough to read the fine print of a newspaper at scale. That’s what I call the 30” to 30’ view. You can do both with an 8K display.

This will radically transform how we work. I want an 85” 8K display at my desk so I can spread the newspaper out like I would at the dining room table. Designers and engineers will love this.

5. 5G IS HERE

Cellular data with 5G coverage, data rates and low latency will usher in a new paradigm of networking. We might see less need for the local area network (LAN) when cameras, door locks, thermostats, TVs, speakers, etc. reach the internet via wireless data coming from a pole on the street. 5G, of course, enables autonomous driving and all manner of driverless delivery vehicles. This one will probably take closer to two years for broad adoption. The key driver will be 5G chipsets in mobile devices.

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