



▲ Panasonic AG-3DA1 integrated HD 3D camera

Earlier this year the consumer division of Panasonic UK invited customers, staff and media, plus a selection of key business partners, to attend the annual Panasonic Convention. The event took place in Munich, and saw a large number of visitors passing through the doors of the Olympic Park venue, otherwise known in Germany as 'Olympiapark'. Visitors were able to view all the latest Panasonic consumer technology ranging from GPS enabled digital stills cameras, designer flat panel TVs and advanced camcorders to innovative white goods. But one thing in particular was causing a stir in and around the event – 3D TV.

Visitors flocked to see the Blu-ray Disc demonstration images shown on the first commercially available Panasonic consumer 3D television sets debuted at the event and could also enjoy demonstrations of a 3D cinema using the professional division's full high definition 103" plasma displays through glasses with an active shutter lens system (see image on page 7).

Meanwhile, the broadcasters were on the lookout for signs of a truly integrated solution incorporating the complete chain from 3D broadcast acquisition equipment right through to the TV sets on which audiences will view early 3D broadcasts.

It was clear at the convention that 3D had become a major drive

for Panasonic and visitors were encouraged to attend a keynote speech from Bill Foster, a consumer electronics industry analyst, who forecast a very positive future for the 3D format, for industry acceptance and for consumer technology innovations surrounding 3D.

3D in, 3D out

Along with a bold announcement that 3D TV sets would be available for purchase later this year, Panasonic also announced in January at CES, the world's largest consumer electronics show, a professional integrated 3D broadcast camera solution.

This full HD integrated camera was on show at the convention. It boasts several potential benefits over traditional, non-integrated, larger set-ups. Most 3D rigs require two cameras to be fitted either in parallel or with one mounted horizontally and the other vertically utilising a mirror (see page 12 for a fuller explanation). In these large-scale set-ups, two separate recorders are normally required, whereas in Panasonic's new HD 3D camcorder, the lenses, camera head and a dual memory card recorder are all integrated into a single, lightweight body. The camcorder also incorporates stereoscopic adjustment controls making it easy to operate.

A new dimension for Panasonic

As we have seen elsewhere in the magazine, this year has seen a remarkable momentum building around the advent of mainstream 3D TV. In line with this trend, GTC sponsors Panasonic have been actively involved in advancing 3D technology, emphasising the need for a fully integrated chain that encompasses everything from broadcast acquisition equipment right through to the TV sets in people's homes.

3D training

Panasonic UK then announced the opening of its new training facility, located at Pinewood Studios and dubbed the Panasonic Broadcast Experience Centre. As well as showcasing P2, this enabled demonstrations of the 3D broadcast camera to customers, partners or UK press wishing to attend the site. The first demonstration was visually impressive with live 3D content displayed on the new BT-3DL2550 3D production monitor via an AG-HMX100 multi-format HDSB digital AV mixer.

Interestingly, the 25.5" wide colour gamut BT-3DL2550 3D monitor, by its very feature set, seemed to address directly some of the broadcast

industry's biggest needs and concerns. It doesn't give full HD plus resolution at 1920 x 1200 or a durable Panasonic Toughbook-like LCD panel, but the Xpol® polarising filter means that results are instantly available to any viewer using simpler, lower-cost passive polarising 3D eyeglasses. In terms of instant reviewing for anyone needing to see footage while maintaining workflow speeds at reduced cost, this simpler passive industrial solution seems as if it may be a good option for studio and production environments.

End-to-end 3D

Earlier in the year, despite all the signs that the company was well on its way to becoming committed to 3D, there

was still an element of scepticism around. 3D TV was viewed by many as a bit fanciful and a long way from becoming a broadcasting reality. So what would Panasonic's next step towards demonstrating its 3D end-to-end capability be? Enter the action sport of tennis.

The broadcast division AVSE (AV Systems Europe) announced details of plans to transmit the 2010 French Open Tennis from Roland Garros live in high-quality 3D through an existing partnership with the Fédération Française de Tennis (FFT).

One of the most prestigious events in the sporting calendar, the French Open is the tennis grand slam with the widest European television audience. For the first time, people across the UK and Ireland would be able to experience the tournament live in 3D at retailers, recreating through the screen the immersive experience of being courtside.

The programme was produced by France Télévision for Orange Sport and distributed by GlobeCast to retailers. Panasonic supplied a total of five

integrated 3D cameras. Two were used for live on-court acquisition and two for player interviews after matches. A fifth was used in tests, including an experimental cable cam system. In addition, Panasonic supplied Eurosport with two integrated 3D cameras for use in its own tests at the event.

The 3D footage from the event was delivered to content management and delivery company, GlobeCast, and the 3D coverage was broadcast live via satellite to Panasonic VT20 full HD 3D TVs in participating retail stores. The signal was uplinked by Eurosport from the stadium to the Astra 1M satellite where it was then downlinked by GlobeCast for delivery to stores via the Eurobird 1.

The visual results were very exciting with high-speed tennis balls screaming out of the Viera TV screens towards captivated audiences sporting their Panasonic active shutter specs. This really was the first stage of Panasonic showing off its end-to-end full HD 3D capability; it did much to refute the idea that 3D broadcast reality is still some way off.



▲ Filming the tennis with the AG-3DA1 3D camera



▲ Audience watching 3D live broadcast of French Open tennis

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▲ 3D glasses used to view tennis from Roland Garros