

TECHNOLOGY: TECH CONVENTIONS

News to use: Annual unveiling of e-gadgets gets the faithful salivating

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Last week, those who love gizmos and gadgets were in heaven. More than 140,000 people descended on Las Vegas for the International Consumer Electronics Show. Consumer electronics sales reached \$145 billion in 2006 and are projected to exceed \$155 billion this year, according to the Consumer Electronics Association, which produced the show.

Here are some of the highlights:

Apple Computer CEO Steve Jobs announced at MacWorld the iPod maker's long-awaited leap into the mobile phone business and renamed the company to just "Apple Inc.," reflecting its increased focus on consumer electronics.

The iPhone, which will start at \$499 when it launches in June, is controlled by touch, plays music, surfs the Internet and runs the Macintosh computer operating system.

Live TV via phone: Crown Castle International Corp. has launched a trial of Modeo, a live television broadcast for cell phones, in New York City after three years of development.

The trial, expected to continue through the first quarter, features six live video channels including Fox News and Discovery Channel, as well as eight audio channels.

Size matters: Sharp Electronics Corp. took the crown for introducing the world's largest flat-screen television - a behemoth 108-inch liquid-crystal display that most people probably couldn't fit through their front door.

Cable TV gets TiVo: Comcast Corp. and TiVo Inc. took the lid off of long-awaited fruits of an agreement to work together on a cable box that runs TiVo's digital-video-recorder software.

Voice into text: A New York start-up company, SimulScribe Inc., has unveiled a new service for Blackberry and Treo users: a software-based program that transcribes voice mail messages and converts it into text and sends you your message by e-mail within a minute of receiving it.

Personal stunner: Taser International Inc. rolled out a new version of its stun gun intended for civilian use, calling the devices "the next generation in personal protection."

- *The Associated Press*

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