

CES Preview Promises Glitz, Games and Gear

By Alexander Gelfand [✉](#) 11.14.07 | 6:00 PM




 Coming to CES: The Dreamflyer, a \$2,800 cockpit that turns the on-screen movement of your flight simulator into actual, vomit-inducing motion.

Photo: Alexander Gelfand

A remote-controlled robotic gutter cleaner. A GPS cellphone with built-in-remote car starter and keyless entry capability. A gimbal-mounted cockpit simulator, complete with joystick and foot pedals, that lets you feel every degree of pitch and yaw served up by your flight-simulator software.

Not to mention Jerry Seinfeld, Mary J. Blige and the president of Rwanda.

These are just a few of the attractions that will be on display at the [2008 International Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas from Jan. 7 to 10. The attractions were announced formally at a preview event in New York on Tuesday.

Given manufacturers' secrecy about upcoming products, not even the Consumer Electronic Association's own in-house trend forecasters were entirely sure which new items will be appearing at the trade show proper.

But that didn't stop them from offering a handful of general predictions for 2008, most of which hardly seemed to require a crystal ball.

Among their Nostradamus-like prognostications: Consumer electronics will continue to get smaller, faster and cheaper; teenagers will continue to buy MP3 players and videogame consoles; and cellphones will continue to sell like hotcakes, especially in emerging markets like China and India.

CEA analysts also ventured that holiday spending on consumer electronics would surge by seven percent over last year, a claim that seemed positively Pollyannaish in light of recent economic data showing a slow start to the holiday season.

Yet those same analysts also offered some interesting data of their own. According to the CEA, 47 percent of consumers want to be able to watch digital video files on their television, and 29 percent want to access the internet through their TV.

Those figures help explain why the 2008 CES will focus so heavily on digital video.

The conference will feature a seminar dedicated entirely to the upcoming transition from analog to digital TV, along with a host of digital-to-analog conversion devices.

And both NBC Universal and Sony Pictures Television will showcase their digital offerings at flashy "content displays" featuring live performances from Seinfeld and Tony Bennett. (Blige, meanwhile, will perform at a concert hosted by Monster Cable, whose CEO, Noel Lee, made the announcement from atop a Segway.)

The 2008 CES will also give the association an opportunity to jump on the sustainability bandwagon.

As part of its "Greening CES" initiative, the association has committed to using recycled materials whenever possible. And it has written what CEA president Gary Shapiro calls a "six-figure check" to Carbonfund.org to make the 2008 CES -- which will spread 2,700 exhibitors and 140,000 attendees over 1,850,000 square feet of space -- the world's "largest carbon-neutral event."

It's hard to see how that will jibe with the presence of the BMW Sauber F1 Team Pit Lane Park. The replica pit lane will feature gas-guzzling demonstration rides along a 90-meter track, plus displays of the latest in-vehicle technology.

Or maybe it isn't. Despite the high-minded nods to environmentalism and economic development -- Rwandan President Paul Kagame will be appearing alongside One Laptop per Child founder

Nicholas Negroponte at a seminar on technological advancement in emerging markets -- CES is really about glitz and gear.

Let the games begin.