

Samsung unveils voice- and motion-controlled TV

Written by

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Forget that old-school remote. Samsung's new TVs are controlled by voice, gestures and facial recognition.

Samsung unveiled array of new products Monday at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, and the coolest of the pack were the first announced: new additions and updates to Samsung's Smart TV line, which launched in 2008.

B.K. Yoon, president of Samsung's consumer electronics division, kicked off the keynote address by saying the future of television is a product that will "listen, see and do what you want, without ever touching the remote control."

First up: the flagship ES8000 LED TV. Thanks to a dual-core processor, this TV lets users multitask between regular TV, a Web browser and apps like Netflix (NFLX) -- all at the same time, without being forced to close down a program.

But the cool part is the controls. First, the TV's built-in cameras use face recognition to automatically sign users into their personal profiles. Then, users can issue voice commands like "channel 34" or "guide" to control the TV. They can also use gesture controls for Web browsing, adjusting the volume and more.

Overall, the experience looks like what would happen if Apple's (AAPL, Fortune 500) Siri voice assistant and Microsoft's (MSFT, Fortune 500) Kinect motion-sensor system had a baby TV.

Content is accessed through the Smart TV Hub. That menu includes other features like "Family Story" -- which can upload photos and videos from a mobile device to the TV -- and special hubs for fitness content and for kids.

The ES8000, along with most of the other devices Samsung announced Monday, didn't get a release date beyond "sometime this year."

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On Sunday, the company unveiled a device called the InTouch, which converts regular TVs into smart TVs. The \$199 converter is a low-cost option for customers to add Internet browsing, Skype voice calling and a keyboard remote, without having to buy a new TV.

Samsung's Monday keynote also included more on the TV and Internet-connected fronts: a 55-inch Super OLED TV, as well as connected washer/dryer and connected camera line.

In addition, two Samsung devices will soon make their 4G network debuts: the Galaxy Note phone, and the Galaxy Tab 7.7 tablet.

Samsung closed the keynote with two computer announcements. The new Series 9 Notebook is "the thinnest premium notebook on the market," the company says, at just a half-inch thick and 2.2 pounds. It boots up in just under 10 seconds.

Like many of the CES exhibitors, Samsung also unveiled a super-thin ultrabook: the Series 5 Ultra. Samsung says Web browsing on the laptop is twice as fast as on last-generation notebooks.

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