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i-stage

CES electronics will stop your heart?

PHOENIX--Guard your pacemaker! The afternoon presentations at i-stage got the heart rate up quiet literally. Okay, only one of them did but it is a doozy.

At CES this year, I will definitely be on the lookout for the KOR-FX. It looks a little like a cross between a vest and headphones for your pecs. It is two plastic pieces that sit on your chest and amplify audio signals into what the company calls accusto-haptic technology. You plug it into a standard audio-out jack and it sends audio signals into your body. It will work with any gadget like an iPod or laptop but it is made for PC gamers, although the imagination runs wild at what will happen when the adult industry gets their hands on it. Also, soccer moms will hate it, particularly the ones that think their kids need to be more immersed in their games like they need a hole in the head.

No pricing was given but Shahriar Afshar, president and CEO of IMMERZ Inc., says that it will be approximately the price of high-end headphones, which is around $300.

Another few devices with promise have to do with monitoring home power usage. First off, the PICOwatt. It is a device that plugs into any home appliances and sends data about that device to the Web using your home Wi-Fi network. You can monitor the power consumption of that appliance, as well as turn it on or off from the Web site. You can also send information about those metrics to your social networks, although I'm not sure why my Twitter followers care about how much power my blow dryer is using.

The PICOwatt will cost $79.99 and launch on April 22, 2010, which not coincidentally is Earth Day.

Alternatively, the Modlet from a company called ThinkEco Inc. looks like an outlet but it plugs into your home outlets and monitors the devices that are plugged into it on the Web. The Web site is elegant and easily competes with Google PowerMeter and Microsoft Hohm. It allows you to label, monitor, and set schedules for any given device. There is also a social element that allows you to compare and compete with your friends to conserve energy, as well as provide tips and tricks for living more greenly. (Is that even a word?)

The final presentation was the CubicVue 3D filter, which is a liquid pixel display that makes any monitor a 3D monitor without the need of the kitschy glasses. The company, CubicVue LLC, hopes to license this to manufacturers to build into their displays. It works with content that is optimized for 3D and supposedly does not disrupt 2D content.

I won't disclose how I voted for these companies but I will disclose the winners:

First place: ReNu from Regen, a line of solar-powered chargers and gadgets. They win $40,000

i-stage, sponsored by the Consumer Electronics Association, is a good, old fashioned technology talent competition. Companies enter their best hardware, software or services in the hopes of becoming the star of this year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES).

Finalists in the i-stage contest include everything from a glove that controls your car doors to voice-controlled home entertainment systems. The winner will receive $50,000 and a free booth to show off their technology on the CES show floor.

This year's event, the first ever, will be hosted by CNET's own Molly Wood and the finalists will be judged by Kevin Kelly of *Wired Magazine* Ryan Block, formerly of *Engadget*, and "tech guru" Jeff Pulver.

CES 2009 Awards

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About CES

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) is