Tablets, TVs and Ultrabooks: CES Day Zero Wrap-Up

Posted by Janine E. Mooney, Editor

Breaking news from the Consumer Electronics Show waits for no one. Especially a group of reporters gathering their wits after an early morning flight to Sin City.

And as soon as we stepped off the plane, new gadgets were waiting for us. Big announcements in three major product areas -- tablets, ultrabooks and TV -- dropped two days before CES officially opens its doors, with offerings from major device manufacturers Acer and Lenovo.

Here’s a taste of what we saw on day zero.
Above: ***Acer Iconia Tab A700***

Acer’s Iconia line was one of the first series of Android-powered tablet competitors to arrive last January, sporting the latest top-of-the-line hardware at the time.

Consider the Iconia Tab A700 Acer’s version "two point oh!" It’s an improvement on its A500 predecessor in nearly every way, and powered by NVidia’s brand new Tegra 3 quad-core processor running at 1.3GHz. Even more importantly, it’s running Google’s tasty new Android version 4.0, better known as Ice Cream Sandwich.

These are the standout features, and we expect to see a lot more of the same specs from other vendors. Like dual-core chips were in 2011, quad-core for high-end Android devices will most likely become the norm

Lenovo IdeaTab S2

We've seen Lenovo take earnest stabs at tablets before, delivering decent (if not wholly uninspired) enterprise-targeted Android devices.

Surprise, surprise: The company is at it again. Lenovo's IdeaTab S2 takes off where the company left off with the K1, updating Android 3.0 to the new version of Android, Ice Cream Sandwich.

It's not, however, sporting a quad-core chip. Instead, the S2 runs on the dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon S4, a recent offering from Qualcomm and certainly no slouch.

Add the keyboard docking attachment to the S2, and Lenovo claims you'll juice up your tablet with an extra few hours of battery life. Not bad, if you want to turn it into a hybrid laptop. Though if you really want a relatively cheap, lightweight laptop, why not buy an ultrabook?

Lenovo K91

What's that, you say? Ice Cream Sandwich on a TV? Preposterous! Everyone knows Google TV runs an earlier version of Android, not Ice Cream Sandwich.

Well, Lenovo's K91 Smart TV isn't a Google TV. No, it's a smart TV powered by none other than Android 4.0.

The K91 will have access to the Android Market and Lenovo's own proprietary apps, but it isn't clear what sort of access it will have to TV optimized apps -- you know, the kind that show up on Google TV.

It will boast, however, a set of impressive specs. Powered by Qualcomm's 1.5GHz Snapdragon backed by 1GB of RAM, the TV will come in both 42-inch and 50-inch versions, the latter offering passive glasses 3D viewing. Not bad.

The storage gets a bit skimpy, though: 8GB local, with a 2GB SD for expansion. There's also a 5MP front-facing web camera for video chat, which we could take or leave.

Still, kudos to Lenovo for sticking Ice Cream Sandwich on a TV. We're not really sure why they did it, but they did it. Will anyone care outside of the hardcore Android fans?

We doubt it.

Acer Aspire S5

This 13.3-inch ultrabook is making waves based on what it doesn't have: heft. The S5, the successor to the S3 ultrabook unveiled this fall, measures merely 0.59 inches (15 mm) at its thickest point, garnering it the title of world's thinnest ultrabook. And it weighs only 2.97 lbs (so it's .01 lbs more than a 13-inch MacBook Air and .09 inches thinner, for those keeping score).

Somehow, Acer managed to cram in HDMI, USB 3.0 and Thunderbolt ports onto the back of that super slim frame, behind what it calls "MagicFlip I/O." When you press the MagicFlip button, a rear cover opens to reveal the ports, which are otherwise hidden from view. This will be the first time Thunderbolt has appeared on anything other than a Mac.

Inside, the S5 has an Intel processor, Ivy Bridge CPU and solid-state storage. Acer promises speedy boot and resume times of 1.5 seconds thanks to its so-called Green Instant On technology.

This slick "onyx black"-hued ultraportable will be available Q2 2012.

Lenovo IdeaPad U310 and U410

If you like a little color with your ultrabook, Lenovo has you covered with its new 13-inch IdeaPad U310 and 14-inch IdeaPad U410.

The U310 measures in at 0.7-inches thick and weighs 3.74 pounds. The larger U410 is 0.83-inches thick and clocks in at a positively obese -- for a true ultrabook -- 4.18 pounds. Both are available in a handful of “fun colors,” including Cherry Blossom, Ruby Red, Spearmint, Aqua Blue, Sapphire Blue and Graphite Gray. Sounds like someone took a page out of the Crayola color-naming handbook.

Both ultrabooks have a 1366x768 resolution display and, like pretty much all ultrabooks thus far, Intel Core processors. The U410 has Nvidia GeForce 610M graphics, though, while the U310 has GMA 3000 HD graphics. They can be configured with up to 64GB of SSD storage and 500GB of HDD storage.

You can get Lenovo’s IdeaPad U-series beginning in May, with pricing starting at a very palatable $699.

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