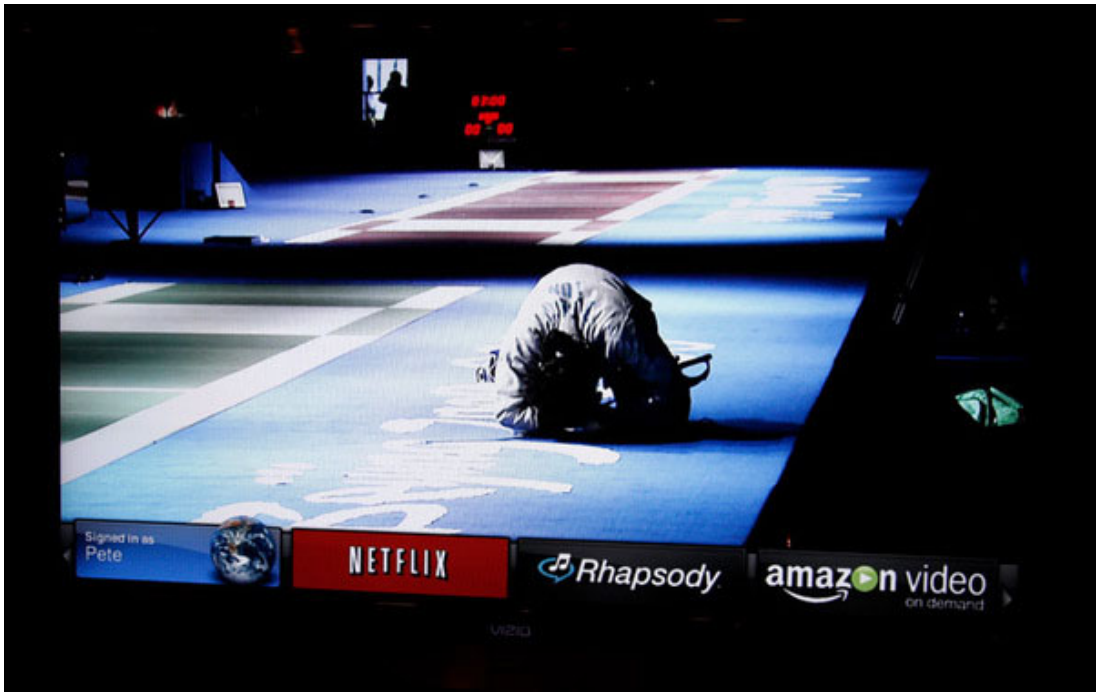
JOSE FERMOSO GEAR JAN 8, 2009 3:28 PM

Vizio's Wireless TV Connects to the Web Through New 'Widget Stream'

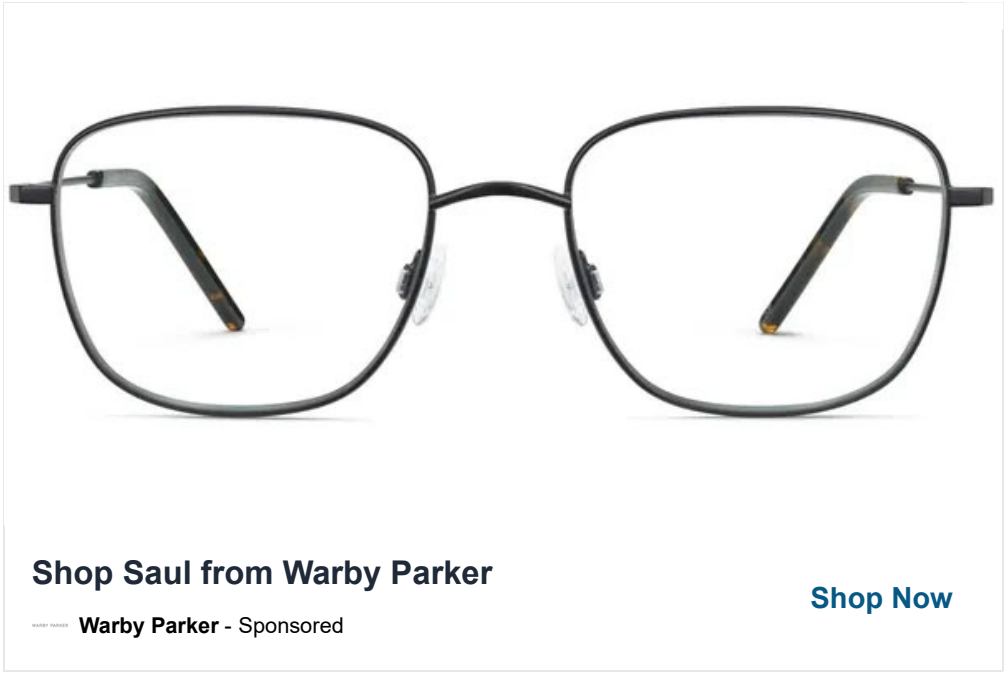
One of the main trends of CES 2009 is that manufactures are finally making good on their promise to fully integrate TVs with internet content. Vizio is surprisingly one of the biggest players, with a new 'Connected HDTV' platform announced this week that packs in 802.11n Wi-Fi and streams in media on an graphic layer [...]

SAVE

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One of the main trends of CES 2009 is that manufactures are finally making good on their promise to fully integrate TVs with internet content.



Vizio is surprisingly one of the biggest players, with a new 'Connected HDTV' platform announced this week that packs in 802.11n Wi-Fi and streams in media on an graphic layer on the screen. Some of the internet companies that have

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agreed to push their content onto the TV include net heavyweights like Yahoo!, Netflix, Amazon.com, MySpace, and Flickr.

The 'Connected' platform will be added to some of the best Vizio TV's announced at CES, including its sweet LED-backlighted $2,000 55-inch VF551XVT LCD.

As you can see in the pic below the streaming media option looks like a cooler, better organized, and more graphically intense version of the info banners used by cable news networks. Interestingly, those news banners will probably now be covered at the moment you choose your next net-based program. This could be a good thing.

The net platform is being developed in conjunction with Yahoo and Intel's new TV Widgets program, while Adobe's Flash Lite tech contributes its familiar graphical snappiness. Yahoo's software holds all the widgets, which means they get to interpret the application for the other net companies. But Yahoo says that using its own SDK, viewers will be able to adjust or create their own widgets out of their favorite programs, all from the TV.

Before you get too excited at the integrated-media beauty of it all, know that the widget will allow those companies to offer ads on the stream. We haven't seen the full implications of this live, but as long as the ads aren't intrusive or have an erroneous intent (Cialis, I'm talking to you), I wouldn't mind them at all for the added value service.

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The Vizio TV comes with a cool QWERTY slider remote to navigate net content but company reps promise that manipulating the UI of the stream will be simple. Yahoo and Intel found in their lead-up research that people wanted a big button to make the stream go away in a single step, and that's exactly what you can do with this remote.

Don't fret if you don't particularly like Vizio TVs but are into the new features. Toshiba and Samsung, among other TV makers, will also offer Yahoo Widgets in their sets by the end of the year.

With more and more of these options taking hold in TVs, it looks like the days of thinking of televisions as stupid Boob Tube passive devices are numbered.

Expect the Vizio Connected HDTV to be available this fall, at an undisclosed price.

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