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## A little of everything turns up at Demo showcase

By Edward Baig, USA Today

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — It's not how I'm typically fitted for Levis. I enter a see-through 8-foot-wide booth. For 10 seconds, I stand still as a rotating "wand" scans my fully clothed body. Through (supposedly safe) low-power radio waves, the contraption collects 200,000 data points it uses to calculate my body measurements. Soon, a printed receipt appears, with a code I can use to order custom-fit jeans online.

The system, called Intellifit, is unquestionably cool. And it may represent how some of us will shop in the not-too-distant future. The company is already working with such retailers as Lane Bryant, Levi Strauss, Macy's and David's Bridal.



Motorola's David Ulmer shows off the iRadio, Toy Hummer not included.

I'm at the Demo conference, an annual showcase for new technologies. Intellifit is just the kind of innovative product that makes Demo so much fun — and potentially life-altering. And it was hardly the only one.

An Australian outfit known as QRSciences does scanning of a different sort. The company demonstrated a system for detecting plastic explosives used in terrorist attacks. QRSciences hopes its technology piques the interest of government safety authorities.

Now in its 15th year, Demo has served as the launching pad for the Palm Pilot, Java and TiVo. This time, around 73 companies, mostly upstarts, were selected as demonstrators. Among the most interesting, MDA of Canada unveiled two breakthroughs: a three-dimensional "Ice Camera" used to determine when to de-ice a plane, and a 3D Instant Scene Modeler that can create three-dimensional images and serve such diverse purposes as mining, architecture, crime solving — and as background

for 3D video games.

OutBoxer from Audiotrieve can help businesses reduce their liability risk by scanning outgoing e-mail for inappropriate or confidential content. Audiotrieve showed how that would have been useful at Enron.

There were tools for business bloggers (produced by iUpload), ways to bring local classified ads to blogs (LiveDeal) and software for video bloggers (Serious Magic's Vlog It). A speedy drag-and-drop platform for updating blogs with pictures, audio, video and spreadsheets was shown, too (Five Across' Bubbler).

There was also software for bringing people together through instant messaging, blogs and shared photos (iMeem). And a Wi-Fi-assisted method of connecting strangers with common interests and backgrounds who happen to be near each other on, say, college campuses, airports, even planes (Jambo Networks).

Consumers or small-business owners who want to design a spiffy Web site will appreciate the QuickSites service shown by Homestead Technologies. Users can download pre-tailored sites by category (restaurants, real estate, etc.), then substitute their own content. Site designs will cost between \$49 and \$499; there's also a monthly hosting fee of about \$20.

British outfit Sonaptic demonstrated its 3D Audio Engine, a surround-sound system for mobile phone users who enjoy games and movies on handsets. With headphones, I watched a chase scene from a Batman movie on an NEC phone and felt I was in the middle of the action. The technology will be sold later this year.

Xfire showed off a free file-distribution system that's like TiVo for those who love to play games on the PC. You subscribe to channels (e.g., "first-person shooter games"). Once files are available, they're downloaded to the PC.

Other quick hits: Teleo unveiled a voice-over-Internet-protocol system that lets you use its cell phones, regulars phones or PCs to receive VoIP calls. Traverse Networks showed how calls could be routed to where you are and to the phone you're using, with any messages linked to a single voice-message box.

Convoq revealed a free Web conferencing system called ASAP Express. A person can initiate a video conferencing session by clicking on a link in a blog, e-mail, résumé or even on eBay.

iControl Networks is the latest company to jump into the home-monitoring field. Through the Web, you can peek in on relatives, nannies and pets. A basic iControl package will cost less than \$500 and should be available this summer. A monthly monitoring fee is likely to be less than \$10.

Lusora, another security company, is targeting elderly people living at home. Lusora's Pendant — it resembles an Apple iPod Shuffle — summons help when it detects the person wearing it has fallen. At \$300, including paging, the pendant seems pricey. But there's no monitoring fee.

Browster, from a startup of the same name, is a free plug-in for Internet Explorer. The company says it can cut search time in half. Normally, when you do a search, you get a list of links you click on to see if they're relevant. If they're not, you must click on the back button and try again. Browster lets you view a site in a preview pane by simply rolling the mouse over any link.

Other products that caught my eye:

- AutoXray's CodeScout. Car trouble? With CodeScout, you may quickly find the problem. This device plugs into a port near the steering wheel on all cars of model year 1996 or later. Codes (circuit malfunction, control valve, etc.) appear on a screen. Once the repairs are made, you can plug it in again to see if the job was done right. Cost: less than \$150.

- Digital Monkey's In the Chair. Ever dreamed of playing with a symphony? In the Chair, from this Australian company, lets you do just that — a flight simulator, of sorts, for musicians. With a mike plugged into a PC, you can play a clarinet or other instrument in

concert with an actual orchestra seen via video. (In the video window, you can see the conductor.)

The software provides feedback in real time; there are three levels of difficulty. In the Chair is free, but you'll pay about \$10 to download a piece of music. Digital Monkey says the program, expected to be available in the USA by year's end, can work even with live performances streamed over the Net.

- Motorola's iRadio. Add Motorola to the mix of companies crowding the digital music space. This service lets you play your own MP3s or hear selections from hundreds of commercial-free radio channels. You can listen in the car, at home or on your cell. Music will be stored on memory cards in the phone and will take advantage of Bluetooth wireless technology. You can add songs heard on the radio to a "wish list" and buy them later. The company will start iRadio trials this spring.

- Novint Technologies' Falcon. I felt the tension as I pulled the string on the bow and released the arrow. I was trying out Falcon, a device meant to bring the sense of touch to the PC. Falcon may look like a small satellite dish mounted on a stand. But the clever gizmo lets you feel what's going on in the computer screen. I felt it as I lifted and shot a basketball or got stuck in sand. Novint's technology is being used to simulate dental surgery and for other purposes. Falcon is to appear early in 2006 for less than \$100.

- PhotoLeap. You've taken a zillion digital images and want to share them with others. But your e-mail program limits the size of attachments. And uploading images to photo-sharing sites can be a pain. PhotoLeap lets you quickly send and receive hundreds of large digital photos in one message, without the constraints of regular e-mail. A basic version is free. A version that lets you send up to 250 pictures and 8 megapixels per photo in a single message costs \$29 a year; sending up to 16 megapixels per photo commands \$500 a year.

- VKB. It resembles a disposable lighter, but the Bluetooth wireless gadget projects a full-size laser virtual keyboard onto any flat surface. It's meant to appeal to folks who have trouble entering text and data into cell phones and personal digital assistants but don't want to schlep around portable keyboards. VKB makes no claims, though, of ergonomic appeal.