

**Toshiba** was another manufacturer betting on Android version 3.0, and while details were scant on the company's upcoming tablet, it is known that the Tegra 2-powered device will feature a 10-inch screen and swappable battery. Toshiba Adaptive Display technology will automatically adjust screen brightness and color settings depending on the user's environment.

### Variety Beats Two of a Kind

With the large number of CE manufacturers joining the tablet party, it may come as a surprise that the tablet arena isn't overwhelmed with various me-too products. The fact that variety is abundant on the tablet scene is a testament to the hard work and vision of the minds behind the development of these devices. Consumers interested in a tablet now have a wide array of choices, from processors, operating systems, screen sizes and connectivity.

The tablet form factor lends itself to a number of innovative designs, as a number of manufacturers at CES demonstrated, including tablets with rotating screens, slide-out keyboards and projectors.

Two of the tablets **Asus** brought to the show, the Asus Eee Slider and the Transformer, aim to bridge the gap between tablet and laptop by offering users a physical keyboard. While the Eee Transformer is a 10-inch tablet with a dockable keyboard, the Slider's 10-inch screen slides up to reveal a miniature keyboard.

Dell's vision for connecting the tablet and laptop worlds is the **Dell Inspiron Duo**, featuring a clamshell design that opens and operates similar to a traditional laptop, but with a 10-inch vertically rotating flip screen that allows the user to operate the device like a tablet when the Duo is closed.

Lenovo decided to offer users both the Android operating system and Microsoft's Windows 7 with the **Lenovo LePad U1 Hybrid**, a dockable 10-inch tablet that switches from Android to Windows when placed in its accompanying U1 keyboard dock. The LePad tablet sports a 1.3GHz Snapdragon processor, while the accompanying U1 base is equipped with 1.2GHz Intel Core i5. Removing the tablet from its base switches the device almost instantaneously from Windows 7 to Android.

One of two prototype tablets brought

to the show by **MSI** features a Pico projector on an attached bezel, making this tablet ideal for portable theater applications. Users who want such an option on other tablets can turn to the devices like the **Microvision ShowWX+**, an attachable Pico projector for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch devices. Most of consumers' unique needs can be satisfied by the burgeoning tablet accessories market. As the tablet field grows beyond the iPad, accessory makers are offering devices such as Bluetooth keyboards, attachable speakers and tablet docking stations. iLuv, an accessory maker with a wide range of products for Apple iDevices, recently announced the **iLuv iSM757 High Fidelity Speaker Dock** for Samsung's Galaxy Tab. This aesthetically appealing speaker dock allows users to listen to music and watch videos while the tablet charges in its dock.

Some niche markets are still better served by dedicated devices, and this fact is recognized by tablet makers such as Kno, MSI and GammaTech, who had market-specific tablets on display at the show. GammaTech, maker of rugged laptops, brought the healthcare-focused **GammaTech T10L** tablet to the show. This 10.4-

inch tablet is drop, spill and shock resistant and runs Microsoft Windows on a 1.66GHz Intel processor. The T10L tablet includes a 2MP camera, for healthcare professionals to monitor patient progress. The images can automatically be added to a patient's records via Intel's Healthcare Mobile Clinical Assistant Solutions software.

**Kno** showed its education-focused dual-screen tablet, combining two 14.1-inch touchscreens into a clamshell design. Students can choose between controlling the device via the two touchscreens or taking notes with the tablet's stylus. According to the company, the tablet could save students up to \$1,300 on textbooks.

The second prototype from MSI, the **MSI Kid Pad** concept, features a 10-inch display in a lightweight package, with eight hours of battery life and an interchangeable back panel and handle. The colorful lunchboxes of yesterday might soon be replaced by light, durable and stylish tablets focused on the youth demographic.

The tablet industry was absolutely buzzing at CES. For now, we can only wait to see what new features and designs CE makers bring to market throughout the rest of the year. ●

**The Tablet Outlook.** The tablet category has emerged as a serious contender and CES set the bar even higher. CEA estimates that tablet shipments to consumer channels reached 10.3 million in 2010, and forecasts that volume will reach 17.65 million in 2011, capturing a 36 percent share of shipment dollars in the mobile computing category. In a January study titled *Eye on Emerging Technology: Tablet Computers*, CEA found that more than a third of consumers (35 percent) that do not own a tablet computer are interested in purchasing one in the future.

The features delivered by the tablets and accessories on display at CES were aimed at consumers' wishlists, which should drive adoption further. For example, 44 percent of consumers who expect to purchase a tablet said they would prefer to use an external keyboard, a nod to both the tablet/notebook hybrids on display at the show and to the growing tablet accessories market. CEA also found that tablet computers sporting powerful, multi-core processors have a place in the market, as more than half of prospective tablet purchasers (56 percent) stated that they would be more interested in tablet computers if they featured faster processors.

With the deluge of new tablet devices coming to market in 2011, retailers will have some work to do educating consumers on their many options. However, they won't be alone: the study showed that when considering purchasing a CE device, expectant tablet purchasers most often consult friends and family (75 percent) and online sources (69 percent) for advice. ●