

Testing more VR platforms: Day three saw us return to the PlayStation VR booth to see if we could have a better gaming experience than Thursday's *London Heist* experience. We also had a chance to demo the HTC Vive. To finish the day off we wandered over to the career fair to see the skills that gaming companies seek and got some opinions into when high-end gaming HMDs could become wireless.

Diving into PlayStation VR: Our second pass at PlayStation VR was incredible. *Into the Deep* placed us into a diving cage that descended to the depths of the ocean. There was nothing to do but look around at jellyfish, manta rays, and shipwrecks. Without ruining the ending, we were attacked by a great white shark – a frightening experience that left us eager to ascend to the surface. While there, we asked a Sony recruiting agent whether or not the firm was seeking hardware design engineers for PlayStation VR. She told us that Sony is fully staffed for the product, which suggests a high level of confidence in the reliability and durability of the PlayStation VR HMD.

Open the Valve: We visited Valve's booth hoping to have a conversation about the Vive and Steam's game catalog. But due to time constraints, we were given a 9-minute VR demonstration instead. The demo was immersive, but it wasn't a game. We were guided by the game developer through a fantasy world. The Vive's graphics were flawless; the audio crisp; but before we knew it, we had to exit the booth. Beforehand, we asked the developer what he thought of Vive. He told us that the sensor technology allowing gamers to move in 3D appeals to developers. He also said that it will likely take years before the high-end HMDs go wireless.

Graphics processor firm weighs in on the wireless/tethered HMD debate: When we asked a graphics processor semiconductor coder the same question, he thought that it may take two years before all HMDs are wireless. However, his co-worker, a hardware engineer recruiter, stated that she wasn't aware of any wireless initiatives in the VR space, although there could be something underway in the research and development department. As consumers will continue to demand higher and higher resolution graphics and more peripherals are added, we suspect that there will be a need to be tethered for several years yet for high-end gaming HMDs.

The 3D audio debate: In other reports, we've written that 3D audio is required in order to have a truly, immersive, virtual reality experience. One game coder told us how his company conducted tests on gamers. Both groups had the same video content, but one group had inferior audio. Not surprisingly, gamers with poor audio rated the experience as poor. Thus, the company was focused on improving audio in its game properties. Another coder told us that 3D audio is not so critical to VR; audio is a poor marketing tool, and given the complexity of graphics processing, coders struggle to allocate precious CPU time to audio. We believe this is short sighted thinking. We believe that one day the best games will mimic real-life experiences across all five senses. GDC had several haptics (reproducing touch) firms, and we remember a company at E3 that had a gaming peripheral that reproduced certain smells. Which entrepreneurial firm will figure out how to impart taste to gaming? Maybe Budweiser and Doritos already have.

Women gamers and coders: The number of women in attendance at GDC appeared to be higher than previous years. We estimate that women easily made up 35% of GDC's attendees, which suggests that women gamers and coders are thriving.

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