



WB8IMY

## ECLECTIC TECHNOLOGY

# CES Not Just for “Consumers”

About 150,000 people showed up for the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas last January. I attended this show more than 20 years ago and it was a jaw-dropping experience even then. I can't imagine what it must be like now.

With the emphasis on consumer electronics, you'd think that there would be little of interest to hams, but you'd be wrong. ARRL Honorary Vice President Fried Heyn, WA6WZO, mingled with the CES multitude and found more than enough to keep him busy...

This was the 40th year for CES in Las Vegas, the world's largest technology tradeshow. This year the show had a record turnout of over 150,000 attendees, 300 speakers and 2700 exhibitors occupying 1.8 million square feet of floor space.

Major speakers included Bill Gates (Microsoft), Michael Dell (Dell) and Robert Iger (Disney). Also, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin was featured with CES/CEA President Gary Shapiro asking the questions. The main topics included the digital television (DTV) transition, cable compatibility and net neutrality.

Although the Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) controversy wasn't addressed in the FCC discussions, I did note the presence of the HomePlug Powerline Alliance at the show. This is a group of nearly 80 international market leaders involved in the use of ac power lines for delivering not only power, but also Internet access and networking, which includes BPL. HomePlug sets standards and certifies member products. At their booth I met with the HomePlug president, Matt Theall (from Intel), and the Chairman of the Board, Pete Griffin (from RadioShack). Both wanted the Amateur Radio community to know they are working with the League to minimize BPL interference.

ARRL Laboratory Supervisor Ed Hare, W1RFI, knows HomePlug well. "ARRL has had a long-standing cooperative relationship with HomePlug," Hare said, "helping them to



The Jadoo XRT hydrogen fuel cell power unit.

Radio involving HomePlug products. If the entire BPL industry could follow their lead and formally do what HomePlug has determined needs to be done, interference from BPL could become a manageable problem."

In addition to the FCC booth, some of the booths of ham interest included those that manufacture two-way radios and scanners like Midland, Motorola, Cobra and Uniden. Kenwood had a large booth, but it did not include their Communications Division. Sangean showed off some of their multiband radios and expect to soon have the first self-contained receiver with DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale) available for sale in America. DRM ([www.drmm.org](http://www.drmm.org)) is an open-standard digital radio system that is starting to become popular in Europe.

Other products of interest at the show included such things as arm and belt holders (for handheld transceivers), rollup keyboards/controllers, tiny video cameras, various microphones and headsets, small solar battery chargers, robotics and lots of computer stuff. For emergency power, Jadoo ([www.jadoodpower.com](http://www.jadoodpower.com)) displayed a 100-W fuel-cell generator with 2200 Wh 110 V ac/12 V dc power. Known as the Jadoo XRT, it runs on hydrogen and can be operated anywhere safely. Alas, it is currently priced at \$7999. That said, Jadoo sells smaller, less expensive units and the company actively courts the Amateur Radio market. Their 5-pound 12-V dc 100-W fuel cell power unit retails for \$999. — WA6WZO



The HomePlug Alliance booth at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Left to right: HomePlug Chairman of the Board Pete Griffin; ARRL Honorary Vice President Fried Heyn, WA6WZO; Sandi Heyn, WA6WZN; HomePlug President Matt Theall.

make the decision not to use the amateur bands in their product specification. This has been a successful model. Over the past 7 years, even though there are over 6 million HomePlug devices deployed, ARRL does not have a single report of harmful interference to Amateur

### PSKMail Update

PSKMail activity has been percolating lately. Lest you've forgotten (or didn't read the column), PSKMail is a narrow-bandwidth sound-card based system using PSK63 or PSK125 to transfer e-mail on the HF bands to and from the Internet. More servers have popped up in the United States, including KE7XO-1 on 10.148 MHz, N8ET on 14.077 MHz and N5ALE on 14.076 MHz. One of the best places to find more information about PSKMail is the *Wikispace* at [pskmail.wikispaces.com/](http://pskmail.wikispaces.com/). 