

## TECH TALK

## Microsoft brings TV content to the Xbox

Owners of the Xbox 360 will soon be able to watch a broad breadth of TV shows and other content through their gaming consoles — though most of that won't be free. Microsoft Corp. said Wednesday that it's partnering with Comcast Corp., HBO, Bravo, Verizon's FiOS service and others to bring on-demand and live television content to the Xbox. -AP

## Oracle's Ellison embraces cloud, finally

Technology giant Oracle Corp has developed an ambitious array of cloud computing services in a bid to catch up with Amazon.com Inc and Salesforce.com Inc, two leaders in the field. -Reuters

## Lawmakers, advocates split over teen Net privacy

A proposed update of the US online privacy rule for children sparked debate at a congressional hearing on Wednesday over whether such protections should extend to teenagers. The Federal Trade Commission plans to update its Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule that gives parents a say over what information websites and other online providers can collect about children under the age of 13. -Reuters

## Rhapsody snaps up Napster to build market share

Two of the longest-running names in digital music, Rhapsody and Napster, are combining in a bid to grow market share and stay ahead of newer rivals like Spotify, Rdio and MOG. Rhapsody, which is the largest US digital music service with 800,000 subscribers, said Monday it would take over Napster, which is currently owned by retailer Best Buy Co Inc. -Reuters

## Oracle's Ellison shows off new tech hardware

Chief executive Larry Ellison unveiled new all-in-one data center products. Ellison touted the benefits of parallel computing and showed off the latest version of the company's SPARC Solaris computer. He also unveiled Oracle's new Exalytics data analysis machine at the OpenWorld conference in San Francisco. -Reuters

## Yahoo joins ABC in online news partnership

Yahoo Inc struck a deal with ABC to use the media company's news on its website and to jointly produce journalism projects as well as sell Web advertising. -Reuters

## Whitman aims for October decision on HP's PC unit

Hewlett-Packard Co's new chief executive, Meg Whitman, is aiming to make a decision on the future of the company's PC business by the end of this month. Whitman said she wanted to determine the fate of the division "much faster" than Apotheker had planned "because uncertainty is not our friend here." -Reuters

# Apple unveils iPhone 4S not iPhone 5, updated iPods at *Let's Talk iPhone* event

Compiled by Jumanah Al-Ghadban

**CAPITALS:** Apple unveiled an updated iPhone complete with a built-in "personal assistant" in a move that failed to dazzle investors and fans but promised to keep the smartphones ahead of the pack. The iPhone was not the only update seen at the event as an update iPod nano was unveiled along with an iPod Touch that now comes in white. The hardware updates were not the main feature of the event as some new software was debuted including iOS 5, iCloud, and the Cards application that lets people design and send greeting cards through the postal service.

Apple's new chief executive Tim Cook, who replaced ailing founder Steve Jobs in August, presided over the launch of the iPhone 4S at Apple headquarters in Cupertino, California on Tuesday Oct. 4.

## iPhone 4S

The new iPhone 4S has an improved camera with a higher-resolution sensor. The processor is faster, which helps run smoother, more realistic action games. It's also a "world phone," which means that Verizon iPhones will be able to useable overseas, just as AT&T iPhones already are. It also has a built-in "personal assistant" that responds to voice commands and a more powerful camera, but it was not the revamped next-generation iPhone 5 smartphone many Apple fans had hoped for.

There had been speculation that Apple would reveal a more radical revision of the phone, an "iPhone 5." The no-show leaves room for speculation that Apple will reveal a new model in less than a year, perhaps one equipped to take advantage of Verizon's and AT&T's new high-speed data networks.

The iPhone 4S will be available in the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Britain on Oct. 14 with pre-orders commenced Friday. The iPhone 4S will be rolled out by the end of October in 22 additional countries including Austria, Italy, Singapore, Spain, and Switzerland.

In the United States, iPhone 4S prices will start at \$199 for a 16 GB model and top out at \$399 for a model with 64GB of memory. It will be available in both black and white models. The iPhone 4S predecessor will be available for \$99 while earlier generation iPhone 3GS models will be free with telecom carrier contracts, an Apple first.



Apple's Senior Vice President of Worldwide product marketing Phil Schiller speaks about prices of the iPod Nano and iPod touch during introduction of the new iPhone 4s at the company's headquarters Oct. 4, 2011 in Cupertino, California. (AFP)

## iOS 5, iCloud, and Cards app

A slick new version of the iOS mobile operating system was shown off at the press event in an intimate theater at Apple's Silicon Valley campus. This new software includes features such as the ability to sync content wirelessly, without having to plug the device to a Mac or Windows machine. Apple's new mobile software, iOS 5, will be available on Oct. 12 for existing devices — the iPhone 4 and 3GS, both iPad models and later versions of the iPod Touch.

Apple also announced the Oct. 12 launch of long-promised iCloud, which lets people store music, pictures, videos and other digital files online and access the content across Apple computers and mobile devices.

Apple also revealed a new app that lets users create and mail greeting cards with their iOS devices.

The app which will be available on Oct. 12 for free will allow users to design and send greeting cards through the postal service for a small fee, cards mailed within the US will

cost \$2.99 and those mailed worldwide will cost \$4.99.

## Siri, your personal intelligent assistant

The 4S will introduce a "Siri intelligent assistant" designed to understand context so people can speak naturally when asking it questions. For example, spoken queries of "Will I need an umbrella this weekend?" and "What is the traffic like around here?" will prompt online searches for local weather forecasts or road conditions, according to Apple. Siri helps make calls, send text messages or email, schedule meetings and reminders, make notes, find local businesses, and get directions. Siri will even perform mathematical calculations if asked.

"Apple's new Siri assistant, unique to the new 4GS, is a powerful harbinger of the future use of mobile devices," said Forrester Research analyst Charles Golvin. "Not just the power of voice but, more importantly, the ability to contextualize a statement or request."

## Updated iPod line

Apple also added new features and pricing to its iPod Touch and iPod Nano devices in the latest improvements to a line kicked off with the introduction of the first iPod in the same Apple "Town Hall" in 2001. New features within the Nano model included a multi-touch display that promises easier navigation with larger icons, additional clock faces, and an easier Nike+ compatibility out of the box capable of tracking distance traveled, pace, time and more.

The iPod Touch featured an ultra thin design, retina display, FaceTime, HD video recording, and comes with iOS 5 as well as iCloud. The major update included a new color added to the line in which the Touch can now be purchased in black or white.

The iPod Touch will be available for \$199, and iPod Nano prices will start at \$129. "iPod has revolutionized the way we listen to music and with over 320 million sold is the world's most popular music player," Schiller said.

## Disney moves in on *Angry Birds* with *Swampy* game

**LOS ANGELES/NEW YORK:** It's not surprising, perhaps, that a game based on a sewer-dwelling alligator named "Swampy" ranks as the top paid app for iPhones and iPads. What's surprising is that the game is a product of Walt Disney Co.

Swampy is the title character on a quest to stay clean in a low-cost, mobile video game called "Where's My Water?" that Disney hopes will lead to a turnaround of its struggling gaming business.

Within 24 hours of its release on September 22, "Where's My Water?" -- a 99-cent puzzle game where players try to help Swampy keep clean by digging paths to guide water to his subterranean bathtub -- rose to the top of Apple Inc's App Store and has stayed there since.

The game featuring Swampy, who is the first Disney character created specifically for a mobile game, currently ranks ahead of Rovio's wildly popular "Angry Birds" as the

top paid app for iPhones and iPads, underscoring the threat that established, deep-pocketed companies like Disney and Electronic Arts pose for upstarts like Rovio and Zynga.

In an interview with Reuters, Bart Decrem, head of Disney's mobile gaming operations, declined to provide figures for downloads or other financial measures, saying only that the game "has been really well-received, doing really well in terms of downloads and chart positions around the world."

Though it is early days, Disney has the potential to develop into the kind of hit Disney needs to help revive its interactive unit, which includes online, mobile and social games plus virtual worlds such as the Club Penguin website.

Last year, Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger charged two digital veterans -- James Pitaro and John Pleasants -- to turn around the division. The pair have said they plan to bring the division to profitability in 2013. One way to accom-

plish that goal is for Disney to leverage Swampy and other gaming characters across its theme parks, movie studio and media networks much the same way it does its stable of mermaids, princesses and other characters, Decrem said. Right now, however, Swampy is still too green to become the next Mickey Mouse.

"First, Swampy needs to continue to prove himself," Decrem said, adding that it will take about three months to judge the character's staying power.

Mobile games for phones and tablets, one of the few bright spots in the beaten-down global video game business, are cheaper to make and purchase than games for consoles. As a result, they have started to eat in to the profits of companies such as Activision Blizzard Inc.

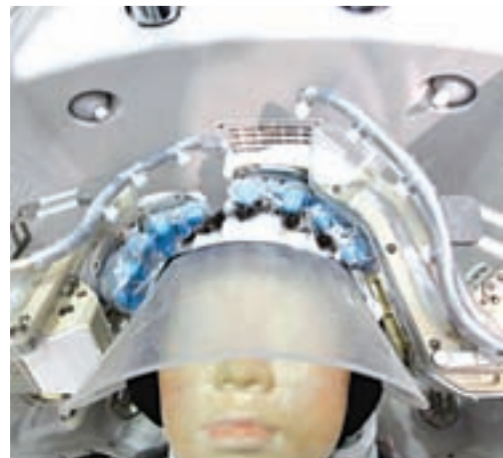
While Disney typically brings characters from movies to games, Swampy could go the other direction from game to television or movie screens, Decrem said. -Reuters

## With 24 high-tech fingers, Japan robot washes hair

**LONDON:** It may look like a glorified salon chair, but a new Japanese hair-washing robot replicates the dexterous touch of a human hand to care for the locks of the elderly and the infirm. Its creators at electronics firm Panasonic say the machine features the latest robotic technology and could help replace human care-givers in this rapidly aging nation without degrading the quality of the service. "Using robotic hand technology and 24 robotic fingers, this robot can wash the hair or handicapped in the way human hands do in order to help them have better daily lives," said developer Tohru Nakamura.

The customer leans back in what looks like a regular salon chair, over a sink, and the machine -- upgraded from a 16-fingered version -- shampoos, massages the scalp and rinses in about three minutes. Conditioning and a blow-dry add another five minutes. Nakamura said Japan's aging society supports a healthy market in care-giving robot technologies. "We will develop more care-giving technologies for the elderly or handicapped in Japan and will export those technologies to other aging societies, such as South Korea and China, in the future," Nakamura said.

The hair-washing machine is not available to consumers at this point, and a price has yet to be set. Panasonic plans to start sales next year, targeting nursing homes and hospitals. -Reuters



Panasonic's hair-washing robot washes hair on a mannequin at a demonstration in Tokyo Oct. 4, 2011. (Reuters)

## GEARS

## It is not for sale, *Ford Evos*

Compiled by Jameel W. Karaki  
Staff Writer

**FRANKFURT:** The Ford Evos concept will never go on sale according to Ford but it is designed to showcase future Ford styling and technology trends. In addition, Ford plans for a range of connectivity systems to link the car and driver with the so-called cloud. The car might match a driver's commuting route with local traffic and weather information, or automatically play a favorite song or radio station.

The Evos is a four-door fastback design but six inches wider than a 2012 Ford Focus hatchback. Four elaborate gull-wing doors rise to admit occupants to each of the four seats -- you can rest assured that such unusual openings are unlikely to appear on any Ford product. With the doors closed, the Evos' taut lines and supple curves are more evident. A slender piece of glass in the roof, connects the front and rear windshields. The body slopes dramatically behind the C-pillar, and tapers into what Ford calls a teardrop shape, sweeping in across the rear fenders. A single trapezoidal exhaust tip pokes out at the rear, beneath which sits an angular chrome diffuser.

The new design DNA is meant to imbue Ford cars with a sense of quality and performance, while at the same time making them appear light and efficient. The Evos concept looks mean and aggressive, with its gaping grille and tapered rear almost resembling a scaled-down Aston Martin. Yet at the same time it's clear that this is a compact, aerodynamic vehicle, with all the character lines and creases designed to guide air and eyes in equal measure.

## Staying connected

The interior is defined by four bucket seats and lots of trapezoidal shapes. Thanks to the gull-wing door design, there are no B-pillars bisecting the Evos' cabin. A color in-

formation screen curves down from the instrument cluster and into the center console, wrapping the screen around the red driver's seat. Rear-seat passengers each get to play with a touch-screen interface embedded into the front-seat headrests.

Taking driver engagement to a new level, Ford says the car's drivetrain and chassis will be adaptive both to the driver and road conditions.

The Evos concept would "learn" how different people like to drive and tailor vehicle settings to suit. It would also evaluate the weather forecast for the chosen route and cater accordingly -- perhaps switching to a snow mode if

you're heading for a blizzard, and a sportier mode if you're driving toward a twisty road on a sunny day.

## Hybrid power

The Evos concept employs the same plug-in hybrid drivetrain that will be found under the hood of the Ford C-Max Energi, which will be introduced in 2012. The powertrain functions primarily as an electric car, with a lithium-ion battery sending power to an electric motor. A gasoline engine and generator can provide additional power, supposedly enough for up to 500 miles of travel on a single battery charge and tank of fuel.



This concept car is designed as a way for the Blue Oval's designers and engineers to showcase future Ford styling and technology trends. (Agencies)