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Simplay Pretest Tool Now Available!

Manufacturers of HD components now have access to a new tool that can help them streamline their product development and debugging cycles. The Simplay Pre-Test System, or SPS, is a compact, self-contained testing unit designed to help product teams identify HDMI™ and HDCP performance issues earlier in the design cycle, and correct them before a product is submitted for official Simplay HD™ testing. The system combines case-mounted hardware and custom software, including a dedicated DVD source and LCD display, and can be used to test HDMI source, sink, or repeater products. While it's not a substitute for the full-protocol testing program at one of our testing centers, it can identify the majority of implementation issues in advance, and lead to increased confidence that a product will pass Simplay HD testing on its first submission. And that can save weeks or even months of development time, helping to get products onto store shelves that much sooner. For more information, please contact us.

European Test Lab Update

Our UK laboratory is fully operational in London, offering the complete schedule of Simplay HD testing. We're also working on a second European testing lab, in Germany, and plan to have the doors open there before the end of August. Along with our testing facilities in Sunnyvale, Shenzhen, and Shanghai, this adds up to a good selection of convenient, worldwide locations where manufacturers can send their products for Simplay HD verification. To see a list of commercially available products that have earned the Simplay HD designation, check our website.

Inside HDMI: Consumer Electronics Control

What do Panasonic's EZ Sync™, Sony's Theatre Sync™, Mitsubishi's NetCommand®, Toshiba's TheaterLink®, and Samsung's Anynet™ technologies have in common? They're all various implementations of CEC, or Consumer Electronics Control, one of HDMI's most intriguing and least known capabilities. Though it's been part of the HDMI spec from the beginning, products featuring CEC are really taking off this year, with the manufacturers named above – along with the likes of LG, Onkyo, and Pioneer – all shipping or planning to ship CEC-enabled products.

Though it only uses one of the nineteen wires in an HDMI cable, CEC encompasses a broad set of command and control functions that, when deployed, can revolutionize the way devices behave in a system. It allows users to control multiple CEC-enabled devices with a single remote control, and enables individual CEC devices to control

one another. For example, pressing "play" on the DVD player in such a system could automatically power up all the required components, select the appropriate HDMI ports, route the audio through the AV receiver to the attached speakers, send the video output to the HDTV, and auto-negotiate all the correct audio and video modes. This is just one example of how CEC can simplify the home theater experience, making it easy to perform tasks that normally might require multiple remote controls and complicated set ups.

Though it's not obvious from the proliferation of brand names attached to CEC, the core functionality is designed to be brand-agnostic, and should work even when devices from multiple manufacturers are connected in a system. When a manufacturer chooses to implement CEC in a product, the HDMI spec defines five standard functions that must be supported. That's not to say that some manufacturers don't go beyond these basics and offer additional commands – some do – but regardless, all CEC-enabled devices are required to support the following:

One touch play - allows a device to be played and become the active source with a single button press.
System standby - enables a user to switch all devices to standby with one button press.
One touch record - offers a "what you see is what you record" capability, meaning that whatever is shown on the TV screen is recorded on a selected recording device.
Device menu control - enables a device to control the menu of another device by passing through the user interface commands. In short, a user could bring up the menus on a set top box or any device in the system.
Remote control pass through - enables remote control commands to be passed to other devices within the system.

The CEC serial bus is designed to connect a single HD display to up to nine other HDMI devices, and as such is not meant to control complex whole-house AV systems. But in a typical home theater installation, it has the potential to vastly simplify a user's life, adding a layer of system intelligence that makes the HD lifestyle more accessible and enjoyable for all concerned.

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