

# Samsung Stakes its Claim

To raise brand awareness and solidify its position as a pioneer in 3-D LED television technology, Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. stages a star-studded product launch in Times Square that garners more than 2.4 billion media impressions. *By Lena Valenty*

## PRODUCT LAUNCH

**Company:** Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd.

**Event:** Samsung Liberation Day

**Objectives:** Establish Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. as the leader in the 3-D and LED television industry and generate 1 billion media impressions.

**Strategy:** Stage a surprise performance by The Black Eyed Peas in Times Square featuring an appearance by "Avatar" director James Cameron to increase brand awareness.

**Tactics:** Pique interest for the event and performance by distributing a press release announcing the launch of Samsung 3-D TVs the day before. Display company and product messaging on various Times Square billboards that hint at the event. Dispatch four break-dancing troupes on tour buses to travel the city and do flash performances at high-traffic locations.

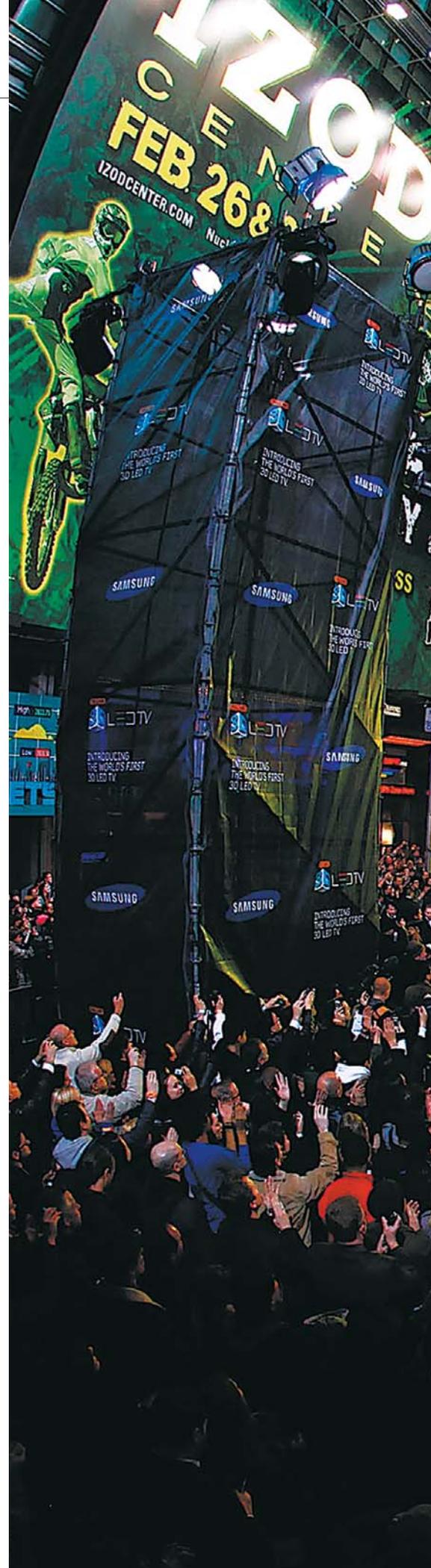
**Results:** Garnered more than 2.4 billion media impressions in five days.

**Creative/Production Agency:** Jack Morton, [www.jackmorton.com](http://www.jackmorton.com)

**Budget:** \$5 million

By the end of its run in movie theaters worldwide, James Cameron's groundbreaking film, "Avatar," not only grossed a jaw-dropping \$2.8 billion; it also redefined the 3-D movie genre, and harkened a new era of cinematography. What was once a novelty largely relegated to innocent animated movies was elevated to an enveloping form of entertainment almost overnight. In fact, since "Avatar" was released in December 2009, more than 45 feature-length 3-D movies have hit theaters. To put that into context, there were less than 20 3-D movies released in the previous three years combined.

The spike in 3-D movies since "Avatar" was largely due to technological advancements in the filming process, which made 3-D more accessible. Those advancements continued, eventually bringing the 3-D experience from the movie theater into the home. Unfortunately, most consumers didn't





GIVE THANKS  
SQUARE  
THIS YEAR

THE BLACK  
EYED PEAS

SAMSUNG

LED TV  
INTRODUCING  
THE WORLD'S FIRST  
3D LED TV.

SAMSUNG

LED TV

INTRODUCING  
THE WORLD'S FIRST  
3D LED TV.

SAMSUNG

LED TV

INTRODUCING  
THE WORLD'S FIRST  
3D LED TV.

SAMSUNG

## EVENT AWARDS

realize just how close they were to having the power of 3-D entertainment in their own living rooms.

Enter Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. In early 2010, just a few short months after "Avatar" made waves, the Seoul, South Korea-based manufacturer of televisions and other consumer electronics (such as computers, cell phones, printers, cameras, monitors, etc.) was laying the groundwork to bring the first 3-D LED TV designed for in-home use to the general public. But it wasn't the only electronics company trying to stake its claim on the 3-D market. Major players in the electronics game, including LG Electronics, Sony Corp., and Panasonic Corp., were all poised to unveil 3-D TVs of their own in 2010. Since the technology had become universal at this point, and the consumer demand for 3-D content was on the rise (bolstered, no doubt, by the proliferation of big-budget theatrical releases), the only question left to answer was this: Which company would successfully brand itself as the uncontested 3-D leader?

According to Philip McDougall, head of creative at Jack Morton, a New York-based marketing firm, Samsung never doubted it would be that company. "Samsung wanted to be the anchor of this movement," McDougall says. "It had a vested interest in creating the initiative, putting 3-D on the market in a broad sense to increase awareness, shaping the competitive landscape, and establishing itself as the market leader." It's no secret that when it comes to carving a place for yourself in a relatively new market, awareness is key, which is why Samsung enlisted the help of Jack Morton. "It was time to do something big," McDougall says. And that something big would involve a surprise concert in Times Square featuring one of the most ubiquitous music groups of the



time, a world-famous A-list director, and lots of planning.

### The Big Picture

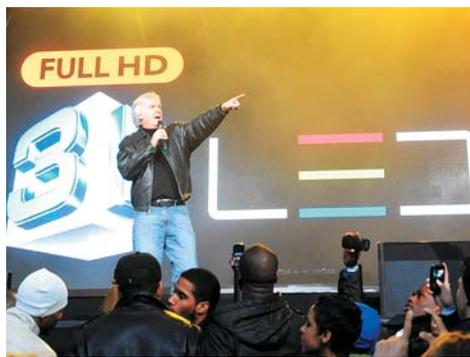
In October 2009, Samsung came to Jack Morton with one goal in mind for its 3-D LED TV launch: Get 1 billion media impressions. "We knew that goal was achievable as long as we had the right mix of ingredients, and in this case, those ingredients had to be top-notch talent in order to garner the type of buzz Samsung wanted," McDougall says. "Since Samsung wasn't just launching its 3-D TV, it was launching the 3-D TV movement, we needed to find a stage large enough to host such a pivotal moment. And what better place than the crossroads of the world — Times Square?"

Indeed, Samsung knew that any event held in Times Square would be instant news given its location and proximity to major media outlets such as Thomson Reuters, Condé Nast, Viacom Inc., and The New York Times, not to mention the various morning television shows, which broadcast from studios in and around Times Square, including the "Today" show and "Good Morning America." In short, staging an event in Times Square is like sending out a live-action newswire. But to make sure news outlets would pick up the story, Samsung and Jack Morton added intrigue. For it's one thing to orchestrate a one-off product launch in Times Square with the typical PR trappings: banners, a stage, a brief speech from a corporate executive, and a product demonstration. It's quite another to attract enough attention to set the wheels in motion for a worldwide movement and widespread adoption of a brand new technology. To do that, you need some big-name stars. With that in mind, Jack Morton and Samsung set their sights on booking The Black Eyed Peas — arguably

the most commercially appealing group at the time — to perform for the launch. Those who question the band's popularity need only be reminded that Fergie, Taboo, Will.i.am, and Apl.de.ap have sold about 50 million records worldwide and performed at Oprah's 24th Season Kickoff Party. Add to that performances at the NFL Opening Kickoff, Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, and Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve, among countless others, and it becomes painfully clear that The Black Eyed Peas were everywhere in 2009 and 2010. But their celebrity cache wasn't their only selling point. "In addition to their popularity, The Black Eyed Peas are very theatrical performers, which is exactly what we needed," McDougall says.

A dynamic performance was key to creating the kind of excitement and buzz Samsung needed to make the audience feel as though they were a part of a larger-than-life movement. Consider, for example, if all the anticipation led up to Yo-Yo Ma gliding onto the stage and whipping out his cello. Sure, he's a world-famous musician, but he has the stage presence of a kitten. Even so, McDougall had another plot twist up his sleeve — he wasn't going to tell the media The Black Eyed Peas were performing.

The rationale behind that decision was twofold: 1) Samsung would pique the interest of the press and passersby in Times Square by staging the event but keeping the performers a secret until the last minute, and 2) while mysterious, the absence of a name would avoid drawing too large of a crowd, which would have resulted in the New York Police Department shutting down the free concert. In fact, city officials and the NYPD granted Samsung permission to use Times Square for the event on the condition



that it didn't mention that The Black Eyed Peas would be performing, and it capped the concert at 15 minutes to keep the size of the crowd manageable. So Jack Morton set out to create buzz around the stars without actually talking about them.

### Sneak Preview

On March 9, 2010, the day before the concert was to take place, Samsung hosted a press conference to break the news that its 3-D LED TV was ready to hit stores the next day and liberate TV content from the "flat" confines of traditional 2-D televisions. The press conference also eschewed concerns about the lack of 3-D content available — though Hollywood studios were releasing 3-D movies quicker than you could say "stereoscopic," few made the jump to the small screen. So, prior to the launch, Samsung inked a deal with DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc. (the cinema wizards behind the Shrek franchise and other animated blockbusters) to get exclusive rights to 3-D content for in-home viewing. To wit, those who purchased a Samsung 3-D LED TV and 3-D Blu-ray player or home-theater system would also receive a 3-D starter kit containing two pairs of Samsung 3-D active glasses and a copy of DreamWorks' 3-D movie, "Monsters vs. Aliens." Attendees at the press conference also learned that the Shrek movies would be available in 3-D exclusively for Samsung home-entertainment products. Samsung hoped the one-two punch — "here's the new product, and here's the content to play on it" — would convince the roughly 100 media attendees (and, ultimately, the end users) that 3-D was a tangible reality for consumers and not a technological pipe dream.

When the press conference was over, the media was well aware of Samsung 3-D LED TVs and the deal with DreamWorks. But little did they

know, they were just a day away from a Times Square spectacle that would be rivaled in scope and scale only by New Year's Eve.

### Coming Attractions

Prohibited from promoting The Black Eyed Peas' appearance due to its agreement with the city of New York, Jack Morton continued to keep the focus on Samsung's 3-D LED TVs the day after the press conference — first, with a series of flash performances. Four 52-foot-long double-decker buses wrapped in graphics featuring the Samsung logo and messaging about the company's new 3-D LED TVs roamed the city like moving billboards.

The buses pulled over at six high-traffic locations throughout the city, and a group of break dancers jumped off. The troupes of men and women, each dressed in white with Samsung-blue sneakers, filed out of their respective buses, dropped branded panels on the ground to create a makeshift break-dance mat, and started a 15-minute, choreographed dance with the graphic-wrapped bus as the backdrop. "We wanted each flash performance to symbolize the liberation of content from a 2-D environment (traditional television) into a 3-D world," McDougall says. "So the dancers started out laying flat but eventually started break dancing with wild abandon."

While the symbolism of the flash performances was certainly an artistic endeavor, the marketing vehicle (literally and figuratively) driving the break dancing was a bold, albeit unconventional, branding opportunity. "We made sure we could create a branded environment wherever we went, so thanks to the graphic-wrapped buses and branded floor panels, the Samsung name likely appeared in every photo and video taken of the flash performances," McDougall says.



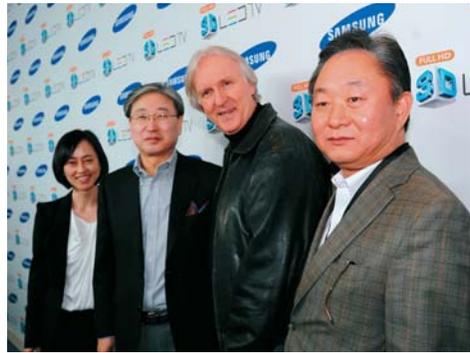
Meanwhile, back at Times Square, the Jack Morton production team had begun assembling the stage for the surprise concert. Still in the dark about the high-caliber talent that would soon grace said stage, curious passersby stopped, gawked at the commotion, and asked questions. "It was actually really cool, because we knew we had The Black Eyed Peas and that people would be shocked," McDougall says. "But because of our agreement with the city, when people asked us what was going on, we'd just say, 'I'm not sure. I think it's some sort of product launch.'" Though McDougall admits keeping the secret was difficult, he also understood the risk. "With smart phones and social media, it takes mere seconds for word to spread about a Black Eyed Peas performance in Times Square. And in just minutes, your manageable crowd of 4,000 people swells to a chaotic 40,000," he says. "We didn't want that to happen — and neither did the city."

The stage was set, so to speak, complete with a branded backdrop featuring the Samsung logo and 3-D LED TV graphics on what looked like a giant conventional 2-D television screen. And about 30 minutes before show time, a countdown began. Samsung sequestered five LED billboards smack-dab in the middle of Times Square belonging to Nasdaq Stock Market Inc., ABC, Thomson Reuters, American Eagle Outfitters Inc., and Samsung. Brand messaging and the Samsung logo had appeared on the billboards sporadically throughout the day, but at 6:30 p.m., the content on all five billboards synched up and displayed a clock counting down to the moment The Black Eyed Peas would take the stage. "At this point, people had started to sort of mill about," McDougall says. "It was obvious by now that something was about to happen."

## The Main Event

As soon as the countdown clock hit zero, Samsung execs took the stage. After a short announcement about the new 3-D LED TV, another surprise guest stepped up to the mic — James Cameron. “We wanted James Cameron there because he’s a pioneer in 3-D,” McDougall says. Samsung also wanted Cameron and his crew to film The Black Eyed Peas performance in 3-D, the idea being that the video would be offered to consumers who purchased its 3-D LED TVs. But before the musical group took the stage and Cameron started filming, he was given an opportunity to address the eager crowd and instill a true sense of the history-making movement Samsung so desired: “When you look back 10 years from now, and everything you see is in 3-D, you can say, ‘I was there. I was there in New York at the center of the civilized world, when the future began.’”

That “goose-bump moment,” as Corporate Event Awards judges referred to it, set the tone for the rest of the evening. As soon as Cameron was done addressing the crowd, The Black Eyed Peas burst through the back-drop and took the stage, much to the amazement of the attendees. Amid a cacophony of camera flashes, people thrust their smart phones and cell phones into the air to snap photos and record video, and the performance that was never hyped became instant news. In fact, after a mere 15-minute performance featuring the hits “Gotta Feeling,” “Imma Be,” and “Boom Boom Pow,” Facebook and Twitter exploded with posts about The Black Eyed Peas concert. The posts captured the awe-inspiring excitement Samsung wanted: “I was there! It was awesome!”, “Awesome! Samsung pioneers everything including 3D!” The surprise concert was also streamed live to 50,000



people via Will.i.am’s media channel ([www.dipdive.com](http://www.dipdive.com)), and broadcast on Times Square billboards in real time to ensure maximum exposure.

In the days following the press conference and surprise concert, the story was picked up by major media outlets, including The New York Times, the Associated Press, Newsweek, Time, People, The Guardian, BBC, MTV, Telemundo, and countless others. Samsung’s 3-D LED TVs were also featured on “Good Morning America” and CNN, and were the subject of more than 7,000 tweets by consumers. All told, the Samsung 3-D LED TV product launch generated an astounding 2.4 billion media impressions in just five days, surpassing the goal by nearly 150 percent and wowing Samsung execs. “We are thrilled with the results,” says Samsung’s Sonia Kim, senior manager of brand marketing, visual display. “Our executive vice president told everyone to follow this event as a model, as it’s the most successful global launch in Samsung history.” But that’s not the only milestone. The surprise concert drew a crowd of 15,000, making it the largest event to take place in Times Square outside New Year’s Eve.

Needless to say, no one was talking about Samsung’s competitors’ 3-D TVs that week, which is exactly what the company wanted. “Anything is possible when you have the right ingredients and a client like Samsung that appreciates the impact of delivering a powerful brand experience,” McDougall says. “We had The Black Eyed Peas. We had James Cameron. We had perfect timing. We had a captive audience. Sometimes, fate smiles on you.” Even “Avatar” can’t boast a Hollywood ending quite that motion-picture perfect. **E**

**Lena Valenty**, managing editor;  
[lvalenty@exhibitormagazine.com](mailto:lvalenty@exhibitormagazine.com)