

Old Meets New

By Jon Kenton

The period known as the **Renaissance** (French for 'rebirth'), which began in the 14th century and extended well into the 16th, is often referred to as the beginning of the modern age. In addition to being a prolific period for art, the Renaissance heralded great innovation in science and technology.

The architect Brunelleschi, a technical and mathematical genius of his time, broke new ground with his design for the dome of the Duomo in Florence. When originally conceived, no one knew how such a dome could be built. And, of course, there was Leonardo da Vinci. Famed as an artist, he was also a great scientist and inventor, with vision far beyond his times. He designed a helicopter and a parachute as well as machines using gearing, the principles of which are utilized in all modern automobiles.

It is only fitting that we pay homage to such an era as we visit Apache Junction's famous Renaissance Festival, to showcase what our current period of innovation has to offer. Our focus, as consumers in our own modern age, is rather different from that of Da Vinci, however the marvels are no less marvelous! Today, access to high quality electronic media in all its forms can be seen as a contrast to the paintings and sculptures of the Renaissance.

The clamor for "smaller, faster, cheaper" along with increasing functionality has been the mainstay of our current period of innovation, realized so stylishly by companies such as Apple with the iPod now in its 7th year. This is exemplified by the latest "Shuffle;" weighing in at only half an ounce and barely bigger than 1½ inches it has a capacity for 240 tracks or around 12 hours worth of music. That's enough to hold all of Beethoven's symphonies with plenty of room to spare for Blur, Pink Floyd and Justin Timberlake. The size belies the quality and with the addition of the latest lightweight sports headphones from Sennheiser or SkullCandy you can have hi-fidelity on the run.

Accessing media whenever we want and wherever we are is an increasing demand and again Apple steps up, with its new iPhone. If you need TV on the move then the latest LG U900 phone is for you, sporting a 320x240 screen. You can watch your favorite sitcom, drama or sports shows either streamed live or downloaded to watch at your leisure.

When it comes to TV in the home, small is not the way it's going. Far from it, the sizes now rival a Michelangelo fresco, with Panasonic and Sharp introducing Hi-Def plasma and LCD screens in excess of 100 inches. Both firsts, Panasonic introduced their 103" plasma last year and Sharp broke new ground when it announced the 108" LCD at CES (Las Vegas) in January. Capturing your own Hi-Def video to show on these "video walls" is now possible with an HD camcorder from Sony capable of 1080i in a native 16:9 widescreen format, coupled with a high quality 12X optical Carl Zeiss lens. Watch out Mr. Spielberg!

In the years prior to the Renaissance no one would have imagined the changes and innovations produced by this prolific period. Who knows what the future holds for us, maybe an HD holographic running mate projected from your sports headphones or iPod. Imagine what Leonardo would do if let loose with a 10mp HD video camera phone.