

## INNOVATION &amp; DESIGN

## Meet the New Breed of Avatars

Check out the coming 3-D versions for cell phones, which communicate your movements or speech through complex animation

Ring tones, shmingtones. The next wave in cool applications for mobile phones promises to be 3-D animated avatars that serve as your alter-ego during a conversation. Think beyond the cartoony stand-ins available now in Asian markets, like those in Japan known as *Chara-den*, which users control via handset keypads.

At Motorola Labs, engineers and designers are working on a variety of styles and applications for synthetic actors. These computer-generated figures range from the cartoony to the photorealistic, of the type you'd typically see in blockbuster Hollywood films starring compute-generated characters such as *Lord of the Rings* or *The Incredibles*. They perform your real-time mover speech on-screen as you use your mobile phone.

Currently in research, Motorola Labs' 3-D animated avatars for mobile phones bring together motion- and voice-tracking software graphics. With next-generation mobile phones able to handle complex 3-D games, it's just a matter of time before animated avatars are going to appear as well on tiny screens everywhere. Here, take a peek at what Motorola Labs -- and its new competitor, 3Dm: launched company that made its debut at the 2006 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas -- is experimenting with in the next generation avatars.

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