

March 22, 2017

From the Grosse Deutsche Funkausstellung to the world's largest trade show for the CE and Home Appliances sector

The history of IFA:

It all began on 4 December 1924 with the "Grosse Deutsche Funk-Ausstellung" (German Radio Show), which attracted no less than 242 exhibitors and an attendance of 180,000 to a display area measuring 7,000 sq. metres. Visitors to this event were fascinated by the detectors and the first valve radio receivers on show. It was the first of a series of annual events, all known as the "Grosse Deutsche Funkausstellung", concentrating mainly on radio and from 1928, on television presentations too.

Berlin remained the venue for this trade fair until the outbreak of World War Two. The event was organized by the industry associations "Verband der Radio-Industrie" (1924), from then until 1933 by "Verband der Funkindustrie", and in 1930 additionally by "Reichsverband des Deutschen Sprechmaschinen- und Schallplatten-Handels". Between 1933 and 1939 the "Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda" assumed responsibility for the fair, and the first chapter in its history came to an end when the event was held for the 16th time in 1939.

Funkausstellung goes on its travels

The Funkausstellung did not have a permanent home in the years following the end of the war, being held in Düsseldorf in 1950, 1953 and 1955, and on the Frankfurt/Main exhibition grounds in 1957 and 1959. In 1961 and 1963 several hundred thousand visitors came to admire the exhibits being shown by the German industry in Berlin. During these years very high frequency (VHF) broadcasting was introduced (1950) and soon achieved widespread use, followed by transistorised equipment (1955), portable televisions (1957) and wireless remote control (1959). In 1963 the audio compact cassette was introduced in Berlin. During the same year listeners had the first opportunity to enjoy stereo radio broadcasting.

The 24th Funkausstellung was held in 1965 in Stuttgart, and in 1967 the fair returned to Berlin. An unforgettable moment came when Willy Brandt pressed the button to launch colour television broadcasting in Germany on 25 August 1967.

International status in 1971 and final return to Berlin

After taking place twice more at other locations, Stuttgart again in 1969 and Düsseldorf in 1970, the Funkausstellung, which had by now acquired an international dimension, returned permanently to Berlin. In the first year back at its original venue it featured 26 exhibitors and 93 additionally represented companies from abroad, from Denmark and Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, the former USSR and the USA.

During the post-war period, until 1973, the "Radio and Television" part of the industry association ZVEI, initially assumed responsibility for this trade show, followed by the "Radio and Television Trade Division" of the ZVEI. Since 1973 it has been organized by another industry organisation, Gesellschaft für Unterhaltungs- und Kommunikationselektronik (gfu).

The Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin has featured the major developments in the world of consumer electronics in the past, and right up to the present day: quadrophonic sound (1973), the ARI road traffic broadcasting service (1975), teletex systems such as Bildschirmtext (1977), the Compact Disc (1979), TV stereo sound (1981), the Video Programming System (1985), the Radio Data System (1987), 16:9-wide screen television, Digital Satellite Radio (both in 1989), the Digital Compact Cassette, Mini Disc and MP 3(both in 1991), Laser TV (1993), digital television (DVB), digital radio (DAB), plasma screens (all in 1995), the Digital Versatile Disc (1997),

MP3 players and cellphones with internet capability (1999), as well as the introduction of digital television via antenna (2003).

Merging technologies

IFA '95 entered the history books as the first truly multimedia trade show. During subsequent years the Funkaustellung has confirmed its pre-eminent role, expanding its position as the leading consumer electronics trade show, and one which also meets the needs of telecommunications and information technology. The advances made in the digitalisation of media and technology have played a vital part in this process, encouraging an increasing integration of the various technologies and equipment used in consumer, information and communication electronics.

Flat TV and HDTV

Among the most spectacular trends at IFA 2005 was the introduction of a new generation of television sets, ushering in large, flat home cinema screens in the 16:9 format.

What was already apparent as an exciting technical development at IFA 2003 helped to determine the future of wide swathes of the market in 2005. At the same time high definition television HDTV made its European debut: Shortly before the start of regular broadcasts in Germany, the United Kingdom, France and other European countries, this fascinating new technology was one of the dominant features of the displays on all the main stands.

Annually IFA starting in 2006

Since October 2005 Berlin has been able to look forward annually to IFA as one of the world's leading trade shows: the dynamic development of the consumer electronics market and the outstanding results achieved at IFA 2005 have encouraged the organizers of IFA, Gesellschaft für Unterhaltungs- und Kommunikationselektronik (gfu) and Messe Berlin, to continue to develop the IFA concept. The supervisory board and the management of the gfu have unanimously agreed to hold IFA every year in future.

IFA 2006 was the first to be held as an annual event, and HDTV was again one of the main topics. Following its launch in 2005, twelve months later HDTV was being presented as a ready-to-market media service with a rapidly expanding range of programmes. Moreover, with Blu-ray discs and HD-DVD, a new generation of optical media became available, bringing high-definition quality into the homes.

IFA 2006 also featured two other major developments in media technology: alliances between broadcasting stations, the equipment manufacturers and the operators of mobile phone services led to the introduction of new television services that can be received on mobile phones and other mobile devices. Another major topic was that of television services via the internet (IPTV).

IFA 2007 was dominated by the generational shift to high-definition media. It goes without saying that the new television sets on show this year are HD-ready.

IFA 2008: First IFA presenting Home Appliances

In 2008 for the first time the combination of consumer electronics and home appliances creates an unprecedented diversity, making this the most attractive platform for international dealers, buyers, consumers and the industry. Following its successful premiere the Home Appliances section expanded at IFA 2009 and now occupied Halls 1.1 to Hall 6.1 (2008: Halls 1.1 to 4.1).

Following its successful premiere the Home Appliances section expanded at IFA 2009 and now occupied Halls 1.1 to Hall 6.1 (2008: Halls 1.1. to 4.1.).

The organisers welcomed the return of consumer electronics exhibitors Pioneer and Sennheiser. Vodafone was represented with a large stand covering more than 1,000 square metres in Hall 18. For the first time Kenwood and JVC occupied a joint stand. Harman International rented a huge area of its own on the grounds as well as the

Radio Tower itself.

IFA 2009 statistics in brief: a significant rise in trade visitor numbers and attendance by the general public. German Chancellor Angela Merkel described IFA as the driving force of the entire economy. The amount of business concluded was in excess of three billion Euros. More than 224,000 visitors attended the fair.

50th IFA Edition in 2010

Classified as a leap into a new era the 50th IFA making history. The signs of success were good: With a double-digit growth in area to around 134 400 square meters (+11%) of rented exhibition space and 1423 exhibitors were bests achieved. Similarly, many visitors came to the 50th IFA: 235,000 visitors (up 5%), including 125,000 trade visitors (+8%) made IFA again the world's largest and most important show for consumer electronics and home appliances. The order volume of trade is with 3.5 billion Euros (+9%) over the previous year.

With IFA-Keynotes from Google, Bosch Siemens, IBM, ESPN, and Constantin the IFA set new standards. The new exhibition areas "IFA iZone" and "IFA eLibrary" were very successful from the start. Thus, the IFA has integrated the latest trends from the world of i-products and e-media success.

51th IFA Edition in 2011

Retailers and consumers reacted very positively to the record number of product firsts at this year's IFA. The world's largest and most important trade fair for consumer electronics and home appliances ended on 7 September in Berlin, with orders placed for more than 3.7 billion Euros. 239,518 visitors (+1%) attended the show. 1,441 exhibitors (+ 1%) exhibited their latest products in a display area covering 140,200 square metres (+ 4%).

IFA 2012: Home of the digital world

From 31 August to 5 September 1,439 exhibitors with their numerous product debuts on a display area occupying 142,200 sqm (+ 1.4 %). With business concluded exceeding 3.8 billion euros (+3 %) and attendance reaching 240,000 (+1%), the world's leading trade show for Consumer Electronics and Home Appliances in Berlin achieved record results.

With the participation of 142.300 (+7%) trade visitors, more than 42.800 (+11%) of whom came from abroad, IFA is underlining its global importance for the industry, trade and media.

IFA 2013 provides optimism

Despite uncertainties on world markets, exhibitors and dealers returned from IFA full of confidence. Manufacturers' expectations were exceeded quite significantly, especially in the key areas of TV, telecommunications and electrical home appliances. With orders totaling just under four billion euros, IFA is the most outstanding event for the industry and the trade in the run-up to the Christmas season, the most important trading period of the year. The 1,500 exhibitors presented innumerable products and innovations on a rented display area measuring 145,000 m². IFA attracted an overall attendance of approximately 240.000, including more than 142,000 trade visitors (+1.4%), 46,000 of them from abroad (+2.2%).

IFA 2014: Global trends are driving the market

Never before in the 90-year history of the event have so many products made their world debut at IFA. Global trends such as networking, wearables and further improvements in the images and sound produced by digital TV and hi-fi systems have reached new heights. More than ever IFA 2014 underlined its expertise in its role as the world's meeting place for the industry and for exchanging information.

The reactions from retailers and consumers to the many products making their world

debut were extremely positive. Over a period of six days alone IFA 2014 generated orders totaling 4.25 billion euros and follow-up business is expected to be good. IFA's unique blend of product innovations, stars and entertainment, presented by 1,538 exhibitors on a display area covering around 149,500 square metres, attracted more than 240,000 visitors. The floor space occupied was larger than at any previous event in the history of IFA.

IFA 2015: IFA generates the buzz

One of the most successful IFA shows in the history of the event has come to a close with an unexpectedly large increase in trade visitors from Germany and abroad. Overall, the total number of visitors rose to 241,990. 1,645 exhibitors displayed their new products to the markets around the world.

Among retailers and exhibitors at IFA expectations for end-of-year business were given a strong boost. Never before had the industry displayed so many new product categories and were so many products shown to the public for the first time. With orders placed amounting to around 4.35 billion euros IFA once again confirmed its standing as the world's leading trade fair for the industry and retail trade before the peak annual sales period in the run-up to Christmas.

The reports filed by almost 6,000 journalists, including 2,700 from more than 70 countries, reached 1.2 billion people worldwide.

IFA builds on its success in 2016

More exhibitors and more innovations than ever before is exceptionally good news for retail and industry. For the first time 1,800 exhibitors presented their latest products on an exhibition area of 158,000 square meters. In 2016 IFA for the first time exploited with STATION Berlin an additional exhibiting space outside of the fairground at ExpoCenter City. IFA Global Markets focused exclusively on trade visitors. This offers especially for buyers and dealers a market place to meet suppliers, OEMs and ODMs. More than 300 exhibitors showed their latest product highlights and services on an area of 10,000 square meters.

With an expected order volume of 4.5 billion euros and 240,000 visitors, the world's most important trade show for consumer and home electronics laid the foundation for strong end of year business. IFA has once again underlined its global relevance. The number of international trade visitors increased to 139,000. More than 5,700 Journalists from more than 50 countries have reported extensively on the latest technology trends. The spotlights of the IFA Keynotes showed a variety from the smart kitchen to the connected car, virtual realities and the internet of things. The speakers have been BSH CEO Dr. Karsten Ottenberg, Dr. Dieter Zetsche, CEO of Daimler AG, Mark Papermaster, CTO of AMD and IBM Watson IoT Manager Harriet Green. The new Smart Home exhibition area in Hall 6.2 was very popular with visitors and the media. On these 3,000 square meters, more than 50 exhibitors from 15 countries exhibited their latest products and services covering various aspects of intelligent home automation. More than 150 companies showcased the latest smart home solutions on their stands.