

## CNN 'hologram': How much did it cost?

How much did that fancy "hologram" on CNN cost?

The network won't divulge the cost of the technology, which allowed Wolf Blitzer to speak to what viewers saw as a flickering image of correspondent Jessica Yellin, who was in Chicago. (An even more weird moment came when CNN's Anderson Cooper interviewed musician will.i.am from Black Eyed Peas via hologram -- or was it hol.o.gram?)



"Star Wars," 1977



CNN, 2008

To create the image, CNN used 40 cameras to film Yellin, a green-screen environment inside a specially constructed tent, a TV screen that allowed Yellin to see the combined image of her and Blitzer, a set of computers that made Yellin's image camera-ready, and "a mix of mechanical and infrared camera-tracking technology to create a realistic holographic image," according to CNN spokeswoman Erica Puntel.

(A holographic suite was also set up at McCain headquarters in Arizona, but it was not used.)

Andrew Orloff, creative director of Zoic Studios, a Los Angeles firm that creates visual effects for TV, movies, commercials and video games, said such equipment does not come cheaply: Just one rendering engine, the kind of computer used to crunch multiple streams of visual information, can cost \$70,000, he said.

For a new company to buy all that hardware and software would cost millions, but CNN already owns lots of cameras and equipment. Orloff's ballpark guesstimate of what the holographic extras may have cost the network: \$300,000-\$400,000.

His verdict on Yellin's holographic debut? "It was pretty cool, but it was a little bit weird too. ... It was a little bit creepy," he said. "They were not quite looking at each other -- he couldn't see what we saw."

Perhaps the futuristic technology will be perfected by 2012. CNN may use the technology in the future, Puntel said, but the network is not sure when.