

THE ROLE OF INTEGRATED DIGITAL TELEVISION SETS IN ACHIEVING DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

As an IT Professional resident in a village in East Northamptonshire with poor analogue TV reception, including no Channel 5, having also suffered until recently from poor mobile phone reception and with no cable supplier or prospect of broadband availability for the foreseeable future, I feel disenfranchised from some of the promise of the digital age.

I have a small living room and would not consider a TV set larger than 20". However I would replace it now if an economic IDTV option were available. Since it is not, I may put off replacing my TV until this changes, facing several more years of poor reception.

Alternatively, I may fit my PC with a DTV card: I already watch DVD's on it and have an analogue TV card.

I noticed some publicity about DVB in television sales a few months ago, but it is my impression that it is now a non-event as far as retailers are concerned. In Dixons this morning there was no information about DVB, I was informed that most of the wide screen televisions on display were analogue only but that they wouldn't be obsolete because I would be able to buy an adaptor in the future!

In my view consumers are being conned into buying analogue only TV's. Unless the whole changeover is delayed significantly they are buying apparatus which will be obsolete before it wears out. This is to the manufacturers' advantage but it may make it difficult for the government to reap the benefit of freeing up the present analogue bandwidth: the voter will resent having to buy additional components or replace a TV that is only a few years old.

I note the consultation on subtitling and presume it may be too late to incorporate this into the technology but if all DTV decoders included teletext capability, including those integrated in VCR's then it would be possible to record subtitles for the hard of hearing with any VCR.

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