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# HOME Theater



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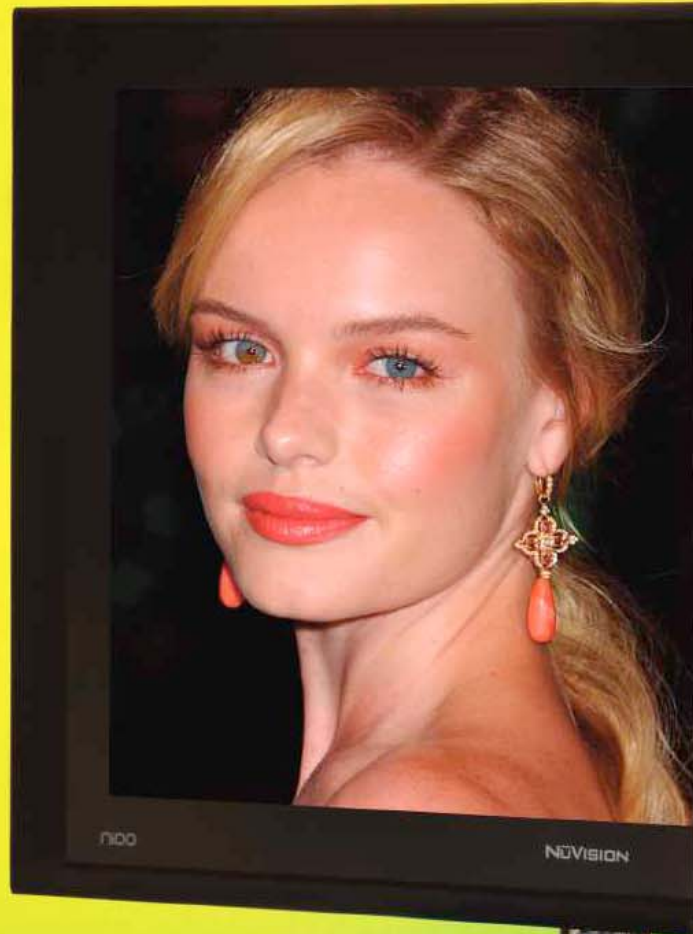


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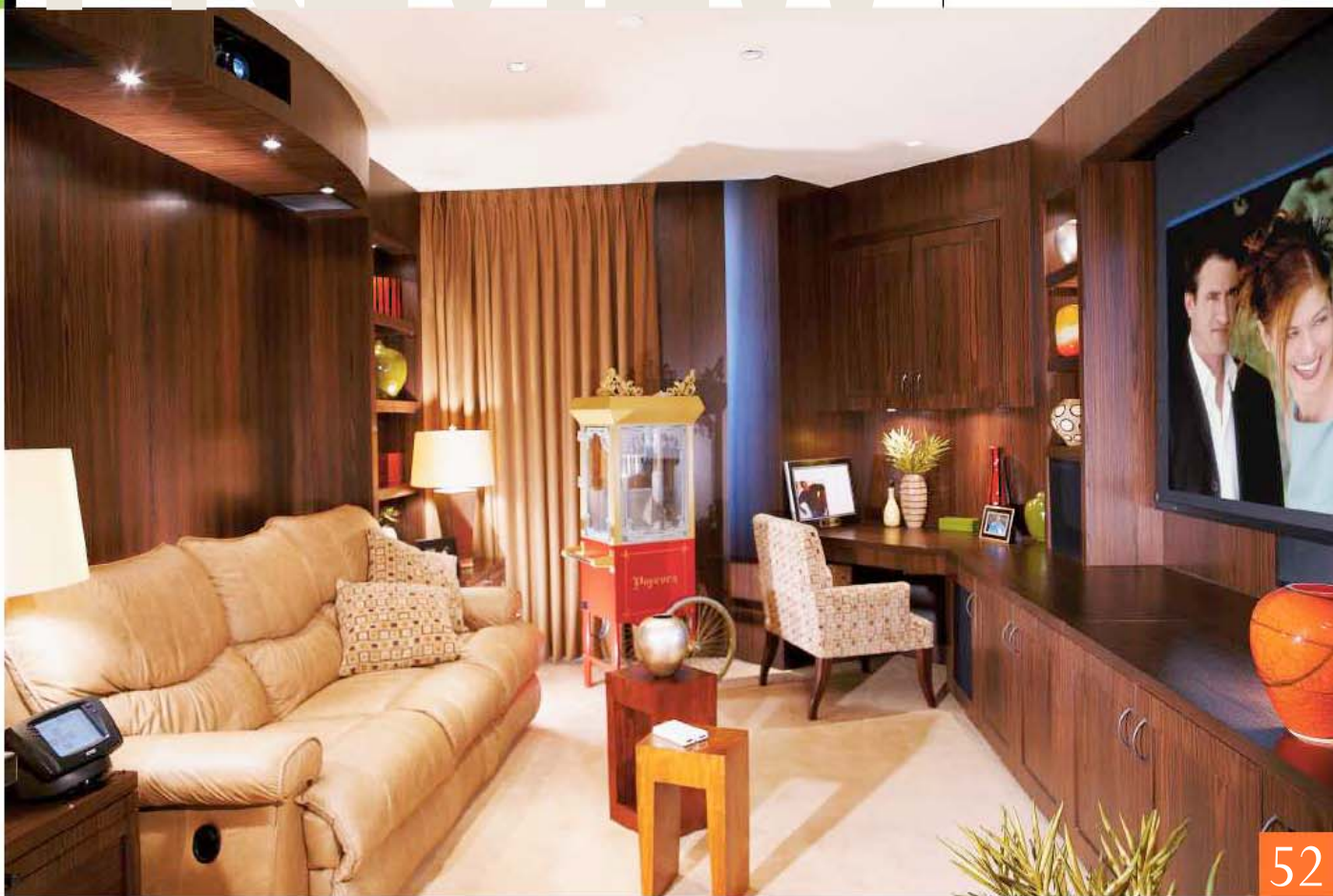


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52

## features

### PLAYING GAME

**52** The Tampa Bay Buccaneers all-star takes *HT* inside his home theater in Phoenix, Arizona. This gamer's paradise has everything a future hall-of-famer could ask for.  
by Amy Carter



52

### A WINNING COMBINATION

**62** Manufacturers are betting that sports programming will continue to drive the HDTV transition.  
by Adrienne Maxwell

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62

## columns

### GearWorks: Lamps

by Geoffrey Morrison

**34** Really expensive light bulbs.

### Hook Me Up: MPEG-4 EVER

by Mark Fleischmann

**39** How a new codec may change DTV as we know it.

### HT Talks to...Peter Gabriel

by Steve Guttenberg

**46** Gabriel talks about his new DVD *Play*, technology, and why the iPod won't take over the music world.

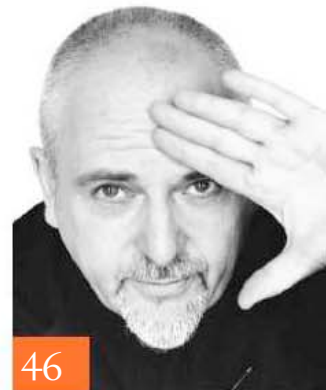
### Curtain Call

by Michael J. Nelson

**130** Celluloid Freeway?



34



46

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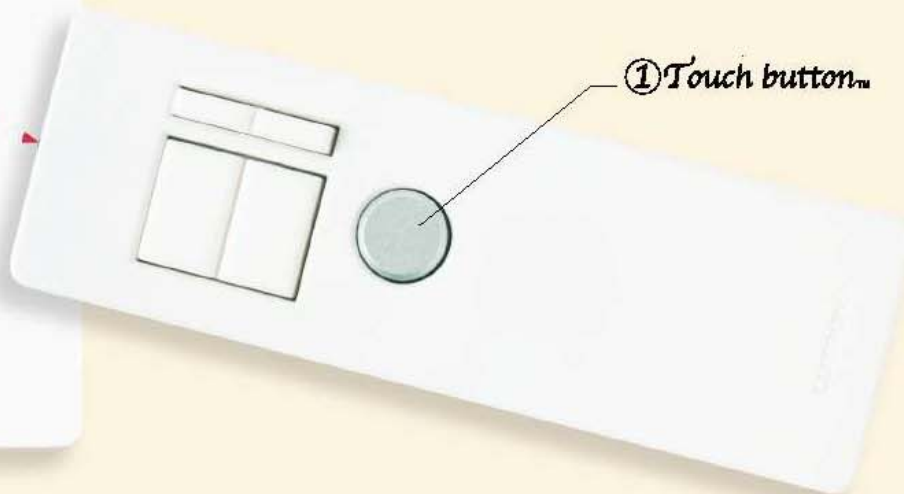
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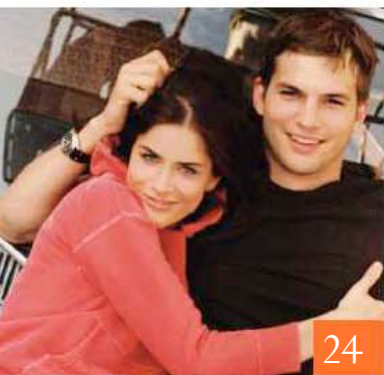


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24



26



28



32



115

## departments

**Prologue** by Maureen C. Jenson

**10** PBS dodges a bullet...for now.

### From the Staff

**12** This month's question: Why is football the best sport to watch in HD?

### Letters

**17** How big is too big when it comes to subwoofers?

### Premium Programming

**24** Your source for the highest-quality digital programming to check out this month.

**AV Newswire** by Mark Fleischmann

**26** Will your cable operator become your TiVo?

### Coming Attractions

**28** Want to snazz up your system? Here's a look at the hottest new A/V gadgets and gear.

### Premiere Design

**32** Philips' 32-inch Ambilight Pixel Plus 2 LCD is a real Dutch treat.

### Critic's Couch: Movies and Music Reviewed

**115** Peter Gabriel's *Play*, *Jaws 30th Anniversary Edition*, and *The Pacifier*.

### Dealer Locator

**123** Before you run out to buy a product we've reviewed, find a quality dealer near you.

### ON THE COVER

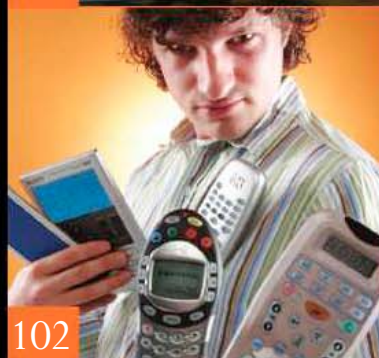
Premier Mounts' VuTerra stand looks sleek and elegant with this NuVision LCD and Infinity speaker. Gear from JVC, One for All, Orb Audio, RadioShack, and Universal Remote Control rounds out this system. Screen images courtesy of Getty Images and WireImage. Photography by Cordero Studios.



74



80



102



112

### HIGH PERFORMANCE

**74** Earthquake Cinénova Grande Seven-Channel Amplifier ✦ Power that will surely register on your Richter scale.

### MIDRANGE

**80** Infinity TSS-4000 Speaker System ✦ Infinity comes through again.

**86** NuVision NVX32HDU LCD HD Monitor ✦ Out with the old, in with the Nu.

**92** JVC HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV ✦ More TV than you can shake a really, really big stick at.

### ENTRY LEVEL

**98** Orb Audio Mod1 Speaker System ✦ A new global power?

**102** Universal Remote Control Roundup ✦ Don't Panic: A home theaterphile's guide to universal remotes.

### CONVERGENCE

**112** LTB Audio LTB-AC3 5.1 Surround Sound Headphone System ✦ 5.1 for your head.



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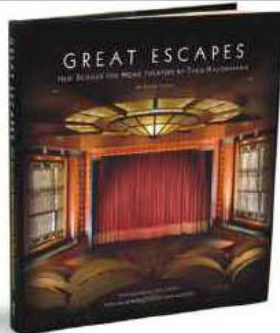


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-Dean Koontz, NY Times

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# PBS Dodges a Bullet...

...for now.

As I write this, the House of Representatives has just voted to restore \$100 million in threatened funding cuts from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Not restored was the Ready to Learn program, a preschool partnership with the Department of Education, and \$80 million in support of public stations' transition to digital facilities and other technical upgrades. If you think this is a lot of money, just remember that the Feds only provide about 15 percent of PBS' overall revenue. The remainder comes from private donations.

Curious, I logged on to see what comments were being posted online. One incredibly well-informed (read sarcasm) online scribe said that PBS is "mostly programming created for a small, elite, upper-class minority. Who would want to watch all of those symphonies, ballets, and intellectual interviews? Those who support PBS are taking from ME in the way of MY tax dollars." Hmm, you're right (more sarcasm). Why would anyone want national assistance for something that is educational and informational and belongs to all of the people, which provides viewers with history, music, dance, art, travel, intelligent humor, and more? Not just for a chosen few, public broadcasting and public radio are revered by every age group.

How do I know? Because, in my own family (hardly the elite, upper-class minority), from our son to my aged mother, who can no longer leave her home, the local public-broadcasting stations are practically the only stations we watch on a regular basis, and these viewers have an age span of more than 80 years. Ah, but back to the tax argument. Let's see: The Government Accountability Office estimated that, between 1997 and 2003, the Department of Defense

spent \$100 million on airline tickets that were not used and failed to seek refunds—even though the tickets were refundable. And, in 2001, \$600,000 in tax money was spent on researching the sex lives of South African ground squirrels. Now, maybe there is something of vital importance about either of these two that is not initially apparent, or perhaps there is significance in the dozens of other seemingly nonsensical ways that the govern-

ment chooses to spend my/our tax dollars. The reality is—guess what—you do not get to pick and choose where your tax money goes, but, with public broadcasting funding, there is an immediate benefit to millions of Americans.

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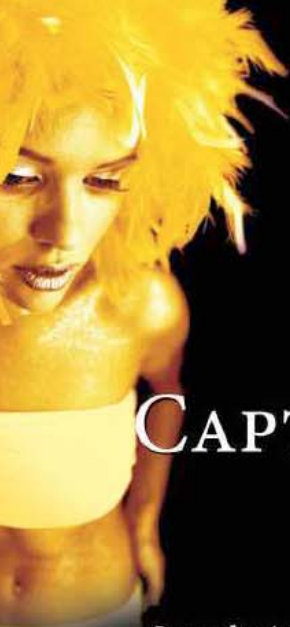
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from the staff

## Why is football the best sport to watch in HD?



**CHRIS LEWIS, AUDIO EDITOR:** “Size makes football the ultimate sport to watch in widescreen HD—it’s the largest field, with the most people on it, of any sport I care to watch. I’m not too concerned with the extra resolution—I don’t need to see every bead of sweat. But, with football, where so much is going on at once, the widescreen perspective opens the window that much wider and allows you to see the game in an entirely new way. It is more valuable and effective here than with any other sport.”

**GEOFFREY MORRISON, VIDEO EDITOR:** “Sure, the resolution is great, but being able to see such a large portion of the field is awesome. (Rectangular field, rectangular screen—makes sense to me.) It’s nice to be able to see the backfield set up, watch the safeties read the line, and so on. Widescreen helps hockey in the same way, but who watches hockey?”



**CHRIS CHIARELLA, CONVERGENCE EDITOR:** “HDTV’s resolution allows viewers to better spot the erratic behavior of those over-paid athletes under the influence of illegal drugs and to identify (with crystal clarity) the next potential sex offender.”

**DARRYL WILKINSON, EDITOR-AT-LARGE:** “Football is the best sport to watch in HD, only because the NHL is on strike—and because the cheerleaders in football are quite a bit more photogenic than the ones you see on the sidelines at curling games. Actually, *real* football (soccer) is best, but that’s a secret known only to the 14 or so of us who watch it.” [I agree.—Ed. :-)]



**AMY CARTER, CONTRIBUTOR:** “Clearly, football is the best sport to watch anytime, even if you’re forced to haul out the black-and-white to catch a game. But football in high definition is superior to any other sport in HD. Those mid-field shots of quarterbacks going long or DEs taking somebody down just look awesome when you have the level of detail that HD affords. And don’t even get me started on the superiority of college football...”

**ADRIENNE MAXWELL, CONTRIBUTOR:** “It’s only logical that the best sport to watch on TV is the best sport to watch in HDTV. The wider angles and improved detail help you appreciate the game’s speed and complexity. And occasionally hearing a fan cuss in the surrounds really makes you feel like you’re there.”



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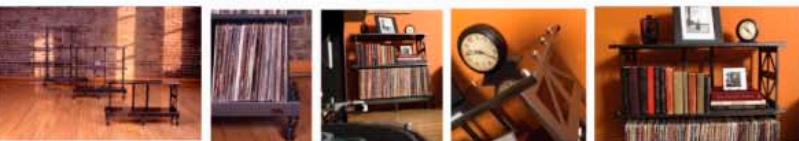


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# Wiseguy



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## IN MY HUMBLE

I have been reading your magazine for a while now, and I just want to throw in my 2 cents. Currently, HDTV is a joke.

- 1) Resolution is in an interim stage: 1,366 by 768 is not HDTV.
- 2) There are not enough HDTV stations, so there is nothing to watch.
- 3) Current TVs have too many faults to purchase one for the long term.
- 4) No really good DVR is available for HDTV.

But I thank all of the beta HDTV testers out there for their use of the interim technology in order to lower the prices for us who are waiting for real HDTV.

**I.N. Botnick**  
Corona Del Mar, CA

*I'm going to do my best not to sound like a wise-ass, but I'm sure I won't succeed.*

1) Actually, 1,366 by 768 is very much HDTV, and, if you think you need to wait for 1080p to see HD, you're a fool. Unless your screen is enormous, you're not going to see a difference between 768p and 1080p.

2) Not even if you live in the sticks. With the exception of reality TV, almost everything in prime time on every network is in HD. In addition, most cable and both satellite providers offer additional channels that run everything in HD. In my area, Time Warner Cable offers 14 HD channels, and, with an antenna, I can pick up more than 15 others (although, admittedly, the OTA stations aren't HD all the time). Other than Comedy Central and the SciFi Channel, everything I watch is in HD. Maybe if you live in a cave you can't get HD, but only if the cave doesn't have cable.

3) Wow. How subjective. I find all generalizations stupid.

4) See No. 3.

*Way to be condescending. It must make you feel really superior. Here in*

## We welcome questions and comments.

You can e-mail them to [htletters@primedia.com](mailto:htletters@primedia.com), or mail them to: Home Theater Letters, 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048. Please note: Be sure to check the FAQ page on our Website ([www.hometheatermag.com](http://www.hometheatermag.com)) to see if we've already answered any questions you might have. Questions about the features and functions of a particular product are best directed to the manufacturer. Questions about what product you should buy are best directed to a dealer who knows all the details of your system, your preferences, and your personal habits. All submissions are considered the exclusive property of *Home Theater* magazine and Primedia. Due to the volume of mail that we receive, we regret that we cannot respond to every letter.

*reality, the joke is on you. While you're waiting for the miracle day when your idea of HD just appears, the rest of us will be enjoying real HDTV, right now. Thanks for reading.—GM*

## WHAT A CONTRAST

Does it matter whether a projector has a contrast ratio of 2,000:1 or 400:1?

**Dylan**  
(Via E-mail)

*In theory, the 2,000:1 will look more contrasty. That is, it will appear that there's more of a difference between the light and dark parts of an image.*

*Contrast ratio is also only one aspect of performance. A 4,000:1 projector could be brighter and have better color, better processing, less noise, or any other performance aspects that would make it look better than a projector with a lower contrast ratio. Just as only looking at a car's horsepower spec tells you nothing about its overall performance, contrast ratio is not the be-all, end-all litmus test of display performance that some people make it out to be.—GM*

## FROM THE DESK OF...

We at BG want to thank Geoffrey Morrison for his fine GearWorks article, "Tweeters," in the May issue of *Home Theater*. In particular, we appreciate that he included planar-ribbon drivers and mentioned BG by name. I would like to take the



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**ONKYO** IMAGINATIVE SIGHT & SOUND

opportunity, however, to comment on his characterization of planar-ribbon drivers as expensive, fragile, and having limited output.

The planar-ribbon driver has been around for decades, and its early iterations were, in fact, more expensive, less efficient, and less robust than its conventional counterparts. For example, the designs of the 1970s and '80s mostly used Mylar-film diaphragms and simply did not handle enough power. In addition, they used ceramic magnets that resulted in overall low efficiency. Those two crucial factors led to the overpowering of the ribbons and, ultimately, their failure.

Originally known as Bohlender-Graebener, BG was founded more than a decade ago with planar-ribbon drivers as the core technology for our loudspeakers. During that time, we have pioneered significant developments in every aspect of this driver's performance and now hold a number of patents.

Today, BG uses neodymium magnets that provide (on average) 20 to 50 times more magnetic energy than the early ceramic magnets. For a diaphragm material, we now use Teonex, a far more advanced material than Mylar in every respect. These two changes alone have resulted in dramatic increases in both efficiency and power handling. In addition, there are other proprietary design and manufacturing solutions where BG has brought ribbon-driver technology to an entirely new level. As a result of our efforts, as well as material science advances, BG now develops and manufactures far better products than were ever thought possible. And, as the world's largest producer of planar-ribbon drivers, we have been able to make them competitively priced with other high-quality drivers.

Planar-ribbon drivers have certainly come a long way, and BG is at

the forefront of the technology. We just wanted to make this additional information available to the readers of *Home Theater* magazine and assure them that our planar-ribbon drivers are comparable or superior to conventional drivers in every respect.

**Igor Levitsky**  
VP, Engineering and Product  
Development  
BG Corp.

*We apologize if there was any confusion between our separate descriptions of planar-magnetic tweeters, like those produced by BG, and more traditional ribbon tweeters. The latter is distinguished by having a diaphragm made exclusively of conductive material. Since they usually consist of an ultra-thin strip of metal foil, they tend to be fragile. Planar-magnetic tweeters, by contrast, are made of metal conductors bonded to a nonconductive film diaphragm. Historically made from Mylar or other rugged high-tech films (now Teonex in BG's tweeters), these diaphragms are significantly less fragile than a thin strip of metal foil. Planar-magnetic tweeters generally have better durability and higher output capability than traditional ribbon tweeters, putting them on par with many conventional tweeters.—GM*

#### TAKE IT OFF!

I am writing in response to a letter from David Meyer in the June 2005 issue about "racy" photography in your magazine. This point of view is indicative of the inherent hypocrisy of today's American society. So many of us find an image of a scantily clad woman more questionable or inappropriate than we do images that depict violence. Is this really the message we want to send to our children? It's cool to blow up buildings and shoot guns, but heaven forbid you see a midriff? Since when is the human body (and the ones Meyer spoke of were still clothed, mind you) questionable? Why do we as a



## Support your loved ones

That new flat screen may as well be part of the family with as much time as you'll be spending with it. Give it the attention it deserves by putting it on something just as impressive. Like ICON from BDI. Strong steel construction and floating glass shelves provide a sturdy and elegant home for your new arrival. And if you want to take your baby for a spin, there's even a model that swivels!



To locate a dealer near you, visit [www.bdiusa.com](http://www.bdiusa.com)

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Mirage®

# UNI-Theater



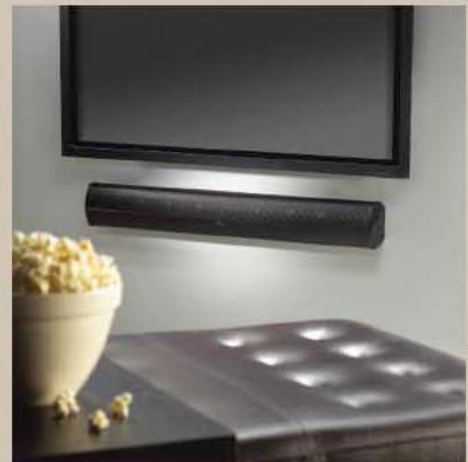
*“...exceptional”*  
*“...truly remarkable”*

Steve Guttenberg, Home Theater Magazine, March 2005

## THE 3-IN-1 HOME THEATER AUDIO SOLUTION

The UNI-Theater — a revolutionary audio solution like no other! Featuring patented OMNIPOLAR™ technology from Mirage, the UNI-Theater incorporates the left, right and center speakers within one ingeniously designed, extruded aluminum enclosure.

For more information on the UNI-Theater and our dynamic range of OMNIPOLAR™ speakers, call us at 416 321 1800 or visit us online at [www.miragespeakers.com](http://www.miragespeakers.com)



culture find it so morally deplorable to show some skin but find it completely OK to show images of cars blowing up or people all bloodied from combat? We need to get over this issue if we are ever to judge people for their internal qualities rather than the way they look. I don't care if you put a man or a woman, clothed or unclothed, on the cover of your magazine. I read it for what's inside. I will gladly put it on my coffee table (and always do!), and, if someone comes over and gets offended by it, that's their problem.

**Gabriel Lowe**  
(Via E-mail)

#### AN APPLE A DAY?

I was wondering if you could answer some questions about using a PC as my DVD player. I'm looking into buying a projection setup and getting a new DVD player, but I've read about using a PC setup solely as a DVD player. Is this common for home theater enthusiasts to do? I know there is software that allows region-free access and proper speed setup for PAL DVDs, along with being compatible with HD-DVDs. (*Terminator 2 Ultimate Edition* comes to mind.) Are there certain PCs you guys would recommend, like a Sony Vaio, or perhaps an Apple? Or is it best to just build your own?

**Mike Bauer**  
(Via E-mail)

*If all you plan to do is use the PC as a DVD player, you are almost surely better off buying a standalone player. It will be easier to use, cheaper, and, in many cases, it will perform better. Careful choices on hardware make all the difference in the end performance, as our HTPC build showed (especially with video cards) in our June and July 2005 issues. In that vein, I can't outright recommend a store-bought computer, even though they will most likely be cheaper than building your own. If you find one*

*that has most of the parts you would buy on your own, by all means, go for it. As far as Apple goes—and let me preface this by saying I am a Mac fan—they aren't the best choice. This isn't because of any performance shortcomings; it's because most software is written for PC, and many of the programs that you'd use are most likely only written for PC.*  
—GM

#### GOING OVERBOARD

I'm ready to upgrade my subwoofer. I'm using a Mirage 100-watt 8-inch ported design in a 15-by-13-by-8-foot room with a textured-plaster ceiling, paper-on-plaster walls, and carpet. There's a large opening into another room. My buying habits have always leaned toward overkill, but I think that could be a huge mistake in this case. If left unadvised, I might buy some 1,000-watt dual-12-inch sub that I'll never be able to dial-in. Can you suggest a woofer size? Amp wattage?

**Danny Zingone**  
(Via E-mail)

*Your room is on the small side, but the opening into the other room negates any advantages of a smaller room. 100 watts for a sub isn't a lot, and, with a large driver and large waves to reproduce, more watts are usually better. However, the sub's location in the room is more important. Room modes will mess up any sub's frequency response, creating peaks and nulls that raw power can't overcome. Placing your sub in the corner usually provides the loudest—but rarely the most accurate—response. If you move it along the wall while you listen to it, you should be able to find a good-sounding location. While your overkill tendencies are certainly going to aim you toward hugely powerful subs, your money would be better spent on a slightly less powerful sub with extensive EQ features. A sub you can dial-in to your room will almost always sound better than one that is merely loud.*—GM



## High Style for High Def

Beautifully surround your system with curved wood panels, sturdy steel supports, and tempered glass shelves. With CIELO from BDI your home theater is presented as well as it is protected. Perfect for flat screen and rear projection TVs, CIELO supports the screen at the perfect height while providing plenty of space below for a center speaker and components. Available in two and three component-wide models, for TVs up to 62".



To locate a dealer near you, visit [www.bdiusa.com](http://www.bdiusa.com)

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high performance furniture.







# A Tall Order

It was a tall order when Revel engineering was asked to create the most affordable line of Revel speakers. There was one overriding mandate: Make sure they sound like Revels!

With this goal in mind, drivers, crossovers and cabinets were designed, thoroughly evaluated, assembled, and refined until our engineers were convinced the Revel sound could be achieved. Then the speakers were subjected to the ultimate test – double-blind listening.

The result? The Concertas not only sounded like Revels, they handily outperformed the competition as well. A tall order indeed.



Available in cherry, maple or black finish (shown at top), the attractive design of the Concerta series easily integrates into the décor of any home. The S12 is available in black or white.



## What to Watch: HDTV

### THE MAJOR NETWORKS

#### ABC

- Monday Night Football:
  - September 12, 9:00 pm ET: Philadelphia at Atlanta
  - September 19, 9:00 pm ET: Washington at Dallas
  - September 26, 9:00 pm ET: Kansas City at Denver

#### CBS

- Sundays, starting September 11: various NFL games

#### Fox

- Sundays, starting September 11: various NFL games

#### NBC

- NASCAR:
  - September 4: California 500, California Speedway

### CABLE/SATELLITE

#### INHD/INHD2

- FHM Uncovered
- Fields of Glory
- Caribbean Escapes
- Fashionista: Los Angeles
- Music Specials:
  - Wilco: I'm Trying to Break Your Heart (documentary)
  - Norah Jones and the Handsome Band**
- Sports:
  - Division 1A College Football
  - Major League Baseball (three games per week)
  - INHD Ringside



#### Discovery HD Theater

- The Green Land
- **Rides 3**
- Golf Escapes (second season)
- Secret Club of Speed
- An Inside Look 2

\*\* In addition to the special events listed above, all of the major broadcast networks and some of the cable networks show at least a portion of their weekly programming in HD. Check your local listings for additional HD programming on the major networks and these HDTV channels: Cinemax HDTV, Discovery HD Theater, ESPN HD, HBO HDTV, HDNet, HDNet Movies, INHD, INHD2, PBS HD, Showtime HD, Starz HDTV, TNT in HD, The Movie Channel HD, and Universal HD (formerly Bravo HD+).

#### ESPN/ESPN2 HD

- Sunday Night Football:
  - September 11, 8:30 pm ET: Indianapolis at Baltimore
  - September 18, 8:30 pm ET: Kansas City at Oakland
  - September 25, 8:30 pm ET: NY Giants at San Diego

#### HDNet

- Sports
  - September 2 & 16, 9:30 pm ET: World Extreme Cagefighting: Clash of the Titans
  - September 9, 9:30 pm ET: HDNet Boxing
  - September 23 & 30, 9:30 pm ET: HDNet Boxing from the Manhattan Center
- Major League Soccer:
  - September 3, 9:00 pm ET: D.C United at Colorado Rapids
  - September 10, 10:00 pm ET: Colorado Rapids at Los Angeles Galaxy
  - September 17, 7:30 pm ET: Chicago Fire at Columbus Crew
  - September 24, 9:30 pm ET: Columbus Crew at Real Salt Lake
- NASCAR Grand National Division
  - September 2, 11:00 pm ET: West Series 200, California Speedway
  - September 16, 1:00 pm ET: Sylvania 125, New Hampshire International Speedway
  - September 23, 4:30 pm ET: MBNA RacePoints 150, Dover International Speedway
- College Football:
  - September 10, 6:00 pm ET: Stanford at Navy
- HDNet Concert Series:
  - September 4, 9:00 pm ET: Bonnaroo Music Festival 2004
  - September 11, 9:00 pm ET: Blues at the Brewery Part 1: Tommy Castro Band
  - September 18, 9:00 pm ET: Blues at the Brewery Part 2: Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers

#### Showtime HD

- Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights
- Speak
- Edge of America
- Showtime Championship Boxing



## What to Buy: High-Resolution Audio

### RECENT RELEASES:

**Bartók: *The Miraculous Mandarin, Dance Suite, Hungarian Pictures*—  
Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra (DVD-Audio/SACD, Naxos)**

The Carl Verheyen Band: *Rumor Mill* (DVD-Audio, AIX)



Giuliano Carmignola: *Concerto Italiano*  
(Works by Tartini, Vivaldi, Locatelli etc.)—Venice  
Baroque Orchestra (SACD, Deutsche  
Grammophon)

Chopin: *Selected Piano Works*—Roberto  
Prosseda (DVD-Audio, AIX)

John Coltrane: *Soultrane* (SACD, Mobile Fidelity)

Elgar: *Violin Concerto Op. 61* / Vaughan Williams:  
*The Lark Ascending*—Hilary Hahn, London  
Symphony Orchestra (SACD, Deutsche  
Grammophon)

Falla: *El Amor Brujo / El Sombrero de Tres Picos*—Asturias Symphony  
Orchestra (DVD-Audio/SACD, Naxos)

The Kinks: *Low Budget* (SACD, Mobile Fidelity)

Anna Netrebko: *Sempre libera*—Mahler Chamber Orchestra  
(SACD, Deutsche Grammophon)

Rosa Passos, Ron Carter: *Entre Amigos* (SACD, Chesky)

Prokofiev: *Cinderella Suite From the Ballet, Op. 87*—Martha Argerich and  
Mikhail Pletnev (SACD, Deutsche Grammophon)

Tchaikovsky & Korngold: *Violin Concerto*—Anne-Sophie Mutter, London  
Symphony Orchestra (SACD, Deutsche Grammophon)

Paul Williams: *I'm Going Back There Someday* (DVD-Audio, AIX)

Vaughan Williams: *Symphony No. 1 "A Sea Symphony"*—Bournemouth  
Symphony Orchestra (SACD, Naxos)

### NEW AND UPCOMING RELEASES:

J.S. Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*—Julia Fischer  
(SACD, PentaTone)

Benjamin Britten: *Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge Op. 10*—Netherlands  
Chamber Orchestra (SACD, PentaTone)

Larry Corvell, Badi Assad, and John Abercrombie: *3 Guitars* (SACD, Chesky)

Anne-Sophie Mutter: *Carmen-Fantasia* (Works by Faure, Massenet, Ravel,  
Sarasate, Tartini, and Wieniawski)—Wiener  
Philharmoniker (SACD, Deutsche Grammophon)

Babatubde Olatunji: *Circle of Drums*  
(SACD, Chesky)

**Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2, Paganini  
Rhapsody—Lang Lang, Orchestra of the  
Mariinsky Theatre, Valery Gergiev (SACD,  
Deutsche Grammophon)**

Jean Sibelius: *The Symphonies*—Neeme Jarvi,

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (SACD, Deutsche Grammophon)



## What to Buy: High-Definition Video

### BLU-RAY/HD-DVD:

It seems we're not the only ones hoping that Blu-ray and HD-DVD will resolve their differences and come to agree on a single set of standards. Disney chief executive-elect Bob Iger says he's personally trying to get the two camps to come to an agreement and feels it's important for a unified format to be in the works by late 2006.

### WMV HD: COMPLETE CATALOG

*Standing in the Shadows of Motown, Step into Liquid, Terminator 2:*

*Judgment Day Extreme Edition, The Rules of Attraction* (Lions Gate)

*Amazon, Coral Reef Adventure, The Discoverers, Dolphins, Journey Into*

*Amazing Caves, The Living Sea, The Magic of Flight, Speed,*

*Stormchasers, To the Limit* (Image; originally filmed for IMAX theaters)

*Lewis & Clark: Great Journey West* (National Geographic)

*Friday Night Lights, Alexander, Ray* (Universal)



Go to [www.wmvhd.com](http://www.wmvhd.com) to get a list of the PC requirements, download high-def shorts, and view clips from current and future WMV HD releases.

### D-VHS: RECENT RELEASES

D-VHS: Recent Releases

*After Image* (Buena Vista)

*Alexander* (Warner Brothers)

*Beauty Shop* (MGM/UA)

*Frank Miller's Sin City* (Buena Vista)

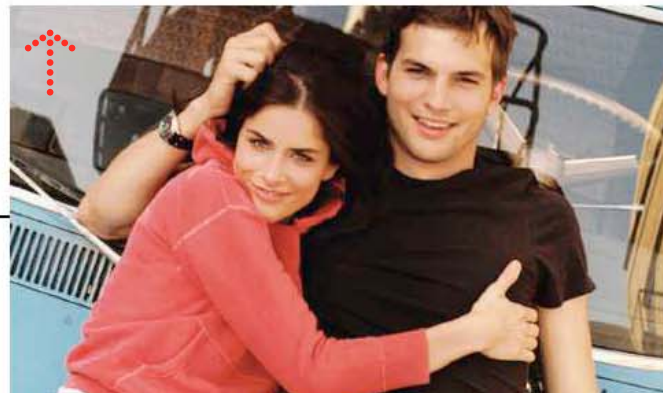
***A Lot Like Love* (Buena Vista)**

*The Mambo Kings* (Warner)

*Sahara* (Paramount)

*Snow White* (Disney)

*The Wedding Date* (Universal)





## Cable Operators Eye DVRs While Others Eye Cable Ops

The cable industry is beginning to feel the winds of change, thanks to new services, the threat of new regulation, and the certainty of new competition.



For one thing, your cable operator now wants to be your TiVo. Time Warner Cable and Cablevision are planning DVR-like services that would allow viewers to designate programming to be stored on a central server. The hard drive would move off your rack and into the hands of the cable company.

Time Warner's service would allow viewers to repeat a program as it's airing by pressing a "start over" button. Heading programmers'

complaints, TWC will not allow fast-forwarding through commercials unless the channel OKs it.

Cablevision's approach would give each viewer a "condominium"—a slice of server space on which to store programs chosen from a limited menu. The viewer can then repeat stored shows anytime.

TWC will reportedly test their new service in Columbia, South Carolina, later this year. Both companies may offer the services by year-end.

Of course, cable companies have been offering boxes with built-in DVRs for some time, in order to keep viewers from defecting to satellite delivery. It remains to be seen whether the new services will prove to be as popular as a viewer-controlled (or viewer-owned) device.

Another potential development on the cable scene is à la carte pricing. Cable subscribers locked into channel packages might eventually be able to pick their favorite channels.

An unlikely coalition of consumer and conservative groups is pushing for à la carte pricing. Consumerists think it's a better deal for the subscriber, while the anti-indecency brigade feels that you shouldn't have to pay for smut. The latter folks have the ear of new FCC chairperson Kevin Martin.

Just in case that isn't enough pressure for the cable ops, the telecom industry is eyeing rate-hike-weary cable subscribers like a German shepherd spotting an unguarded steak on the dinner table. Verizon and NBC Universal have signed a deal to bring all of the network's programs to the telco giant's fiberoptic TV service in time for its third-quarter rollout in Keller, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.

Between the DVRs, the liberals, the conservatives, the FCC, and the telcos, cable companies are sweating bullets.

## The RazorVision's Edge

Belkin's RazorVision video interconnects contain a little box of circuitry that's said to increase contrast, black level, detail, and depth. The technology, licensed from San Diego-based DigiVision, adds no edge-enhancement artifacts. Pricing ranges from \$249 to \$299 for 8- to 16-foot lengths. Building proprietary circuits into cables is hardly a new idea: Tributaries has done it with S-video cable and MIT with both speaker cable and audio interconnects. By the way, unlike a lot of cable manufacturers that are



primarily marketing machines, Belkin actually *manufactures* cable. Not content with just that, the company is also moving into new product categories with their RemoteTV (\$499), a PC-to-TV streaming device, and PFHD (\$199), a power-line conditioner.

# FCC Accelerates Tuner Mandate

Midsized and smaller TVs will be getting digital tuners sooner, thanks to a recent acceleration of the federal government's tuner mandate. The Federal Communications Commission has moved the deadline for TVs with screens from 25 to 36 inches from July 1, 2006, to March 1, 2006, and for smaller TVs



and other products equipped with tuners from July 1, 2007, to December 31, 2006.

The FCC laid down its DTV tuner mandate in August 2002, setting a series of gradual phase-ins, with the biggest screen sizes coming first. By July 1, 2004, half of all TVs with screens 36 inches or larger were required to have digital tuners, with the other half following by July 1, 2005.

By the end of next year, all sets, regardless of size, should be able to receive DTV broadcasts, and so should other tuner-equipped devices like DVD recorders, TiVos, and that LG fridge with a built-in 13-inch display. That will set the stage for another major step in the DTV transition—the cessation of analog over-the-air broadcasting on December 31, 2006.

However, the analog cutoff may be pushed back, and there's even a movement afoot to kill the tuner mandate. Details next month.

## Oops, They Did It Again! DVD Talks Founder

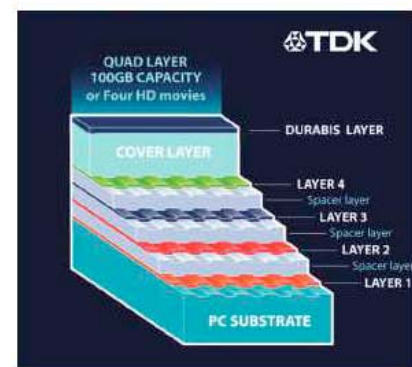
Peace talks between the Blu-ray Disc (BD) and HD-DVD format developers have broken down, although the discussions do still continue; and, if that confuses you, join the club. In the meantime, here's what we know:

In May, Panasonic opened a Blu-ray disc-replicating plant in Universal City, California. Shortly afterward, the rumor mill claimed that the compromise format would combine Blu-ray's disc structure with Toshiba's data-transfer technology. Then Toshiba retaliated with a slew of new improvements in HD-DVD's disc structure:

HD-DVD has a third 15-gigabyte layer now, bringing disc capacity to 45 GB, just 5 GB less than dual-layered BD's incessantly bragged-about 50 GB. Also new is a hybrid HD-DVD with two 15-GB layers on the high-def side and 8.5 GB on the standard-def side—a slick backwards-compatibility move. Memory-Tech, Japan's largest disc replicator, confirmed that both the triple-layered disc and the hybrid disc would be easy to make. Biff, bam, pow!

The Blu-ray group, led by the president of Matsushita, retorted that they have no intention of abandoning their disc structure, in which the laser reads the memory layer at a depth of 0.1 millimeters (versus 0.6 mm for HD-DVD and existing DVD). Soon, TDK had announced a new four-layered disc that doubles both storage capacity, to 100 GB, and data rate, to 72 megabits per second. Baboom!

Combining all of this with existing product announcements for late 2005 and early '06—none of which have been withdrawn—it seems unlikely that a unified format will emerge anytime soon. Meanwhile, sales of DVD players were down 33 percent in the first 17 weeks of 2005—nearly as unhealthy as the now-dying VHS VCR, at 45 percent. Without a compelling new technology based on a reliable standard, consumers have little reason to upgrade.



## THIS JUST IN...

**WOBBULATION** is the kicky name that Hewlett-Packard has given to a DLP-enhancing technology that uses an oscillating mirror to deliver two pixels at the same time. It's even migrating to other brands, including Toshiba, giving the convergent PC maker sudden credibility in the home theater arena...**KREISEN LCD TVS** are now sold in both Wal-Mart and Costco and are covered by the latter's generous return policy. Don't forget to leave room in the trunk along with all of those disposable diapers...**SAMSUNG** will someday deliver a 100-inch flat-panel TV, the president of its LCD division said at a display conference. That won't fit in the trunk...**TOSHIBA** has converted a 45-year-old former CRT plant in Himeji, Japan, for production of its new-tech SED panels starting in early 2007. Out with the old...**PLAYSTATION 3** and Xbox 360 both have HD output, along with a Blu-ray disc drive in the former and wired or Wi-Fi PC streaming in the latter. Home theater and video gaming have officially converged...**BROADBAND-IN-GAS** is what Nethercomm calls its plan to deliver 10 gigabits of HDTV (among other things) through the same lines that serve your stove. Now, will the picture shrink if we put on the kettle?...**THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HOME** has 3.1 TVs (we love the ".1"), according to the Consumer Electronics Association, up from 2.4 last year. But only 13 percent of homes have HDTV...**EUROPEAN UNION** countries have set deadlines between 2010 and 2012 for their digital transitions—they're even slower than the United States. Now, aren't you proud to be an American?...







## Runco International

Runco's new Crystal Series line of LCD flat-panel displays specifically addresses the needs of custom home theater installers. The line includes 26-, 32-, and 40-inch models, each with a 16:9 screen and a 1,366-by-768 resolution. Runco's self-ascribed upscale industrial design allows the displays to blend with a variety of room designs, and the wealth of connections accommodates integration into most home theaters. The TVs have slim profiles, and each includes built-in two-way stereo speakers and a 185-channel NTSC tuner. Runco's own ViViX processing technology ensures visual performance. The LCDs are priced at \$2,495, \$3,995, and \$6,995, respectively.

Runco International • (510) 324-7777 • [www.runco.com](http://www.runco.com)



## Boston Acoustics

Fans of AM/FM radio are constantly plagued with a number of reception problems, including static, hiss, pops, and fades. Boston Acoustics' new Receptor Radio HD, one of the first HD radios for home use, eliminates these deleterious audio phenomena. It also offers listeners radical improvements, as Boston Acoustics claims, in radio fidelity by incorporating digital technology developed by iBiquity Digital, all while providing that distinct Boston sound. With an increasing number of major radio stations converting to digital, listeners now have the opportunity to make an upgrade on their end to maximize the reception of these improved radio signals. The radio retails for \$499, and a satellite speaker is included.

Boston Acoustics • (978) 538-5000 • [www.bostonacoustics.com](http://www.bostonacoustics.com)



## April Music

If you're looking for a pre/pro that is unobstructed by electronics needed to handle video signals, April Music has released their audio-only Stello SP200, retailing for \$3,995. The pre/pro has a two-channel upsampling digital-to-analog converter that supports bit rates up to 24-bit/192-kilohertz, and it handles essentially every popular surround format. It also has eight direct analog inputs for SACD and DVD-Audio users who want to bypass the D/A upconverter for an undisturbed high-res signal. The Stello SP200 offers an extensive array of inputs, which will accommodate format growth or changes. In addition, a bevy of performance-enhancing features highlight the product.

April Music • (603) 883-1982 • [www.aprilmusic.com](http://www.aprilmusic.com)



## BDI

This sleek entertainment center, part of BDI's Avion line, keeps your home theater components accessible, providing practicality and functionality, all in a visually sleek package. An intelligent ventilation system helps maintain the integrity of your components' performance, and the sliding back panel eliminates wiring hassles. Hidden wheels further aid connection adjustments or let you easily move the unit for whatever other reasons. Fabric inserts are available for the compartments for the concealed placement of center-channel, left, and right speakers, and a universal mounting bracket is available separately for \$449. The Avion 8527, pictured here, is \$1,499, and the Avion 8529, which is a little longer, is \$1,799.

BDI • (800) 428-2881 • [www.bdiusa.com](http://www.bdiusa.com)

# *Silver RS*

*Performance with style from  
Monitor Audio*

Created to meet the needs of the most demanding music lovers and home theater enthusiasts, the new Silver RS range of loudspeakers takes the performance of the award winning Silver S range to the next level with stunning new design, construction and engineering.

Monitor Audio's long established expertise in high performance metal driver technology and cabinet design has been enhanced with further innovation to deliver elevated standards of sonic excellence and bold new aesthetic design.

 **MONITOR AUDIO**

*As close as it gets®*

[www.monitoraudiousa.com](http://www.monitoraudiousa.com)

905 428 2800







## Goldmund

A rose by any other name is still a rose. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for 4.75-inch discs, which is why owning a universal disc player is a wise idea. And, if you are unwilling to sacrifice the quality of your home theater, Goldmund's \$39,900 Eidos 36 universal player might be down your alley. In addition to providing a unique quality of CD playback and, as Goldmund asserts, the highest possible standard for DVD-Video, the Eidos 36 supports SACD, DVD-Audio, and MP3 discs. The 50-pound unit has a brass-and-aluminum chassis, advanced electronics, and a power supply that Goldmund says is extremely sophisticated.

Goldmund • (888) GOLD-001 • [www.goldmund.com](http://www.goldmund.com)



## Premier Mounts

Here's a product for high-enders who want to add something imaginative and cool to their home. It's one of Premier Mounts' two Multi-Monitor Mount stands, which allow you to place multiple LCD monitors (sized between 10 and 20 inches diagonally) next to each other to create a video wall. The wall-mountable version, the MMW, holds up to three LCDs. A ceiling attachment for the MMW is available for \$150. The MMT tabletop model, pictured here, can be bolted down and also holds three LCDs, and you can attach up to three additional LCD-holding arms for \$150 each. The stands, priced at \$350 each, offer smooth articulation, sliding horizontal adjustment, and 360-degree rotation.

Premier Mounts • (800) 368-9700 • [www.premiermounts.com](http://www.premiermounts.com)



## SkipJam

Since audio files can be tagged and categorized, it's usually quite easy to sort your digitally stored music collection into various arrangements. Most video files stored on media managers and computers, on the other hand, are not fit to be organized as such. SkipJam intends to change that. Their iMedia Tag Tool software lets you identify your video files with information such as description, genre, and even representative icons, and you can perform searches in any of these fields. The software is most compatible with SkipJam's Internet-friendly manager, the iMedia Center, and SkipJam iMedia players. However, it works with other PC-based systems, as well. It retails for \$20 but also now comes standard with all SkipJam products.

SkipJam • (914) 933-0590 • [www.skipjam.com](http://www.skipjam.com)

## Sanus Systems

Flat-panel televisions are a well-established part of the industry, and now more and more people want their speakers to match this aesthetic. Sanus says their Flat Panel Foundations stand (FF1) is the first on the market that has been specially designed for the new generation of flat-panel speakers. The extruded-aluminum pedestal is contoured to precisely fit the rounded, parabolic backsides of flat-panel speakers. This, coupled with a thick, tempered-glass base and chrome feet (with adjustable carpet spikes), provides a sturdy hold that produces a minimal amount of diffraction and resonance. A patented wire-management system keeps wires completely hidden in the stanchion. The FF1's retail price is \$160 each.

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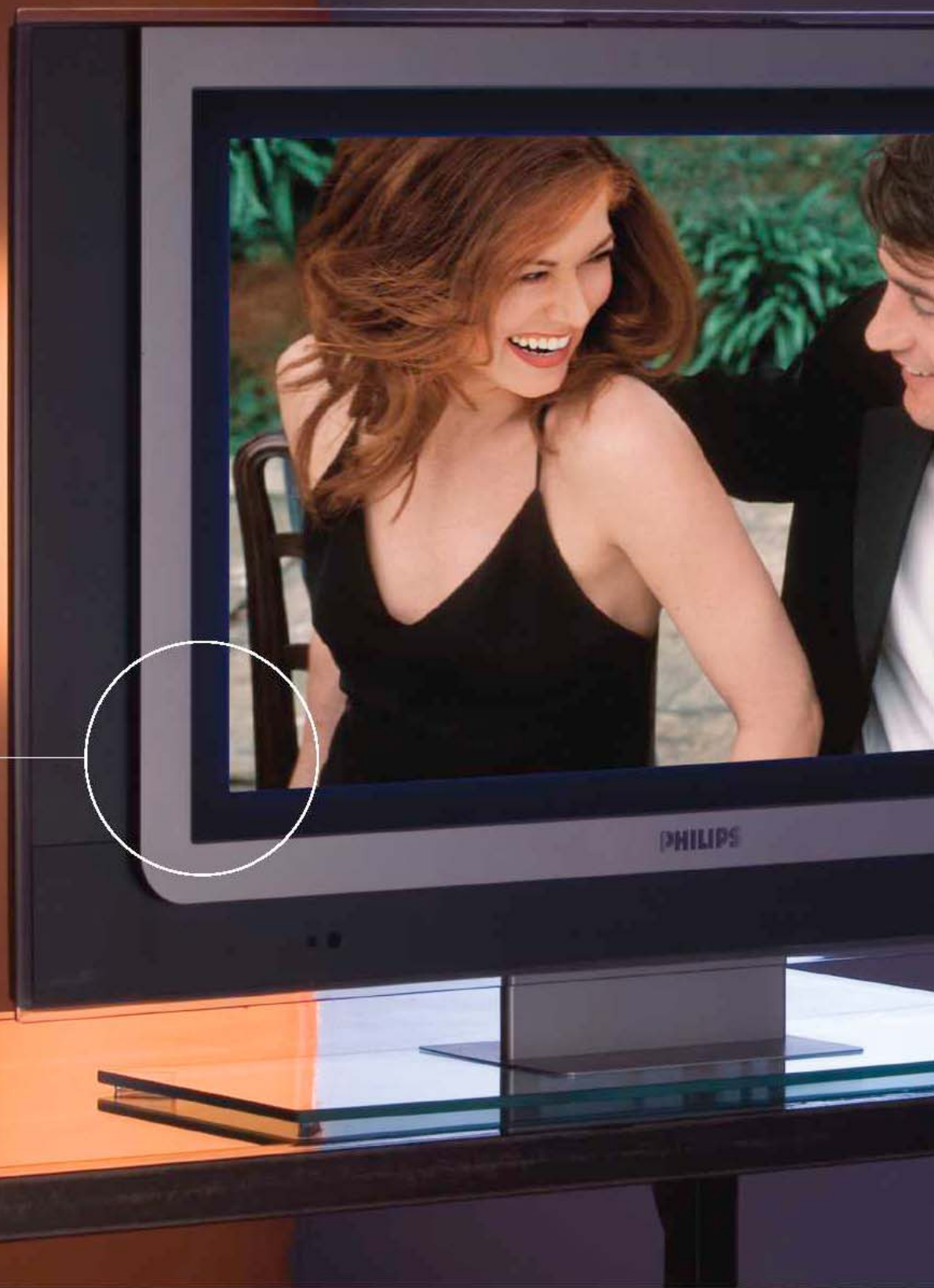
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The Pixel Plus 2 LCD's antireflective screen reduces glare in a bright room.



## Dutch Dynamite

The Philips 32-inch Pixel Plus 2 LCD TV has certainly arrived in style. In fact, not since the likes of live window entertainers, funny-looking orange soccer jerseys, or cutting off ears have the Dutch delivered such a mesmerizing concept. This new LCD has a wide range of features that would cover any true TV enthusiast, soup to nuts. Let's start with the display. Philips claims that the Digital Crystal Clear screen has a 170-degree viewing angle and is enhanced with an antireflective coating. Philips' Ambilight technology is combined with Digital Natural Motion, Pixel Plus 2, and 3D comb-filter advancements. The end result is a clear, judderless picture. The display has a claimed overall brightness of 146 foot-lamberts and a contrast ratio of 800:1.

Philips also satisfies the desires of the sound-hungry. The display comes standard with five built-in speakers, including two high-end integrated NXT Monolith speakers that are complete with Virtual Dolby Surround, Auto Volume Leveler, and Smart Sound technologies. The TV also features heart-pounding wOOx bass technology.

This impressive LCD has a classy pearl-white-and-silver cabinet and weighs a total of 44 pounds. Philips' retail price is a reasonable \$3,500. That should leave you plenty of dough for a new Rutger Hauer poster.

Philips  
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Philips' Ambilight technology uses a sensor to determine the amount of back-lighting your home theater needs and self-adjusts using its automatic-dimming function.

## premiere points

- The 32-inch Pixel Plus 2 LCD TV has six widescreen modes and full dual-screen picture-in-picture.
- wOOx technology gives the bass a real punch.



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# Lamps

Really expensive light bulbs. *by Geoffrey Morrison*

It's no secret that, if you have a new projection display (front or rear), you'll eventually need to replace its light source. Take one look at them, and you'll see that these aren't your ordinary 100-watt bulbs—that, and the fact that these light sources cost hundreds of dollars each.

It all started in the 1800s, although exactly when is rather debatable. Old man Edison gets all the fame, but an Englishman, Sir Joseph Swan, beat him by at least a year. In reality, Swan merely advanced concepts that a host of other European scientists had been putting in place since the turn of the century. So we'll just say that someone came up with something at some point that looks remarkably similar to that which allows us to see when it's dark.

## Turn On

To oversimplify everything, most light bulbs fall into one

of two categories: incandescent or arc. Incandescent light bulbs send an electrical current through a thin wire. The wire resists the current, which creates heat. With enough current, the wire becomes hot enough to glow. Incandescent bulbs are remarkably inefficient, as they mostly create heat, while the light they produce is only a byproduct.

Fluorescent, UHP, and xenon lamps are all variations of arc illumination. At their core, arc lamps work by applying a voltage between two electrodes separated by a certain distance and suspended within a gas. The gas conducts electrons between the electrodes when the proper voltage is applied. This electrical current through a gas is called an arc, and it creates heat, as well as a lot of light.

Common fluorescent bulbs work in a similar manner, although they are technically not arc lamps. In fluorescent bulbs, the electrons travel through a gas that includes mercury vapor. This excites the mercury atoms to a higher energy state; when they drop back to a lower energy state, they emit ultraviolet photons. These photons hit a phosphor that coats the inner



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surface of the bulb, which creates visible light. This is similar to how plasma displays work.

UHP lamps also use mercury vapor, but at a much higher pressure than fluorescent bulbs, which causes the mercury atoms to emit visible light without the need for phosphor. Xenon lamps (found in swanky car headlights, film and digital cinema projectors, and high-end home projectors like the Sony QUALIA 004), operate in much the same manner as UHP, except that they use xenon gas instead of mercury vapor, which takes much less time to begin emitting a stable spectrum of visible light. That spectrum is also much more uniform than the light from UHP mercury atoms.

## Oww, My Eyes

Most projectors (front and rear) use UHP lamps. Two electrodes are sealed in a quartz-glass tube, and an arc forms between them to create light. UHP lamps create so much heat that the electrodes melt slightly every time you use them.

Over time, as the electrodes shrink from usage, the distance becomes too great for an arc to form. If this moment of failure happens while the lamp is lit, there is a chance that the electrode could come in contact with the lamp housing, and, *poof*—you've got shrapnel. Most displays and lamp housings are designed to safely contain such an explosion, should it occur.

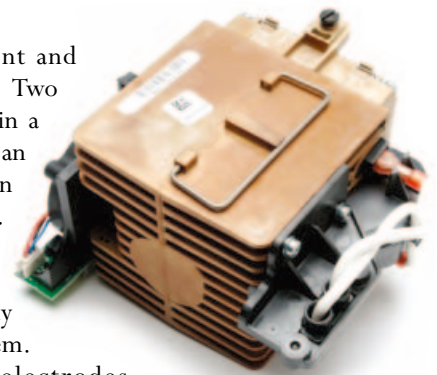
Another drawback of the light source being effectively a “wear” part is that, as the lamp ages, it doesn't perform as it did when it was new. Its light output drops significantly over the first few hundred hours. Then, it ages at a slower pace until it dies. In some instances, we've found projectors that are half as bright when they reach the halfway point of the lamp's specified life span.

King Gillette, the famous shaving-razor pioneer, realized that, if you want to make money, you make them pay you for continued use of your product. The razors were free; the blades cost money. Projection lamps are the same, only the projector itself is damn pricey to begin with.

## The Future (Is So Bright)

UHP lamps can last anywhere from 2,000 to 10,000 hours, depending on usage and implementation. Mileage varies, but it should improve in the future. Mitsubishi has announced a pocket-sized projector that uses LEDs as the light source. In terms of size, heat, life span, and power requirements, this is awesome. Is it a sign of things to come? We'll see.

Two last points: A lamp will last longer at a lower lamp setting than it will at a higher one. Also, in general, the more times you turn the display on and off, the shorter the bulb will last, especially if you turn the display on and off in less than 20 minutes. So watch more TV (or less)! 📺



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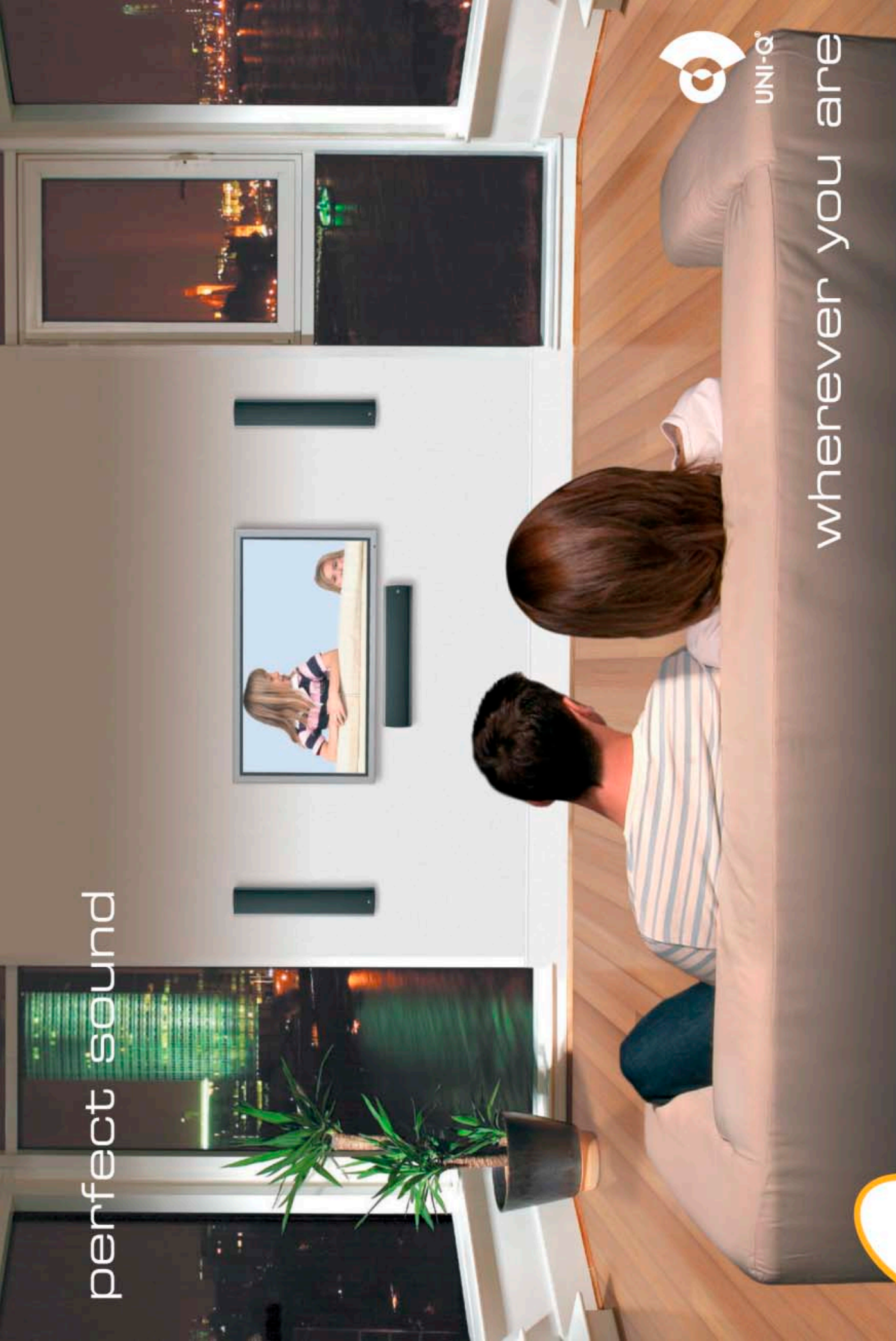
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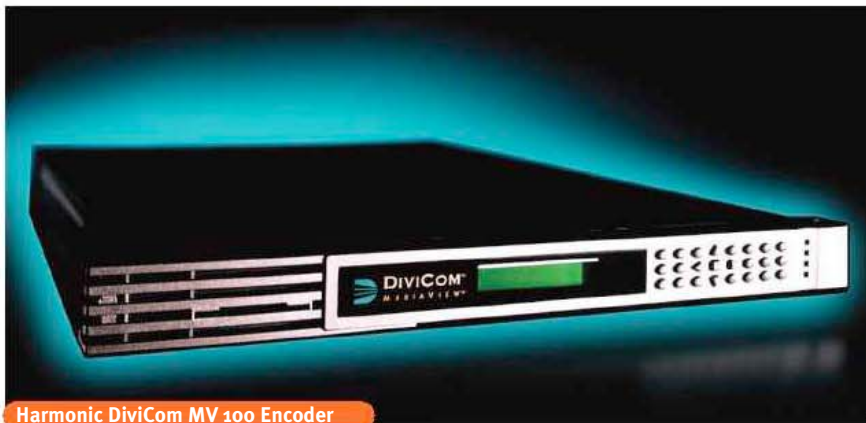


# MPEG-4 EVER

How a new codec may change DTV as we know it. by [Mark Fleischmann](#)

MPEG-4 Advanced Video Coding (AVC) is a next-generation video codec (coder/decoder) that's about to change the face of digital television—slimming it down,

enabling it to move into narrower channels, and probably changing how it looks. I can almost see your eyes glazing over: *Lucy, you got some 'splainin' to do.*



Harmonic DiviCom MV 100 Encoder

Most folks who know anything at all about DTV visualize a grid of pixels or lines of resolution. The more savvy videophile who's bought a progressive-scan DVD player—and who knows how it works—thinks in terms of frame rates, 3:2 pulldown, and video artifacts.

These are all valid ways to think about DTV, but there's another factor to consider in addition to pixels, lines, and the scanning system: the codec that underlies it all. The codec determines how the signal is encoded, decoded, and compressed—in other words, which data are discarded and which affect what you see on the screen.

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Compression brings efficiency, and that, in turn, enables DTV to flow into our homes through various pipelines—antenna, cable, satellite, broadband, even dial-up. It also has a strong impact on DTV hardware's perceived performance. The trade-off between efficiency and quality is what's about to turn MPEG-4 AVC into a front-burner videophile issue.

This up-and-coming codec is quietly but surely becoming a major player in satellite- and disc-delivered HDTV. Yet few digital-era viewers know what it is or how it works. Until recently, I was one of the great unwashed, and it was partly out of shame and curiosity that I decided to become better informed on the subject.

### MPEG Who?

Let's back up. Why compress at all? Who are these MPEG people? How specifically does MPEG-4 AVC differ from other codecs? And what, finally, will it look like on *your* big screen?

DTV cries out for compression. Uncompressed DTV lives only in the pro sphere. Like me, DTV signals are naturally fat, lazy creatures. Also like me, DTV signals have slimmed down considerably, thanks to a dietary regimen created by a squadron of experts.

In this case, the experts are Moving Picture Experts Group (MPEG), established in 1988 as a working group of ISO, the International Organization for Standardization. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, ISO brings together standards from 148 nations. An average MPEG meeting attracts around

300 experts drawn from 200 companies operating in 20 nations. This ain't just a bunch of techies having a food fight.

MPEG has promulgated a whole family of open standards for coding audio and video. Here's a quick overview:

❖ **MPEG-1** determines how video is compressed on CD-ROM and VideoCD, the low-quality forerunners of the existing DVD format. As an unintended side effect, its MP3 (MPEG-1, Layer 3) audio codec set off the file-sharing revolution.

❖ **MPEG-2** is a high-quality codec used in off-air, cable, and satellite DTV, as well as DVD.

❖ **MPEG-4**, formally known as Coding of Audiovisual Objects, was initially supposed to be a more efficient codec for multimedia and the Web—although its new AVC variation is about to expand into higher-quality video applications.

❖ **MPEG-7** is the Multimedia Content Description Interface. It codes metadata, or data about data. It filters, searches, and manages information.

❖ **MPEG-21** is the Multimedia Framework that defines digital

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content (video, soundtracks, subtitles, URLs) and its users. It's designed to control content throughout the delivery chain, including digital-rights management.

### A Tale of Two MPEGs

For our video-related discussion, the only kinds of MPEG that matter are numbers 2 and 4. MPEG-4 is not currently the accepted standard in digital video compression. That would be MPEG-2. But MPEG-4 is more efficient—it compresses the signal more, doing more with fewer bits.

In the best of all possible worlds, the bit bucket would never run dry, and we'd all be stunned at the beauty of uncompressed DTV. In the real world, though, every application has its own bandwidth limitations, and DTV at a low data rate is better than no DTV at all.

Uncompressed, studio-quality DTV can run at more than 1 gigabit per second. With MPEG-2 compression, that data rate drops to significantly less than 6 megabits per second for DBS, digital cable, video on demand,

DVD. Under MPEG-4's ascending quality profiles, you might see anything from a super-slim 10 kilobits per second for

mobile phones, to 1 to 2 Mbps for SDTV, to 7 to 8 Mbps for HDTV (the latter using a mid-2004 Apple QuickTime demo as a yardstick).

MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 both allocate the most bits to complex, fast-moving video information. But MPEG-4 is more intelligent, more adaptive, and takes better advantage of increased processing power. It provides a set of tools and algorithms for coding, scaling, and compressing numerous objects. MPEG-4 can compress video, audio, animation, still images, textures, meshes, and buttons. It's more sophisticated at handling shape and motion than MPEG-2, and, when MPEG-4 detects errors in the bit stream, it can resync the decoder, recover data, and conceal errors.

Until now, the consensus has been that MPEG-2 looks better at high data rates, while MPEG-4 looks better at low data rates. That's what has driven the growth of MPEG-4 in videoconferencing, streaming, downloads, and mobile devices. Older versions of MPEG-4 are all over the PC world. You can find them in software-based applications like Nero, the RealOne player, and QuickTime.

However, MPEG-4 is now available in a new flavor—known variously as Layer 10, H.264, or AVC—and it's likely to surpass MPEG-2 in quality-critical applications. According to Rob Koenen,

Requirements Group and founded the MPEG Industry Forum, "MPEG-4 AVC is a higher-quality codec, both in the sense that it will deliver



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more quality for the same amount of bits and in the sense that it will be used in very high-end applications.”

The word on the street is that AVC will be strong competition against VC-1, a codec originally used in Microsoft's Windows Media 9 and currently under revision by SMPTE (the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers). Both AVC and VC-1 are licensed through the MPEG LA licensing

organization, but AVC may find wider acceptance than a standard associated with the monolith of Redmond, Washington—unless, of course, Windows ends up ruling your rack.

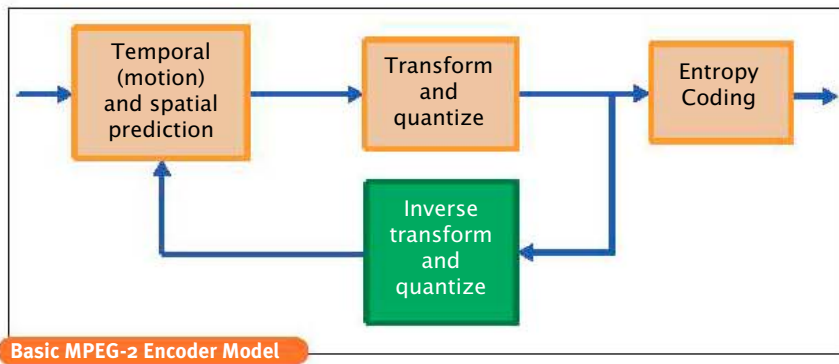
### Coming to a Big Screen Near You

MPEG-4 AVC has made its first major conquests in satellite video delivery. DirecTV has adopted AVC as the future codec for HD broadcast channels

starting in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Tampa, and Washington, D.C. Eventually, all of DirecTV's HD channels will use AVC, although SD channels will continue to use MPEG-2.

EchoStar is also planning to make the transition from MPEG-2 to MPEG-4 AVC on DISH Network sometime in 2006. The same need to fit more channels into limited bandwidth has telecom giants like Bell Canada, BellSouth, and Southwestern Bell interested in using AVC for video-over-DSL services. Even the cable industry is quietly eyeballing the new codec.

Both of the forthcoming high-definition DVD formats, Blu-ray and HD-DVD, have



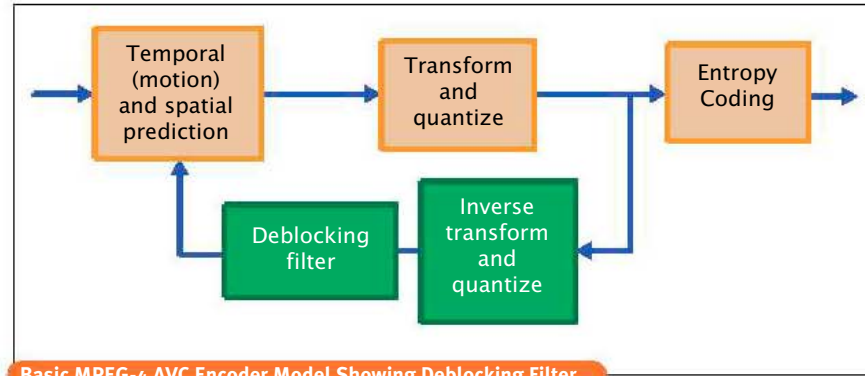
Sound & Vision October 2003  
Daniel Kumin

“This is one high-end preamp/processor that deserves close inspection by serious home theater builders and A/V dreamers alike.”

adopted AVC, although not exclusively. They'll also support the Microsoft/SMPTE VC-1 codec and MPEG-2, which remains the industry standard in terrestrial DTV broadcasting and standard-definition DVD-Video.

Going from MPEG-2 to MPEG-4 AVC raises HD running times from 4 to 8 hours in HD-DVD and from 9 to 15 hours in Blu-ray (using a dual-layer disc in both cases). The Blu-ray disc has greater capacity and supports higher data rates—suggesting (although not conclusively) that AVC may be a more significant player on the HD-DVD side.

High-def DVD will put MPEG-4 AVC to the ultimate test. With existing standard-def DVD, it's possible to use the player's data-rate display to monitor video artifacts as the bits fly by. If the studios release movies in



Basic MPEG-4 AVC Encoder Model Showing Deblocking Filter

AVC, this rarefied sport will be even more eagerly discussed in online forums. Then we'll get a consensus on exactly how good—or bad—MPEG-4 AVC can look.

Can MPEG-4 AVC scale up to bandwidth-critical big-screen applications while maintaining the picture quality that videophiles have come to expect from MPEG-2? If so, it will speed the penetration of DTV, enabling it to spread into new

areas. If it doesn't measure up visually, though, it will degrade the state of the art and confuse the public.

Whatever happens, MPEG-4 AVC will make videophiles more conscious of bandwidth, its limitations, and ways to overcome them. Maybe learning to live within limits is good for the soul. 🍷

\* Mark Fleischmann is the author of Practical Home Theater ([www.quietriverpress.com](http://www.quietriverpress.com)).



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## GABRIEL TALKS ABOUT HIS NEW DVD PLAY, TECHNOLOGY, AND WHY THE IPOD WON'T TAKE OVER THE MUSIC WORLD.

**P**eter Gabriel's career got off the ground when he fronted one of Britain's top prog-rock bands, Genesis. He went solo in 1975. For this interview, we focused on his groundbreaking videos and his lifelong fascination with technology. *by Steve Guttenberg*

**"FATHER, SON," THE FIRST VIDEO ON YOUR NEW PLAY DVD IS WONDERFUL. THE IMAGES OF YOU AND YOUR FATHER TOGETHER ARE INCREDIBLY TOUCHING. THE VIDEO WAS DIRECTED BY YOUR DAUGHTER, ANNA GABRIEL?**

Yes, and Anna was with us for the first leg of the tour to make a film about being on the road with her family. That's now been released as the *Growing Up on Tour: A Family Portrait* DVD. Soon after that, she showed me a treatment for the "Father, Son" video. Because she's family, the performances from the three generations of Gabriel boys were totally uninhibited.

**I'VE READ THAT YOU'VE PRODUCED MOST OF YOUR VIDEOS. THE EARLY ONES WERE SHOT ON FILM, NOT VIDEO, RIGHT?**

Right. All of the early videos were shot on film, mainly as a quality issue. But also, in those very early days, film cameras

were considerably more portable and easier to use than video cameras. Obviously, some of the treatments and final edits were done on video.

**SOME OF THEM ARE PRETTY COMPLEX. I'M THINKING ABOUT ONES LIKE "SLEDGEHAMMER." YOU CAN'T SHOOT SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN A DAY OR TWO.**

We would always lay out the ideas as storyboard videos first. That is one of the most enjoyable parts of the process—the brainstorming. And it was really great working with people who can visualize ideas and get them on paper quickly, but the whole process of making the video took about a month. First, we'd work through ideas with Stephen Johnson for a week, and then we'd spend two weeks in development with Aardman Animation and the Brothers Quay and a week filming in stop animation.

**WERE YOUR VIDEOS A REACTION TO WHAT WAS ON MTV IN THOSE EARLY DAYS?**

Not so much a reaction to other stuff—more a chance to play around and work with some interesting people. In many ways, it was the same motivation that led to the introduction of theatrical stuff into Genesis.

**AH, YES! WERE YOU PLOTTING OUT THE VIDEOS AS YOU WROTE THE SONGS?**

Film has always been a stronger influence than theater. I think visually, and I often picture things when I'm writing, and things evolve when my collaborators throw their ideas into the mix. I have a wide range of musical influences, including church music, soul, blues, the Beatles, the Who, the Kinks, and the Yardbirds.

**"THE NEST THAT SAILED THE SKY" ON THE PLAY DVD VIDEO COLLECTION MAY BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VIDEO I'VE EVER SEEN.**


Thanks. I discovered that one while working with our very able multimedia department at Real World Records, which is led by York Tillyer, who created that video. We seem to be developing a knack for creating visual material from our own video clips and working from library material on the Internet. It's a lot of fun and enables us to produce interesting experiments quickly while staying on a reasonable budget.

**YOU'VE SAID THAT LISTENING TO A CD IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TRIP THAN WATCHING A MUSIC VIDEO. WHY DO YOU THINK WE CAN LISTEN TO THE SAME SONG OVER AND OVER AGAIN,**



Photography by Steve Double (left) and Armando Gallo (bottom)





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SPEAKERS



**BUT THAT DOESN'T HOLD TRUE FOR MOST VIDEOS?**

I think listening to music leaves plenty of space for our imagination, which is why repeated listening works well. When we're watching a video, the information passes through a different filtering process and ties up more of the brain.

**DANIEL LANOIS AND RICHARD CHAPPELL CREATED THE NEW 5.1 MIXES FOR PLAY. WERE THEY WORKING WITH YOUR ORIGINAL MULTITRACK MASTERS?**

Yes, Dan and Richard went back to the original multitracks for their mixes. I have always taken the view that music is a living thing and should be allowed to evolve. So, when we came to this project, I wanted some new additions. I was delighted with what Dan and Dickie achieved, and, in some cases, they produced better mixes than the originals. It's great to have enough space in the 5.1 environment to allow everything to be heard, and that wasn't possible in stereo.

**I ASSUME THE EARLIEST RECORDINGS WERE ANALOG, BUT, BY THE EARLY 1980S, YOU WERE USING DIGITAL. HOW WERE THEY BUMPED UP TO 96/24 FOR PLAY'S DTS MIX?**

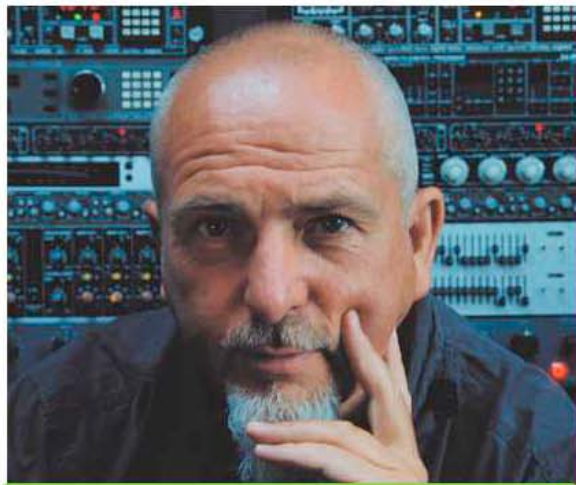
Interestingly, even in the '80s and '90s, we used a mix of analog and digital sources for our multitracks. Before we started the mixing process for *Play*, all of this material was digitized in 24-bit resolution. We did it on the Sony Oxford console because it has some of the best digital converters we've heard.

**PLAY MIGHT BE THE FIRST DVD MUSIC VIDEO WITH DTS 96/24 HIGH-RESOLUTION AUDIO. I THINK THAT'S GREAT. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS BETTER ABOUT "BETTER" SOUND?**

Music is about an emotional connection between artist and audience. In our experience, the human ear has always been more sensitive than any recording technology. Higher-resolution audio gets more of that emotional message across. I guess it's like looking through a window: The better the technology, the cleaner the window and the better the view. But, as always, the real work lies behind the glass.

Switching back to CD after listening to SACD or 96/24, the music seems constrained, smaller, and less alive. And the MP3 is even more removed from the sound of real music—and listening to music becomes mere background for other activities. There's not enough "there" there.

Dan Lanois has argued for a while that the ubiquity of music has really devalued it, and, while I agree with some of that way of thinking, I believe much depends



Gabriel uses such programs as Pro Tools and Logic Audio.

on the context, the environment, the company or lack of it, what else is going on emotionally, and the listening history of those present. Most people prefer the convenience of MP3, but it is a giant step back in quality.

As far as *Play* is concerned, I particularly like the 5.1 mixes on "Red Rain" and "Zaar" because of the way they open up spaces in the recording. Multichannel mixing is great—you can really put the audience inside the music. Because of the increased space, there is more room to put things in the surround

field. This works particularly well for my music, some of which can be quite dense.

We have yet to experiment with more than 5.1 channels, although, many years ago, we messed around with the height channels. This is also something I did when we mixed *Up* with my friend Tchad Blake, who has done a lot of work in the binaural arena [an early headphone surround-recording technique]. More than anything else, film is educating people about what to expect in larger-than-life sound environments.

**I'M CURIOUS ABOUT HOW MUSICAL IDEAS ARE TRANSFORMED BY THE PROCESS OF MAKING A RECORD. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY EXAMPLES OF SONGS THAT ARE RADICALLY DIFFERENT THAN YOUR ORIGINAL CONCEPTIONS?**

"Mercy Street" is an interesting example. I often fill songs up and then strip right back. The empty version can lead us to a new, more sensitive, and sensual approach.

**YOU BUILT REAL WORLD STUDIOS IN 1987 WITH THE RECORDING ARTIST IN MIND. HOW HAVE THE STUDIOS EVOLVED SINCE THEY WERE BUILT?**

I believe we managed to create an environment in which artists from many cultures can be comfortable enough and well supported enough to give great performances, without which you can never have great recorded music. The biggest change in the way studios work has been the arrival of computer recording and in processing systems like Pro Tools and Logic Audio, as well as, obviously, a reduction in the amount of tape people use. It is amazing how much more time now gets spent poring over computer screens.







**I KNOW YOU'RE INTO ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY, BUT DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE DEATH OF ANALOG TAPE OR REACTIONS TO NEWS THAT THE LEGENDARY HIT FACTORY RECORDING STUDIO HERE IN NEW YORK CITY IS CLOSING ITS DOORS? HAS DIGITAL KILLED THE ANALOG STAR?**

I think there is still a place for analog tape because of its unique sound, but the flexibility that digitized systems afford means they are definitely here to stay. I think it's great that digital technology has put music-making into the hands of anyone with a PC, but it has also put a lot of good studios out of business. I believe, in the case of the Hit Factory, where so much great music was made, there were other non-music-biz factors at play. But there is still no replacement

for great-sounding studios and working in a creative environment. The whole retro movement worships analog, but I like to use digital and analog for different purposes.

**DO YOU THINK TODAY'S ARTISTS ARE DISTRACTED WITH THE MINUTIA OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY?**

I have always felt that the more the artists are involved in the whole process, the freer they



become to create, and the results speak for themselves. Personally, I get distracted easily, but my other activities provide a rich and varied life.

**IT SEEMS LIKE YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO MAKE ROOM FOR MORE STUFF CLUTTERING UP THEIR LIVES, AND THEY PREFER STORING MUSIC AND FILMS AS FILES ON THEIR COMPUTERS. IS THAT WHERE IT'S ALL HEADED?**

I think there will always be a space for physical "stuff"; it is part of the way we identify ourselves. I think human beings are naturally collectors and will still want to keep the stuff that's most important to them. But my guess is that there will be a lot less of that than in the past. Digitized libraries of all media, whether at home or online, will be a much more significant part of how we receive information and entertainment.

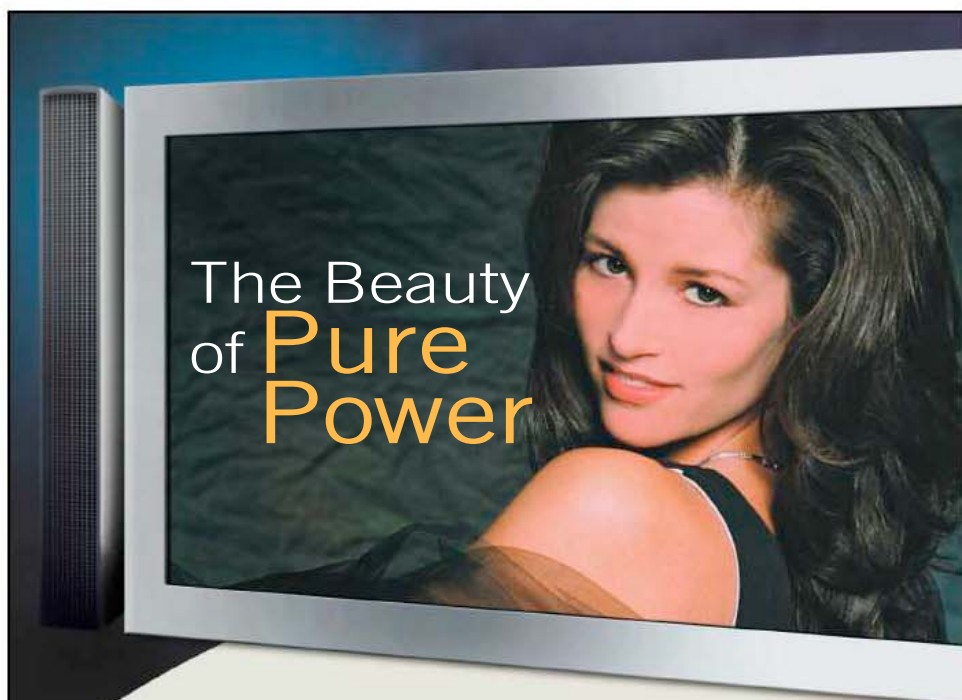
**YOU'VE RECENTLY STARTED A NEW LABEL, PRE RECORDS. WHAT'S GOING ON THERE?**

We have always wanted to include more material based around good western songwriting. It's hard for rock artists to work through Real World's world-music tag, so PRE was created to feature some of these artists. Sizer Barker and Pina are the first releases.

**BEFORE WE GO, I HAVE TO ASK: WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO ON YOUR IPOD?**

Italian lessons and lots of unfinished demos. 🍷

\* Our thanks to B&W Loudspeakers for arranging this interview. Extracts from Peter Gabriel's DVD, *Growing Up Live*, can be found on B&W's free promotional DVD, *A Sound Experience*, available from [www.bw800.com](http://www.bw800.com).



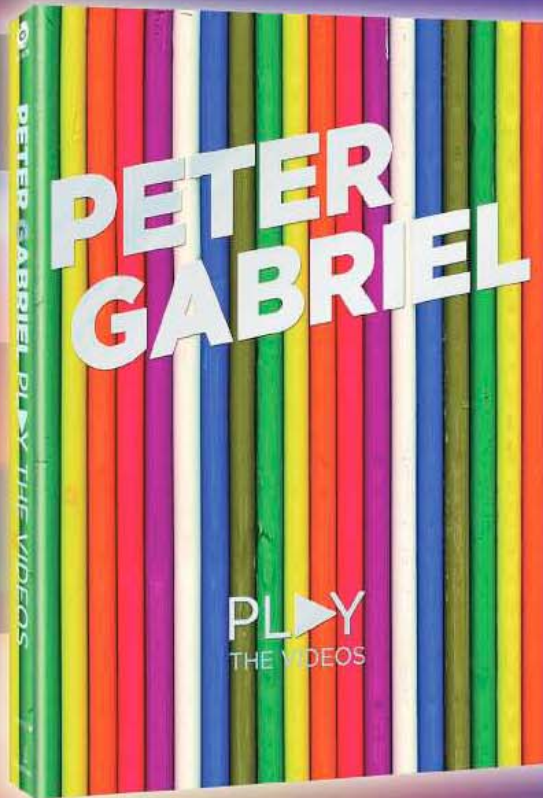
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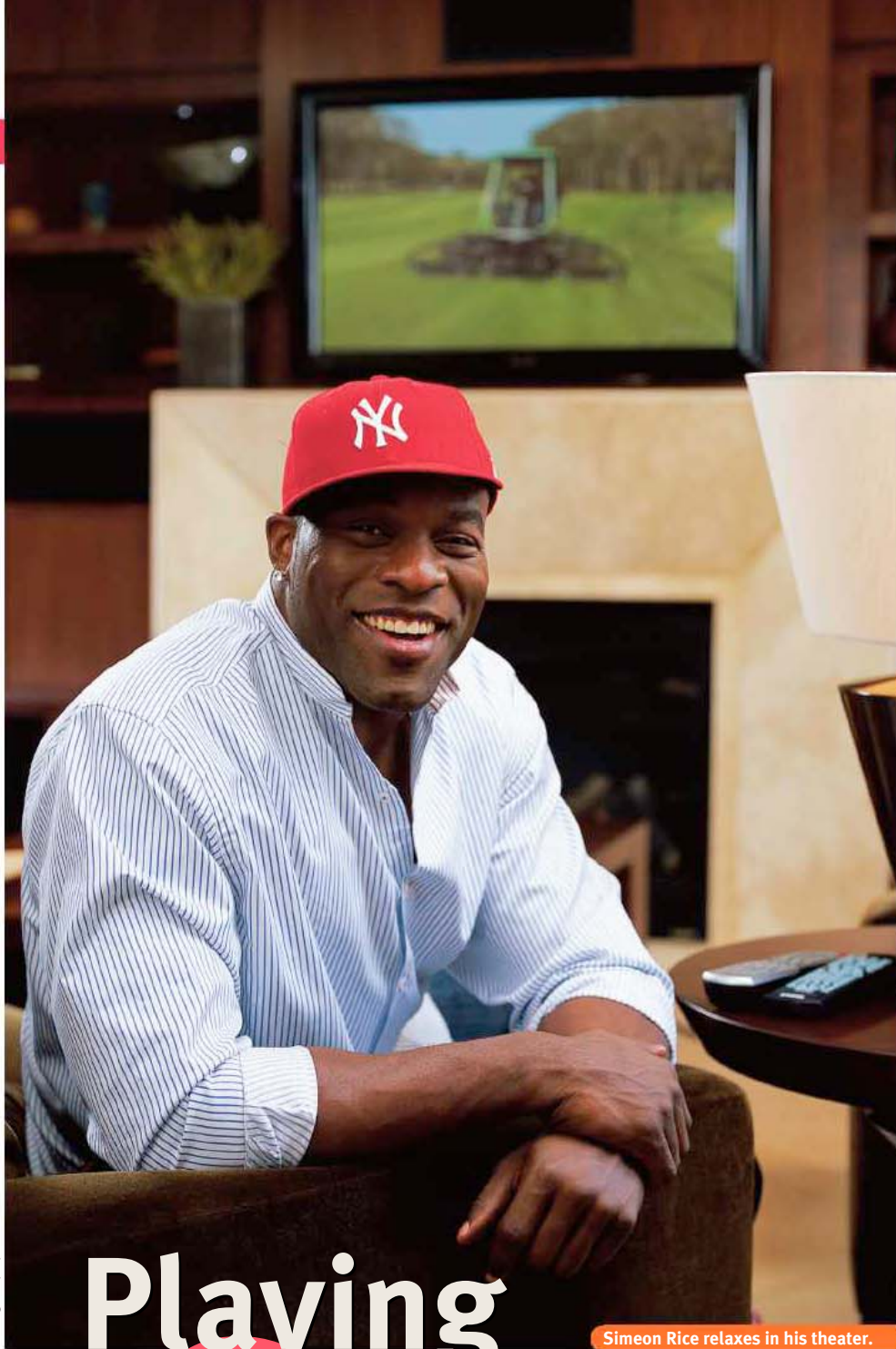
All entrants are entitled to request a free copy of B&W's DVD, **A SOUND EXPERIENCE**, featuring the Peter Gabriel song "In Your Eyes." Contest rules and guidelines are available on the official Web entry page, [www.bw800.com/hometheater](http://www.bw800.com/hometheater). No purchase necessary. Closing date: 1 November 2005.



REALWORLD

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# Playing Game

Simeon Rice relaxes in his theater.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers all-star takes *HT* inside his home theater in Phoenix, Arizona. This gamer's paradise has everything a future hall-of-famer could ask for. **BY AMY CARTER**

Simeon Rice, defensive end for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, became the highest-paid defensive player in NFL history when he signed a \$41 million contract in 2003. Just like any other home theater enthusiast, the first decision he made was where to put the big-screen.

## Drafting a Deal

Rice visited Jim Miller at Desert Sound & Security in 2003 for advice on how to add an entertainment system to his new 1,500-square-foot home in Phoenix, Arizona. Rice's five-room, high-rise condominium offered only one room—a small office—that could house the system he wanted. "I could have had a customized study or library, but I knew I'd rather have a theater," Rice explained.

Miller added that the room needed a short-throw projector and soundproofing. He and his team ran all of the wiring through pre-existing 6-inch walls and ceilings. "The challenge in the room was getting all of the wiring throughout the existing condo with no space and no drywall repair," Miller said.

Before they got started, Miller and the Desert Sound team visited the site and looked at the existing rooms. Rice requested specific items, including wholehouse music, a theater/media room, a media room, a computer network, and an automatic drapery system. Rice pointed out that his biggest concern was not the budget but getting the system he wanted. "I really let the designers do their thing with the theater," Rice said. "I met with them at the beginning of the project, told them what I wanted, and let them work from there."

"The project took seven weeks to finish, which was a challenge," Miller said. "We had to use a service elevator along with the other contractors in the building. We also had to go through a security checkpoint and could only work during certain hours."

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The popcorn machine was a gift from Rice's girlfriend.

## Video Challenge

The theater was very important to Rice. He was looking for the latest equipment and the best picture possible, so Miller's team installed an 80-inch Stewart Filmscreen GrayHawk screen and a DWIN TransVision3 DLP projector—all in a 14-by-16-foot office. The team used a Philips color analyzer to calibrate the system to movie-studio standards, and it is capable of receiving HDTV. Rice said that the first thing he does when he comes home is watch TV.

"When I think of home, I think of my theater; I don't even think of the bed," he said. In Rice's theater, Miller added a Toshiba RD-X2 DVR/DVD player and a JVC HM-DH30000U D-VHS HDTV recorder.

Rice likes watching anything in high definition. "I really enjoy Discovery HD Theater, especially any landscape shots," he said. "It's like looking out of a window; it's almost a surreal effect." However, Rice is a bit of a videophile, specifically when he describes how he watches movies:

"Whenever I watch a movie, I always watch and listen to how the movie makes my system perform. I might not like the movie or any of the actors, but, if the picture looks good and it sounds good, then it makes me like the movie just for that."

Miller and his team installed the latest in high-definition technology from their regular manufacturers. "We use the same products over and over, so we're not reinventing the wheel," Miller said. Eventually, the living room got spruced up, too. It's a smaller



## Playing Game



room that also features an impressive system. Rice had existing equipment that he wanted to incorporate into the room, specifically some Pioneer Elite equipment. The room now houses a 50-inch Pioneer plasma TV above the marble fireplace. Miller had to remove some of the marble and reframe the area to hold the display. He also added a Pioneer Elite receiver and DVD player, a Mitsubishi HDTV satellite receiver, and a Monster Cable surge protector.

### The Sound Department

Miller said his team

designed Rice's theater with Dolby Digital AC-3 surround sound in mind. According to Miller, AC-3 is the newest, most state-of-the-art technology in multi-channel surround sound. It creates six channels of clear digital sound. All of the loudspeakers use timbre-matched drivers of the same size. The team installed a Denon AVR-1082 A/V receiver, and Miller chose Triad Bronze surround speakers because of space limitations and because they produce loud, clear sound. The subwoofer is a Sunfire MKIV, which produces a lot of bass in a small package. "I got a few complaints from the neighbors when I first turned on the system," Rice said. "And it wasn't even turned up that loud." Because Rice likes to listen to his music loudly, Miller had to install sound-damping

material to keep the sound from intruding on neighbors.

For the wholehouse music system, Miller's team installed SpeakerCraft CRS One speakers throughout the condo. These speakers connect back to the living-room system, which leads into the theater.

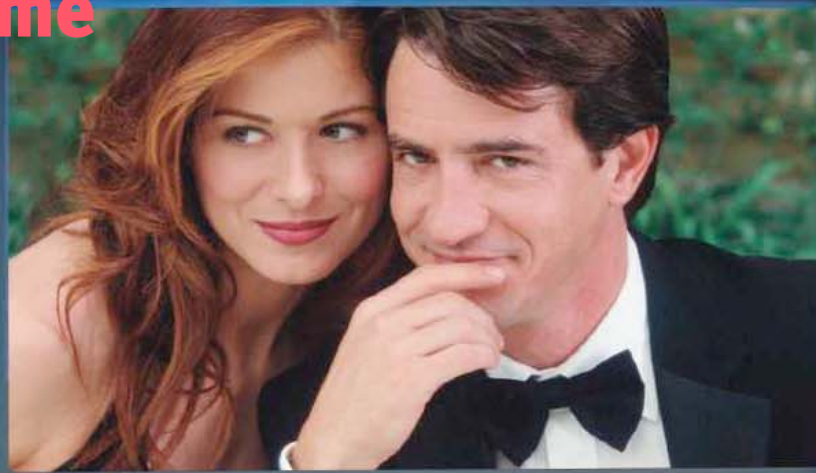
Rice is a huge gamer, and one of his main requirements was to have both a Sony PlayStation 2 and a Microsoft Xbox with Internet access so he could play online. "I love adventure games," he explained. "Right now I'm playing *Freedom Fighters*, and it's great. When I was little, I had my gaming system set up to an old TV, and I told myself that, if I ever got a nice TV, I would hook my system up to that. That's exactly what I did."



A 50-inch Pioneer plasma sits above the marble fireplace.



## Playing Game



A Stewart Filmscreen is located in the main theater room.

An AMX panel controls the theater, music, and shade systems.

### The Other Essentials

One of Rice's main objectives was to have an automatic drapery system. He wanted to be able to open and close the drapery on an individual window or on all the windows together. Miller used a Lutron QED display to control the drapery system.

Miller worked with Tamm-Jasper Interiors of Scottsdale, Arizona, for the condo's cabinetry and interior design. Tamm-Jasper put together all of the electronics and shades in-house. The cabinetry for the equipment was smaller than Miller had specified, so he and his

team used a product from Active Thermal Management to increase the cooling of the equipment in the smaller area.

### Staying in Control

Designing a way to control the system was the final piece of the project. Rice uses an AMX control system with Desert Sound's custom Residential Environment System (REX) software package, which controls the theater, wholehouse music system, and the shade system throughout the condo. Miller and his team have been installing and programming AMX systems for more than eight years and have developed a very intuitive, user-friendly touchpanel interface. "It took Simeon all of 15 minutes to

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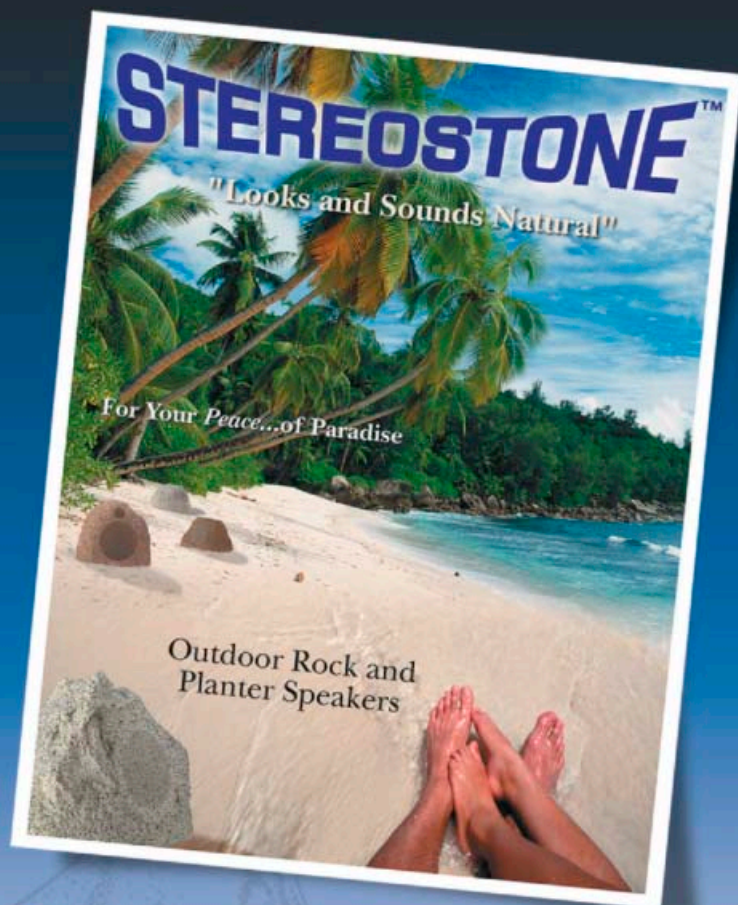


understand the system,” Miller said. After just a few minutes, Rice was watching TV, switching to PlayStation, or controlling his drapes from anywhere in the house.

Rice’s theater has a laid-back, streamlined feel. He didn’t want theater seating, opting instead to sit or lie on a leather couch for hours of Internet gaming or movie watching. The custom cabinets hide all of the



A huge gamer, Rice has his Xbox and PlayStation 2 hooked up to his theater system.



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Definitive Technology Surround  
Sound Speakers  
LG LSS-3200 HDTV Satellite Receiver  
Monster Cable HTS-3600 Surge-  
Protection System  
Pronto TS-7000 Touchscreen Remote

### Media/Theater Room:

Stewart Filmscreen 80-Inch  
GrayHawk Projection Screen  
DWIN TransVision 3 DLP Projector  
Denon AVR-1082 A/V Receiver  
Triad Bronze Surround Speakers  
Sunfire MKIV Subwoofer  
Toshiba RD-X2 DVD Recorder  
LG LSS-3200 Satellite Receiver  
Microsoft Xbox  
Sony PlayStation 2  
JVC HM-DH30000U D-VHS Deck  
Lutron QED Drapery System  
AMX Access Automation System

equipment and have areas for art and pictures. And Rice received a 5-foot popcorn machine from his girlfriend.

Rice enjoys coming home and relaxing in his theater, but he already has plans for his next home theater. “Next time I put together a theater,” he said, “I’ll just go bigger, in every sense—a bigger home with a big yard and lots of land—and I’ll do everything on a much grander scale.”



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# A Winning Combination

Manufacturers are betting that sports programming will continue to drive the HDTV transition.

BY ADRIENNE MAXWELL


Another football season is upon us, and what better way to usher it in than to reflect on some of last season's grand finales? The Patriots claimed their third Super Bowl title in four years. USC thoroughly trounced Oklahoma to win the NCAA national championship. New Year's Day saw two games—the Rose Bowl and the Capitol One Bowl—end on game-winning plays. And Wyoming pulled off a stunning upset of UCLA in the Las Vegas Bowl.

Photography by Dano Holmquist



Pioneer's PureVision brand even appears on the Las Vegas Bowl trophy.





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# A Winning Combination



Adrienne gets a tour of the ESPN truck.



The HDTV broadcast comes together in the tiny broadcast truck.



The ESPN announcers use an HD monitor.

to run in HD, but how could something called the Pioneer PureVision Las Vegas Bowl not be in high def? The company was so excited about their new sponsorship deal that they invited us folks at *Home Theater* to tag along and watch the production unfold. Let's see: holiday time with the family or a sideline view of a bowl game? What's a girl to choose?

Wait a second. The Las Vegas Bowl? That's not a Bowl Championship Series game. It's not even a New Year's or Christmas Day game. ESPN aired it on the night of December 23, when most people were still in a pre-holiday frenzy, yet it drew its largest TV audience in the past several years. Why? Because of the powerhouse match-up of two teams with 6-to-5 records looking for a winning season? Hardly.

Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that the 2004 Las Vegas Bowl aired in HD for the first time, solely because its new sponsor—Pioneer—worked that into the contract with ESPN. It wasn't originally scheduled

## Ad It Up

Pioneer's bowl sponsorship is just one part of their aggressive plan to market HDTV to sports fans, and they aren't alone in this approach. Manufacturers like Sony, Sharp, and Thomson/RCA are also betting that sports will pave the way to the mass adoption of HDTV. In fact, it's difficult to escape their marketing efforts. They get you at home through newspaper and television advertising. Last year, Pioneer bought extensive ad time during *Monday Night Football*, *Sunday Night Football*, *College GameDay*,



The ESPN truck travels around the country to various sporting events.



Pioneer PDP-5050HD Plasma HDTV

and MLB's ALCS and NLCS games. ABC aired its first-ever HD commercial during the first *MNF* game of 2004—for Pioneer plasmas. Does it work? "I've had more people tell me they've seen our [TV] spot this year," says Russ Johnston,

Screen image courtesy of Universal





**WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?**



## A Winning Combination



ESPN uses 15 HD cameras to film a game.



What's a bowl game without pregame fireworks?

Pioneer's senior VP of marketing, "It's because of football."

RCA held a "home court advantage" promotion during March Madness in which they discounted 23 HDTVs and HD monitors, with heavy ad support in *USA Today*. And no one who watched the 2004 Winter Olympics on NBC HD will soon forget Sony's "Hey Todd" Wega HD Theater commercial that played during each and every break. Apparently, even Sony didn't know the ad was going to run so many times.

If you decide to get out of your home theater and attend a game, well, they'll get you there, too. Outfitting stadiums with HDTVs is the latest push. In 2004, Sony equipped Petco Park in San Diego



A sideline cameraman captures the action between plays.



A Pioneer PDP-5040HD plasma in the press room.



Pioneer's Aaron Levine, Ron Franklin, Adrienne, and Mike Gottfried.

with 800 TVs, one-third of which were HDTVs, in conjunction with Cox's announcement that it would run more than 100 of the Padres' games during the 2004 season in HD.

Sharp has already equipped three arenas with AQUOS LCDs and other HDTVs: the FedEx Forum in Memphis, the United Center in Chicago, and Dodger Stadium. They also have deals in the works with Shea Stadium, the Target Center in Minnesota, and eight others. Such deals benefit both the stadium and the manufacturer. "It's a competitive issue," says Bill Johannesen, senior director of Sharp's vertical markets group. Every stadium wants bragging rights on the best, most cutting-edge suites and facilities. HDTV and flat panels help foster that image.

In the meantime, manufacturers establish their brands with sports consumers, and the stadiums assist in the promotion. To announce the HDTV makeover, the United Center gave 130 Sharp 13-inch LCDs to

suite owners as Christmas gifts. According to Johannesen, Sharp dealers in the Chicago area are feeling the effects; the promotions and word of mouth from happy suite owners are making a difference in sales.

While Pioneer has taken a similar path by putting HDTVs in both the Toyota Center in Houston and the America West Center in Phoenix, they are the first HDTV manufacturer to venture into sole sponsorship of a major sporting event. In addition to getting eight TV spots, the sponsor's welcome, and the trophy hand-out during the Las Vegas Bowl, their PureVision plasma brand essentially



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Adrienne talks strategy with coach Karl Dorrell.

received free advertising every time ESPN promoted the game or showed the logo during their daily broadcasts.

### Behind the Curtain

All of that promotion doesn't mean much if there's nothing to watch in HD. That's less of a problem for sports fans, who receive a fairly consistent stream of HDTV content, both from premium channels like HDNet and INHD and from basic cable and network providers. ESPN HD and ESPN2 HD, which both launched in January, plan to air more than 400 HDTV telecasts in 2005.

They have between 10 and 12 HD production trucks at their disposal to produce multiple events simultaneously. TNT, ABC, and ESPN brought us the NBA playoffs in HD this year, Fox is finally offering NASCAR and the NFL in HD, and CBS and ESPN deserve note for consistently giving us college sports in HD.

For rabid fans seeking a true you-are-there experience, it's hard to beat the emotional reaction to seeing an HDTV sports broadcast for the first time. Sure, nature programs look beautiful on Discovery HD, and *CSI* is gruesomely realistic in high definition; but, when I have people over, it's always sports that elicits the "Man, I have got to get me an HDTV!" response.

That was exactly the reaction that Pioneer was hoping for when they strategically positioned four PureVision plasmas around Sam Boyd Stadium during the Las Vegas Bowl: a PDP-5040HD in the press room, a PDP-5045HD in the ESPN broadcast booth, and two Elite PRO-920HDs in the president's suite. Their goal for 2004 was to show the people with the money and the ink how good HDTV can look; for the 2005



Viewfinder guides show a 4:3 frame.



...but look at the great shots he gets.



Adrienne chats with the endzone cameraman.

Las Vegas Bowl, they hope to position Pioneer displays all over the stadium.

My tour of these plasma placements ultimately landed me in the broadcast booth, where announcers Ron Franklin and Mike Gottfried were setting up. These



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## A Winning Combination



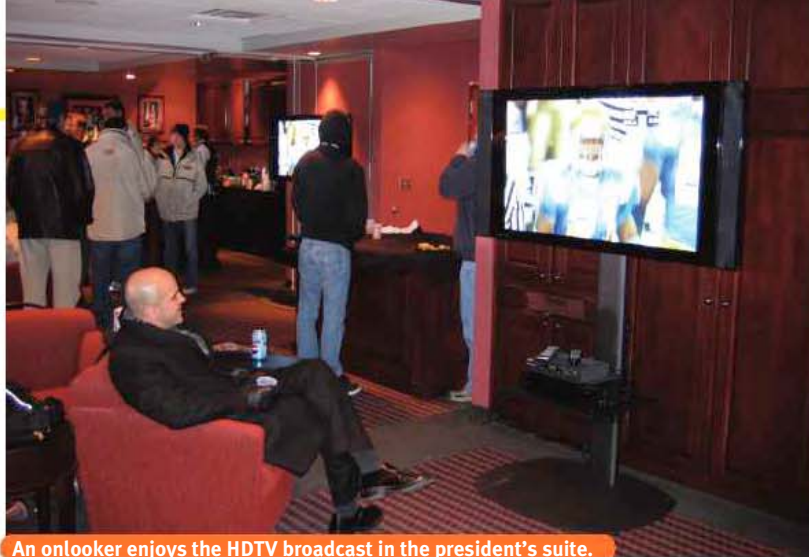
The game between UCLA and Wyoming turned out to be exciting.

two ESPN veterans called the first college-football game broadcast in HD, and they now do ESPN's Saturday-night NCAA game, which is always in HD. They were quick to express their enthusiasm for the HDTV format. Both own home theater setups, and the difference between HD and SD is "like night and day," Gottfried says. HD transmissions help them with small details, like catching a player's number during a complex play.

Next, I headed for the field and watched the crew position HD cameras around the sidelines. This particular production used 10 HD cameras; only the super-slow-mo camera wasn't in HD. Noticeably absent was the Skycam, which captures the in-the-huddle moments and provides an incredible quarterback view during plays. The days of constantly switching between standard- and high-def shots are almost completely behind us. On average, ESPN uses 15 HD cameras for a college-football game,



Sony KLV-S23A10 LDC HDTV



An onlooker enjoys the HDTV broadcast in the president's suite.

8 to 10 for college basketball, 14 to 20 for the NBA, 20 for *Sunday Night Baseball*, and 24 for *Sunday Night Football*. A combination of fiberoptic and triaxial cable carries the video signal from the cameras to the production truck, where they produce the show using mostly HD monitors.

I chatted for a while with one cameraman, nicknamed

Trigger, while he set up his Sony camera in the end zone. Trigger had just filmed an HD game the night before in another state and would head to Los Angeles right after this game to prepare for the Christmas Day Lakers/Heat NBA match-up—where Kobe and Shaq met for the first time since Shaq's departure from Los Angeles. Needless to say, December and January are busy months for sports cameramen, with bowl games, the NFL, and the NBA going at the same time.

When I asked him what presents the biggest challenge for a cameraman shooting in HD, he said it is using viewfinders—being more aware of shooting what's on the sides and keeping a 4:3 frame in a 16:9 viewfinder. I later spoke with ESPN senior coordinating producer Larry Kristiansen, who agreed that "keeping the production teams in a 4:3 mentality and cutting as such" is still one of the main difficulties. As great



Hey, watcha filming there? Can we see?

as the 16:9 shots are at showing HDTV viewers the complete field, cameramen and producers alike have to remember the importance of "producing the game for that [4:3] world, as it's still how we're viewed by the largest percentage [of people]," says Kristiansen. The trick is to get the perfect shots and overlay correctly formatted graphics to satisfy both camps.

Early HD cameras didn't make the transition easy for cameramen, Trigger tells me, but the camera makers are now more mindful of the operator, including guides for various frame sizes. While his camera didn't have the guides, I found one that did at the last stop on my tour—the Sony HDC-910, which shoots the wide-angle views from the rooftop deck.

### Please Stand By...

Like the HDTV transition itself, the Las Vegas Bowl production encountered



The cold doesn't bother this Wyoming fan.

its share of technical difficulties. In conjunction with the bowl, ESPN HD planned to air their first-ever HD commercial—again from Pioneer. This time it was Russ Johnston's sponsor's welcome to the game. Pioneer had recorded the commercial's audio in 5.1, but the game was broadcast in stereo. A few hours before kickoff, when they tested the commercial spot, they realized it had no dialogue because the center-channel info had been lost. Luckily, they were able to fix it before airtime. ESPN HD has been broadcasting in stereo since day one, and there's no word yet on whether they'll make the switch to 5.1 anytime soon. So, for you *MNF* fans, it remains to be seen whether the game will still be in 5.1 when it moves from ABC to ESPN in 2006.

Pioneer was also less than pleased when, the morning of the game, stadium reps told them they didn't have the cable in place to show the game in HD within the stadium. Those plasmas Pioneer had brought in would have to show the game in standard def. So much for PureVision. When Cox's cable guys showed up later in the day to set up the necessary feeds, they discovered that the fiberoptic cable was in place to show HDTV, and everything worked out fine.

Sharp hasn't had the same luck in Dodger Stadium. As of this writing, the stadium can't receive HDTV, so all those AQUOS panels are showing



Adrienne gets a few shots of her own.

SD feeds, some in a stretched aspect ratio. Clearly, consumers aren't the only ones who are experiencing problems with misinformation and technical limitations. The HDTV learning curve affects everyone trying to usher in this exciting technology.

### Play Ball

Finally, it was time for kickoff at the Las Vegas Bowl. The HD cameras were in place, the technical issues had been resolved, and we could all relax and enjoy what turned out to be an exciting come-from-behind victory for underdog Wyoming.

Of course, it was about 20 degrees that night in Las Vegas, and the wind was blowing through the stadium. The sidelines were like an expressway for cameramen and photographers trying to get the perfect shot. When I was able to get a good view of the field, I couldn't tell who was making a play, and my perspective was often so skewed that I couldn't see if a play resulted in a 10-yard gain or a 15-yard loss.

I've spent many a brisk fall or winter day at the stadium cheering on my team from the stands, paying a fortune for a ticket that's nowhere near the 50-yard line. The experience of a college-football game is not to be missed; but, when it comes to actually seeing the game, enjoying it in high def from the comfort of your home theater isn't the next best thing to being there. It's better. 🍷

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from the

# TEST BENCH



74



80



102



112



## Our Test Gear

- Audio Precision System Two 2532 Dual Domain
- Fluke 189 multimeter
- Leader LT-446 HDTV test generator
- Leader LV5700A waveform monitor
- LG OS-9020A oscilloscope
- LinearX loudspeaker measurement system
- Minolta LS-100 luminance meter
- Photo Research PR-650 SpectraScan colorimeter
- Staco variable transformer 3PN2210B (22-amp)
- TecLab TWS-1510 test benches

## OUR RATINGS SYSTEM

Each product is rated on a scale of 50 to 100 in five categories: build quality, value, features, performance, and ergonomics. The overall rating is an average, with each category receiving the following weight:

- Performance: 35%
- Value: 25%
- Features: 15%
- Build quality: 15%
- Ergonomics: 10%

We also color-code each ratings box to reflect a certain price class:

- PURPLE** → High end (\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$)
- BLUE** → Midrange (\$\$-\$\$\$)
- GREEN** → Entry level (\$-\$)

### HIGH PERFORMANCE PG 74

#### Earthquake Cinénova Grande Seven-Channel Amplifier

Power that will surely register on your Richter scale.

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# Earthquake Cinénova Grande Seven-Channel Amplifier

Power that will surely register on your Richter scale.



can be harnessed on a large, multi-channel chassis. A good chunk of the Cinénova Grande's bulk is its massive 4KVA toroidal transformer, which tips the scales at more than 40 pounds. All seven channels share this transformer, but that's about all they share. In every other respect, the channels are independent monoblocks, right down to the fact that you can remove and service each as a separate module. Each channel has its own power supply and preamplification

Cordero Studios

BY CHRIS LEWIS

**Earthquake is not a bad** moniker to have attached to an amplifier that can crank out some 300 watts across each of its seven channels. That kind of power, with the right speakers in front of it, can certainly set your listening room to rolling and rumbling. The name also applies well to the minor seismic event that will result when you drop this 122-pound behemoth into your equipment rack—assuming that

you have an equipment rack that can hold it. But, as endearing as weight and power are in an amplifier, they don't tell the whole story of an amplifier's potential. Finesse and athleticism are just as important in a big, bulky amplifier as they are in a big, bulky linebacker.

A look inside Earthquake Audio's Cinénova Grande seven-channel model indicates that the team at Earthquake has gone to considerable lengths to prove that a potent combination of speed, grace, and power

stage and possesses no less than 20 15-gigahertz output transistors, which helps to account for the speed this thing has.

Each block also has a substantial amount of heatsinking and protection with individual thermal sensors, in addition to peak LED indicators on the back panel and a pair of 10-amp fuses on the power-supply rails. The individual rear panels supply a single-ended (RCA) and a balanced (XLR) input, five-way binding posts,

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controls for an independent filter with options for high-pass, low-pass, or bypass operation, and a crossover range from 20 hertz to 5 kilohertz. A pre/pro normally handles the filtering, but this is an interesting feature. I set up the Cinénova Grande with a variety of playmates—some priced below

its level, and some priced above—which gave it the opportunity to prove itself across a broad range of price categories. The speakers included a couple of excellent systems from Energy and B&W. For pre/pros, I went with the Lexicon MC-12 and the Parasound C2. The same diversity of price and strength

of performance applied to the source units, as well, with the Marantz DV8300 and the Simaudio MOON Orbiter universal players.

It was hardly surprising that the Cinénova Grande kicked away from the gate with a truly impressive display of raw power. I set it to work immediately in two-channel mode with a diverse array of cage-rattlers, playing everything from Beethoven's Fifth, to the pipe-organ assault of *Lindenkirche Berlin* (Burmester Vol. 2), right through the 30-instrument barn dance of "Katy Hill" (*The Three Pickers*, Rounder Records). The Cinénova Grande met these challenges with a massive, wide-open soundstage, and it refused to constrict even the smallest of nuances anywhere in the presentation. Having seen the corresponding concert of *The Three Pickers* several times, I know where everyone is supposed to be and, thus, knew right away that the amplifier was reproducing the stage immaculately. Visual aids were hardly necessary to lay the soundfield out properly in my mind—that's how good a job this amplifier does of reproducing distinct events, even in a crowded, hard-driving context.

All of this power was laced with acumen and dexterity. As good as the Energy Veritas 2.4 speakers are, they are most successful with an amp that can drive their occasionally laid-back midbass through with authority but can also keep a handle on their sometimes-exuberant top end. You can't just throw raw power at these speakers and expect them to perform their best. The Cinénova Grande did a highly successful job of addressing both of these aspects, resulting in a near-perfect tonal balance from top to bottom, with no hints of editorializing or overmanipulation.

**AT A GLANCE EARTHQUAKE CINÉNOVA GRANDE SEVEN-CHANNEL AMPLIFIER**



**CONNECTIONS**

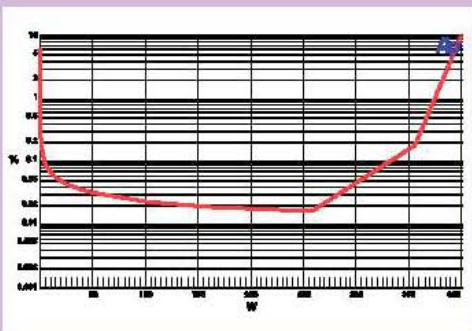
- Inputs: XLR (7), RCA (7)
- Outputs: Five-way binding posts (7)
- Additional: 25-pin parallel input connector

**FEATURES**

|                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Number of Channels:               | 7                         |
| Power Rating (watts per channel): | 300, into 8 ohms          |
| Frequency Response:               | +/-0.1dB: 20 Hz to 20 kHz |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):   | 9.25 x 18 x 21            |
| Weight (pounds):                  | 122                       |
| Price:                            | \$5,899                   |

These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

**HT Labs Measures: Cinénova Grande Seven-Channel Amplifier**



••• All channels driven continuously into 8-ohm loads:  
 0.1% distortion at 293.3 watts  
 1% distortion at 329.6 watts

••• Frequency response:  
 +0.09 dB at 10 Hz; +0.12 dB at 20 Hz  
 -0.16 dB at 20 kHz; -0.68 dB at 50 kHz

This graph shows that the Cinénova Grande's left amplifier channel, with two channels driving 8-ohm

loads, reaches 0.1% distortion at 330.9 watts and 1% distortion at 374.4 watts. Into 4 ohms, the amplifier reaches 0.1% distortion at 480.8 watts and 1% distortion at 564.7 watts. An input level of 100.2 millivolts was required to produce an output of 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load, indicating an overall gain of +29.03 decibels using the RCA input. When using the XLR input, a level of 100.1 millivolts was required to produce an output of 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load, indicating an overall gain of +29.03 dB.

THD+N from the amplifier was less than 0.014% at 1 kHz when driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load using the RCA input. When using the XLR input under the same conditions, THD+N was less than 0.013%. Crosstalk at 1 kHz driving 2.83 volts into an 8-ohm load was -99.40 dB left-to-right and -99.72 dB right-to-left using the RCA inputs and -101.90 dB left-to-right and -101.14 dB right-to-left using the XLR inputs. The signal-to-noise ratio with 2.83 volts driving an 8-ohm load from 10 Hz to 24 kHz with "A" weighting was -104.50 dBBrA using the RCA input and -102.60 dBBrA using the XLR input. —MJP



# “Incredible ... Definitive Has Yet Again Set a New Standard”

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You'd expect impressive dynamic range from an amp with this kind of résumé, but you'd probably still be surprised by what it does with high-resolution material, opening the window even further. I hit it with symphony after symphony and found myself constantly noting how well this amp preserves soft, subtle nuances, like dancing piccolos. But it also gives large, powerful events, like brass and percussion barrages, incredible authority and excitement. I decided to use the in-the-orchestra perspective to really see what this amp could do with all of the channels blazing. In turn, one of this amp's most memorable displays of power, agility, dynamic range, and everything else came with a playing of Respighi's *Pines of Rome* (AIX Records). You haven't entirely heard the magnificent climax that defines this piece until you've put yourself in the middle of it. It may not be the textbook way to listen, but it will blow you away—especially with a combination like the Cinénova Grande and B&W speakers exploiting every last element of the frequency range with off-the-chart dynamics, raw power, and a free-flowing sense of ease and composure.

The Respighi experience put me in the mood for a more active surround field, so I tried out some war movies like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers*, as well as big adventure films like the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy—none of which cheat you on surround effects. Thankfully, both the Veritas 2.4s and the B&Ws are the kind of surround speakers that can make good use of their massive wattage allotment. It would be a shame to put undersized surrounds with this amp. I ultimately used the Energy and B&W speakers in a seven-channel array that about blew the door off the room, but not in a way that was uncomfortable or overly aggressive. Undoubtedly due, in part, to all of its extra headroom, this amp possesses that rare ability to tear through the densest, most complicated material with incredible punch, power, and control, without ever dropping hints that it's having to work very hard to do so. There were none of the sonic indications, like dynamic compression or fatigue, or even the physical signs, like excessive heat. The experience of using this amp is not unlike driving a high-end luxury sedan where the engine is purring along, barely breaking a sweat at 3,000 RPMs, and only when you look at the

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Power to burn
- Modular, monoblock configuration
- Balanced inputs

speedometer do you realize you're going 120 miles per hour.

Power is the lifeblood of a home theater system, and you don't have to know much about it to know this: You want it to be clean, you want it to be true, and you want a lot of it. Finding all of this in one package isn't cheap or easy, and that's why true high-end amplifiers like the Cinénova Grande cost what they do. If you don't give power its due when you build your system, it's easy to end up with either a whole bunch of hapless, distorted watts or an amplifier that sounds good at modest volumes but not much else. Power with composure and athleticism, such as that which the Cinénova Grande presents, is a rare thing, and it's worth paying extra for. Everybody remembers a good earthquake, and the Cinénova Grande is no exception. 🌋

| EARTHQUAKE CINÉNOVA GRANDE SEVEN-CHANNEL AMPLIFIER   |   |  |   |   | OVERALL RATING  |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Build Quality  | Value   | Features   | Performance   | Ergonomics  | 93  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➡ Top-quality internal components all around</li> <li>➡ Built like a tank</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➡ Big power is never cheap—if it's good</li> <li>➡ The modular design allows for easy channel isolation and replacement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➡ Big, clean wattage and current are the best amp features of all</li> <li>➡ Balanced inputs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➡ Massive power and dynamics</li> <li>➡ Strong with two-channel or multichannel music or movies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➡ How ergonomic can a big amp be?</li> <li>➡ Handles to carry the amp are an option—a good option</li> </ul> |   |
| 95   | 91  | 94   | 93  | 90  | <p>The Cinénova Grande brings a lot of power, a lot of current, and a lot of excitement to the table. Its musical performance is strong, and it can easily power a large-scale seven-channel theater system—not to mention anything smaller—without breaking much of a sweat. It sounds as big as it looks.</p> |
| <p align="center"><b>General information</b><br/>                 Cinénova Grande Seven-Channel Amplifier \$5,899 ➡ Earthquake Sound Corporation, (510) 732-1000<br/> <a href="http://www.earthquakesound.com">www.earthquakesound.com</a> ➡ Dealer Locator Code EAR</p> |   |  |   |   |   |

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Forbes Magazine

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*Your Sound Solution™*



# Infinity TSS-4000 Speaker System

Infinity comes through again.



BY CHRIS LEWIS

**When it comes to expectations,** setting the bar high can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, you can't establish credibility or customer loyalty without

coming through time and time again. On the other hand, the higher you set the bar, the easier it is to go down rather than up. Infinity quickly comes to my mind as one of the companies that isn't afraid of this challenge, whether it be with a \$500 speaker or a \$5,000

speaker. No reviewer can ever predict how tuned his ear will be to a particular set of speakers, or even a brand. However, with Infinity, you can count on getting a well-designed, well-built speaker from a company that has the right priorities in mind. Some speaker manufacturers get it, and some don't. Infinity is clearly one that does.

The latest indication of Infinity's high standards is their TSS-4000 system, which takes over flagship duties in their plasma-friendly TSS speaker line. Anyone who's shopped for so-called plasma-friendly speakers in the last few years already knows that their quality can vary significantly. Some companies have simply slapped together pretty silver boxes in an attempt to capitalize on a fad, with little thought for much more than aesthetics. Other companies have taken their time, done things right, and set out to prove that, just because a speaker is convenient and attractive, it doesn't have to sound compromised. With what I know of Infinity's track record, I definitely expected the TSS-4000 system to be of the latter variety.

The workhorse of the system is the TSS-SAT4000, a versatile three-way satellite that uses four 3.5-inch woofers, two 3.5-inch midrange drivers, and a 0.75-inch dome tweeter in an extruded-aluminum cabinet. All of the drivers are constructed using Infinity's new Metal



# Mick, meet Keith.

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Matrix Diaphragm (MMD) process. Not to be confused with the CMMD drivers used in Infinity's higher-end speakers, which add a ceramic element to the mix, the MMD process instead applies an anodizing process

to both sides of an aluminum core. Infinity believes that this process provides significant improvement over standard metal cones.

The TSS-SAT4000s also have a highly versatile range of placement

options, as all good satellites should. They come standard with wall-mount and table-stand options, including spacers for the latter that allow you to set the speakers at three different heights. The wall-mount brackets conveniently allow you to rotate the speaker 30 degrees in either direction. Optional floor stands, which are solidly built and easy to integrate, are available, as is a flush-mount kit.

Rounding out the system are the TSS-CENTER4000 and the TSS-SUB4000. The center-channel unit is virtually identical to the satellite, except for its horizontal orientation. It uses the same driver array and also comes with a table stand and a wall-mount bracket. The TSS-SUB4000 uses a 12-inch MMD cone, backed by a 400-watt amplifier, in a sealed enclosure. The back panel offers line-level inputs, gain and phase control, and crossover bypass. It also houses the controls for Infinity's proprietary R.A.B.O.S. system, an effective, easy-to-use low-frequency room-correction tool.

As it has been a while since we discussed R.A.B.O.S., a refresher may be in order. A parametric filter integrated into the subwoofer's electronics allows the user to optimize the system's low-frequency output based on the listening room's characteristics. Room anomalies usually have a great influence on the final sound, especially in the lower sonic regions. Speakers, even those with a perfectly flat response, will still have a poor, colored sound in a bad room. R.A.B.O.S. simplifies the generally difficult process of dialing-in your sub to best match your room. It comes with an SPL meter, a test CD (supplying test tones from 20 to 100 hertz), and

**AT A GLANCE INFINITY TSS-4000 SPEAKER SYSTEM**



**SUBWOOFER: TSS-SUB4000**

|                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Connections:                    | Line-level in             |
| Enclosure Type:                 | Sealed                    |
| Woofer (size in inches, type):  | 12, MMD anodized aluminum |
| Power Rating (watts):           | 400                       |
| Crossover Bypass:               | Yes                       |
| Available Finishes:             | Silver                    |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 17.5 x 11.1 x 17.25       |
| Weight (pounds):                | 48                        |
| Price:                          | \$1,249                   |

These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

**SPEAKER:**

Type:  
Tweeter (size in inches, type):  
Midrange (size in inches, type):  
Woofer (size in inches, type):  
Nominal Impedance (ohms):  
Recommended Amp Power (watts):  
Available Finishes:  
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):  
Weight (pounds):  
Price:

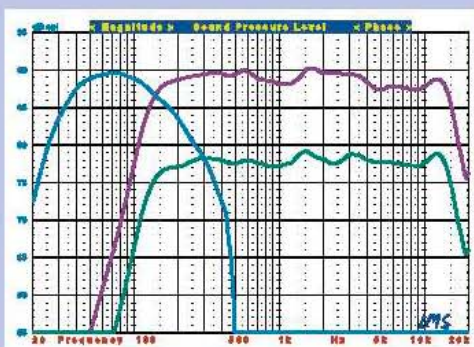
**TSS-SAT4000**

Three-way LCR  
0.75, MMD aluminum dome  
3.5 (2), MMD aluminum  
3.5 (4), MMD aluminum  
8  
10-150  
Silver  
23 x 4.1 x 4.4  
12.7  
\$549

**TSS-CENTER4000**

Three-way center channel  
0.75, MMD aluminum dome  
3.5 (2), MMD aluminum  
3.5 (2), MMD aluminum  
8  
10-150  
Silver  
4.1 x 23 x 4.4  
12.7  
\$549

**HT Labs Measures: Infinity TSS-4000 Speaker System**



**Satellite Sensitivity:**  
88.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

**Center Sensitivity:**  
88.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the TSS-SAT4000 satellites (purple trace), TSS-SUB4000

subwoofer (blue trace), and TSS-CENTER4000 center channel (green trace). All passive loudspeakers were measured at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The TSS-SAT4000's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +1.72/-1.10 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3dB point is at 131 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 115 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.72 ohms at 12.9 kHz and a phase angle of -55.24 degrees at 198 Hz.

The TSS-CENTER4000's listening-window response measures +1.67/-0.35 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +1.09/-0.87 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 131 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 115 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.72 ohms at 12.9 kHz and a phase angle of -56.21 degrees at 198 Hz.

The TSS-SUB4000's close-miked response, normalized to the level at 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3dB point is at 37 Hz and the -6dB point is at 30 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 141 Hz with the low-pass switch set to off. —MJP



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level, frequency, and bandwidth adjustments on the back of the subwoofer. Instructions, worksheets, and a bandwidth-selector tool are included, as well. After you set a system test level and a subwoofer test level (with the main level control, also on the back of the sub), you then use the individual test tones to plot a frequency curve for the sub's output in your room. Next, you apply the bandwidth selector to the curve to adjust for the most severe problems and make level, frequency, and bandwidth adjustments based on the results, using the supplied charts. If you don't want to look up the adjustments for yourself, head to Infinity's Website. Enter the data you compiled from the test tones, and it will determine the proper settings for you. It doesn't get much easier than that.

I set up a 5.1-channel TSS-4000 system with the optional floor stands for the front and surround channels. I placed the front speakers about 3 feet away from the side and rear walls, slightly toed-in, and put the rear speakers behind the listening position at an angle of roughly 120 degrees. Then, I mounted the center channel on its tabletop base and set it just below the screen. A Parasound C2 surround controller and a Marantz DV8300 universal

player handled the audio signals, while a Sunfire Theater Grand amplifier traded off with my trusty old Krell KAV-500 amplifier in supplying the power.

The first aspect that grabbed my attention with two-channel music was the TSS-SAT4000's dead-on imaging. Vocals were perfectly centered (provided that they were recorded that way in the first place), and everything else took up residence right where it was supposed to. What is especially impressive about the imaging is that the front speakers were only toed-in a little, at an almost negligible degree. This was my first clue that these satellites have a wide sweet spot and solid off-axis performance. The two-channel soundstage was nicely developed, as well, but a bit smaller than I would have preferred. You cannot expect these speakers to defy the laws of physics. In other words, you have to be realistic about the fact that they, like virtually all other speakers with small drivers and limited cabinet dimensions, won't be able to develop the kind of low-midrange, upper-bass body that large, properly designed tower speakers can. Naturally, their low-frequency impact is also limited by design, and by necessity—that's where the sub of the sub/sat

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Natural, engaging sound
- Considerable placement flexibility and ease of use
- R.A.B.O.S. low-frequency room-correction system

equation must step up to the plate. However, you can expect as full a midrange effort from the TSS-SAT4000 as I've heard from speakers of this size at this price. And that midrange is as natural as you'll find in this context—a hallmark of Infinity speakers from the tops to the bottoms of their lines. In addition to sounding lifelike and balanced, the midrange was scintillating and forceful. These MMD drivers appear to have all of the bases covered. The tweeter has a similar sonic profile.

The system's performance with high-resolution material was even more impressive, as it delivered an output level that, to some degree, defied its dimensions. Its neutrality was even more important, however. The system effortlessly and realistically delivered vocals, music, and anything else I sent it, with little of the constriction that I might

### INFINITY TSS-4000 SPEAKER SYSTEM

### OVERALL RATING

| Build Quality   | Value   | Features  | Performance  | Ergonomics  |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| → Quality drivers<br>→ Sturdy, well-built cabinets and stands | → Better drivers than most at this price<br>→ You could pay more for less | → Several mounting options<br>→ R.A.B.O.S. system is easy and effective | → Engaging sound<br>→ Strong with movies and music | → Flexible and easy to place<br>→ R.A.B.O.S. simplifies a complex process |
| 94  | 92  | 97  | 92   | 95  |

93

I have come to expect a well-built, well-designed, and strong-performing speaker that has its priorities straight when I see the Infinity logo. The TSS-4000 system certainly lives up to that reputation, and it does so with an aesthetic flair that will definitely get it noticed in the wide sea of plasma-friendly speakers.

### General information

TSS-SAT4000 Satellite Speaker, \$549 each → TSS-CENTER4000 Center-Channel Speaker, \$549  
 TSS-SUB4000 Subwoofer, \$1,249 → TSS-SAT4000 Floor Stand, \$279 each  
 Infinity Systems, (516) 674-4463, [www.infinitysystems.com](http://www.infinitysystems.com), Dealer Locator Code IFY

have allowed it to get away with, given its size. This was true with male voices at all pitches, from Muddy Waters (*Folk Singer*, MCA, SACD) all the way up through Ralph and Carter Stanley on the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack (Lost Highway, SACD). Female voices fared equally well, as Emmylou Harris, Alison Krause, and Gillian Welch's haunting "Didn't Leave Nobody but the Baby" from the *O Brother* soundtrack demonstrated. The TSS-CENTER4000 also anted up nicely with high-resolution, multichannel material, dropping the first hints of its strong performance with movies.

That strong movie performance was quick in coming, from both the center channel and the system as a whole. If you've read any of my reviews through the years, you're probably aware that my general philosophy for center channels is the bigger, the better. But I'm also well aware of the logistical realities that many systems face—realities that don't allow for a large center unit. I'm always impressed when I come across a smaller center channel that challenges my philosophy. I won't tell you that the TSS-CENTER4000 will make you believe you're listening to a big, multithousand-dollar model. However, if someone pulled a blindfold away from your eyes and revealed this small, skinny unit as the source of the full-bodied sound you'd been hearing, you'd be more than surprised. I've come to expect that compact centers will be overwhelmed, both by the rest of the system and, even more, by the tendency Hollywood mixers have to overwork the channel. This one held its own impressively, though. Dialogue was rich and lifelike, and the speaker had a surprising ability

to effectively render the rest of the music and surround effects that get jammed into this channel.

Since the satellites are only rated down to 120 Hz, the system naturally leans heavily on the TSS-SUB4000—more heavily than some people, including the folks at THX, would like to see. But a sub that is designed to cover an extended range, like this one, can handle the 80-to-120-Hz region just fine without neglecting its primary workload below 80 Hz. Placement can be tricky, since the higher in frequency a sub must operate, the more localizable it will be. This sub knows its role—and fills it well. It doesn't try to rattle the wall studs or ruffle your pant legs; it simply drives clean, impactful bass from 120 Hz and down with a natural attack and decay and no inclination toward boomy, monotone mush. It can certainly rumble when it's supposed to, but it doesn't when it's not supposed to—and that's one of the true marks of a quality sub.

I've come to expect a lot from Infinity over the years, and the TSS-4000 system only reinforced those expectations. It embodies all of the musicality and the quality of design and build that its predecessors have, and it does so with an aesthetic flair that is sure to get it noticed, even in the vast sea of plasma-friendly speakers that dominates store shelves these days. The prettiest speaker in the world isn't worth a cent if it doesn't sound good. So, if you have an eye for aesthetics, you'll want to take notice of a system that sounds this good, looks this good, is this versatile, and is easy to integrate, to boot. If you're looking for plasma-friendly speakers, put the TSS-4000 system on your short list. 🍿

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# NuVision NVX32HDU LCD HD Monitor

Out with the old, in with the Nu.



BY ADRIENNE MAXWELL

**This is an interesting time for display manufacturers.** On the one hand, the HD and flat-panel revolutions have energized the market. People are truly excited to buy TVs again. On the other hand, competition is fierce. It seems like a new TV manufacturer pops up every day to capitalize on the flat-panel frenzy.

So don't be surprised if you've never heard of NuVision. Neither had we. This startup recently entered the LCD market with four

monitors ranging in size from 23 to 37 inches. If the NVX32HDU is any indication of this company's prowess, I expect you'll be hearing a lot more about them in the future. This is an excellent display that is priced competitively with 32-inch LCDs from the big-name manufacturers.

The NVX32HDU is a 1,366-by-768 panel that resides in a simple black cabinet that's surprisingly light but doesn't feel flimsy or cheap. I liked the

clean, unostentatious design, and the cool NuTouch material that the cabinet is constructed of gives it a more substantial, higher-end feel. Basically, everything about the cabinet says, "Don't focus on me. Focus on the screen." As it should.

The small remote has a clean look and a logical layout. It mimics the TV's all-black aesthetic, which can make the remote a bit challenging to use in the dark. I was happy to discover that, in addition to direct-input access, the remote also provides dedicated buttons for each of the four aspect ratios: 4:3, 16:9,

panorama, and zoom. It does have one oddity, though: It sports two component-input buttons, but the NVX32HDU only has one component video input. Press either button, and it takes you to the same input. Go figure.

The connection panel is divided into two, with half of the connections running down each side panel. The side panels are inset behind the speakers, which makes it easy to connect your sources while still preventing the cables from being visible from the sides, and NuVision supplies detachable panels that cover up the connections. Basic RF, composite, and S-video connections run down the right panel, while the higher-end connections run down the left. Instead of HDMI, you get one DVI input with HDCP. I would've liked to see two component video connections, but at least there's a VGA input. If you have two component sources, component-to-VGA adapters are easy to come by.

## Step by Step

I connected the LCD to our reference Onkyo DV-SP800 DVD player via component video and sat down to make the first round of adjustments using just the onscreen menus. The OSD is easy to navigate, and you can move it around the screen. You can also lengthen or reduce the amount of time it

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remains onscreen. The component video input doesn't have a color-temperature setting, so I simply adjusted the brightness, contrast, and color using *Video Essentials*. I also used *VE's* gray ramp to check the NVX32HDU's ability to smoothly transition from dark

to light; this transition wasn't completely smooth, with one noticeable jump near the darker end of the ramp, but it was decent overall.

Screen uniformity is often an issue with LCDs; you'll sometimes see light spilling out from the sides onto the screen, or the black level will shift unevenly as you move off-axis, causing parts of the screen to look more purple than black. With the NVX32HDU, light spill wasn't an issue. The black level did get higher as I moved to the left or right, but not as dramatically as with many LCDs I've seen.

The NVX32HDU first raised my eyebrow when I tested its processing skills. It did an above-average job with film-based signals, creating virtually no artifacts and only a hint of shimmer in my *Gladiator* and *Bourne Identity* test sequences. It did an outstanding job with video-based signals, sailing through the video tests on my Silicon Optix test DVD, creating fewer artifacts than any TV or DVD player I've tested. My HD cable box's internal processor creates a ton of artifacts when I set it for 720p output, so I was happy to set it for 1080i and let the NVX32HDU handle the deinterlacing and scaling.

This LCD features two backlight modes: One brightens up the image, while the other creates deeper blacks. Using our Minolta LS-100 luminance meter, we determined that both modes produced a similar contrast ratio of about 650:1, which is better than many LCDs that have passed through these doors lately.

Our Photo Research PR-650 colorimeter also revealed that the NVX32HDU's color temperature tracked pretty consistently around 7,500 degrees Kelvin. Calibration wasn't absolutely necessary, as the

## AT A GLANCE NUVISION NVX32HDU LCD HD MONITOR

### CONNECTIONS

**Inputs:**  
Video: DVI w/HDCP (1), VGA (1), component video (1), S-video (1), composite video (2), RF (1)  
Audio: stereo analog (3), mini-jack (2)

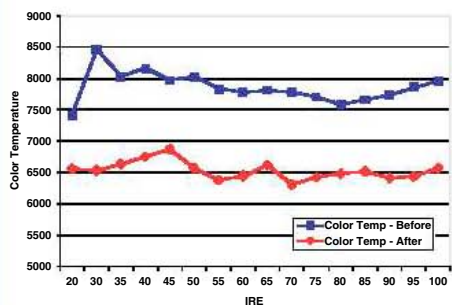
**Outputs:**  
Video: composite video (1)  
Audio: stereo analog (1)

**Additional:** RS-232 (1), IR control jack (1), headphone out (1)

### FEATURES

Type: LCD  
Screen Size (diagonal): 32 inches  
Native Resolution / Aspect Ratio: 1,366 by 768 / 16:9  
Lamp Life: 60,000 hours  
Wall Mount or Stand Included?: Tilttable Stand  
Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): 22.15 x 36.9 x 8.66  
Weight (pounds): 46  
Price: \$2,499

## HT Labs Measures: NuVision NVX32HDU LCD HD Monitor



0.142

85.77

Full-On/Full-Off Contrast Ratio—604:1;  
ANSI Contrast Ratio 586:1

Measured Resolution with the Leader LT-446:  
480: 480 (per picture height)  
720p/1080i: Out to the limits of the  
1366 by 768 panel

DC Restoration (poor, average, good, excellent):  
Excellent

Color Decoder (poor, average, good, excellent):  
Good

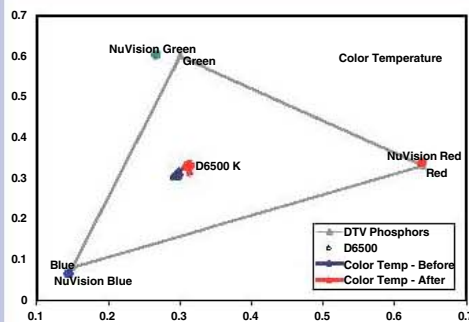
#### Measured Color Points:

Red Color Point:  $x=0.638$ ,  $y=0.339$

Green Color Point:  $x=0.266$ ,  $y=0.603$

Blue Color Point:  $x=0.145$ ,  $y=0.066$

The left chart shows the NVX32HDU's gray scale relative to its color temperature at various levels of intensity, or brightness (20 IRE is dark gray; 100 IRE is bright



white). The gray scale as set by the factory measures slightly cool across the gray scale. After making adjustments using the Photo Research PR-650, the gray scale measures within 377 degrees Kelvin of D6500, the accurate color temperature, across the entire range. Although the darkest images measured 6,500 degrees Kelvin, the actual x,y coordinates were lacking green.

The right chart shows the gray scale (or color temperature) relative to the color points of the display's red, green, and blue color filters. These are slightly off those specified by SMPTE. Blue is slightly oversaturated, red is slightly reddish-orange, and green is fairly bluish-green.

Using a full-field 100-IRE white (85.77 foot-lamberts) and a full-field 0-IRE black (0.142 ft-L), the contrast ratio was 604:1. Using a 16-box checkerboard pattern (ANSI contrast), the contrast ratio was 586:1. The best contrast ratio was achieved in the Backlight 2 setting. The brightest image was achieved in the Backlight 1 setting and produced 118.2 ft-L on a 100-IRE window. Black level in this mode was 0.197 ft-L, which is a contrast ratio of 600:1—GM



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**A** Adrienne liked the remote's logical layout and the easy-to-navigate onscreen display.

color palette through the component input was generally pleasing. It was a tad exaggerated, with hints of red in skintones, but nothing that would distract the average viewer. For those of you who would notice these issues, we were able to calibrate the component input and get closer to 6,500 K across the board, although our adjustments did lower the contrast ratio a little to 600:1.

What does all of the above really mean? It means that the NVX32HDU creates a very enjoyable image with both HDTV and DVD sources. Its detail is excellent, regardless of the source, and it isn't as noisy as many digital displays can be. Every display reviewer has a pet peeve, be it black level, color, or processing. In my case, that peeve is noise. I find it hard to enjoy a display that constantly reminds me of its digital nature. The NVX32HDU has a noise-reduction feature with multiple levels of adjustment: off, auto, strong, middle, and weak. With the noise reduction off, I did see some patches of noise in solid colors, and there were hints of quantization error in the light-to-dark transitions in the "Cell Block Tango" scene from *Chicago*, but it wasn't too distracting. When I switched to auto, the picture improved slightly.

That solid contrast ratio and a choice of backlight modes meant I could enjoy this LCD both during

the day and at night, with no light issues disturbing my enjoyment of dark scenes like the opening sequence of *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*.

### And Then Some

The picture only improved when I switched to the DVI input. This input lets you choose between normal, cool, and warm color temperatures, and the warm setting produces a pleasing color palette with natural skintones. There's even less noise in the picture through the DVI input, although the same *Chicago* scene did reveal that some grays looked a bit green around the edges. I didn't see this effect with any color other than gray.

Whether I watched DVDs, HDTV, or even SDTV, I found myself forgetting to take notes and just enjoying the view. I popped in one of my new favorite demo DVDs, *Collateral*. Since it takes place predominantly at night, it's a great test of a display's ability to reproduce black detail and color accents, and the NVX32HDU did a wonderful job. Director Michael Mann shot a good portion of this film using HD cameras, and I could really tell when the picture jumped from grainy film to super-detailed video.

There is one issue to note when it comes to the DVI input: It does

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Excellent processing and detail
- An above-average contrast ratio

not accept a 1080i, 60-hertz signal. When I connected the V, Inc. Bravo D2 DVD player to the DVI input to view some upconverted DVDs, I wasn't able to set the player for 1080i output, only 720p. Interestingly enough, when I connected Hewlett-Packard's new z555 Digital Entertainment Center to the NVX32HDU, which was set to 1080i at 50 Hz (don't ask me why), I was able to see a picture. However, it was very choppy and not really watchable. According to NuVision, the DVI input is designed to synchronize with the ATSC standard for 1080i, 59 or 60 fields per second.

Don't expect to find the NVX32HDU at your nearest Best Buy or Circuit City. NuVision has boldly decided to offer their products only through the specialty marketplace, so you'll have to visit the dealer locator on their Website to find a retailer near you. You may have to work a little harder to check out the NVX32HDU's performance for yourself, but I assure you that it's worth the effort. 🐼

### NUVISION NVX32HDU LCD HD MONITOR

### OVERALL RATING

| Build Quality   | Value  | Features  | Performance   | Ergonomics  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Weighs just 46 pounds, but the sleek look and NuTouch material give it a higher-end feel</li> <li>→ The NiDO (NuVision Intelligent Digital Optimization) processing does its job well</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Falls on the low end of average compared with other 32-inch LCDs</li> <li>→ No component video or DVI cable in the box</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ RS-232 and IR ports are on board for the custom-install crowd</li> <li>→ No CableCARD slot or card reader</li> <li>→ Only one component video input</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ An attractive image through both the component and DVI inputs</li> <li>→ Doesn't suffer from the light and black-level issues that can plague many LCDs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The menu system is transparent, and you can move it around the screen</li> <li>→ The remote is hard to use in the dark but has lots of convenient buttons</li> </ul> |
| 92  | 94   | 87  | 95  | 92  |

# 93

NuVision may be new to the already-crowded field of flat-panel manufacturers, but they are off to a strong start with the NVX32HDU HD LCD. It's just an easy LCD to enjoy.

### General information

NVX32HDU LCD HD Monitor, \$2,499 → NuVision, [www.nuvision.com](http://www.nuvision.com), Dealer Locator Code NUV

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Brent Butterworth, *Digital TV*

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# JVC HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV

More TV than you can shake a really, really big stick at.



technology called LCOS, or Liquid Crystal on Silicon. (JVC calls it D-ILA: Direct-drive Image Light Amplifier.) You can think of this technology as the result of a gene-splicing experiment with LCD and DLP. While it has similarities to the other two RPTV technologies, it is quite different. (That's right: the other *two*. CRT RPTV is pretty much dead.) Polarized light shines on a panel of liquid crystal, which has a mirrored backing. If the video signal calls for a pixel on the screen to be dark, the liquid crystal that corresponds to that

Cordero Studios

BY GEOFFREY MORRISON

**You know what? This is a big TV**—deceptively big. The cabinet that surrounds the screen is so thin that, at first glance, the display doesn't appear that large. In our studio, it's sitting next to a 55-inch display that I'm reviewing for an upcoming issue, and it is positively

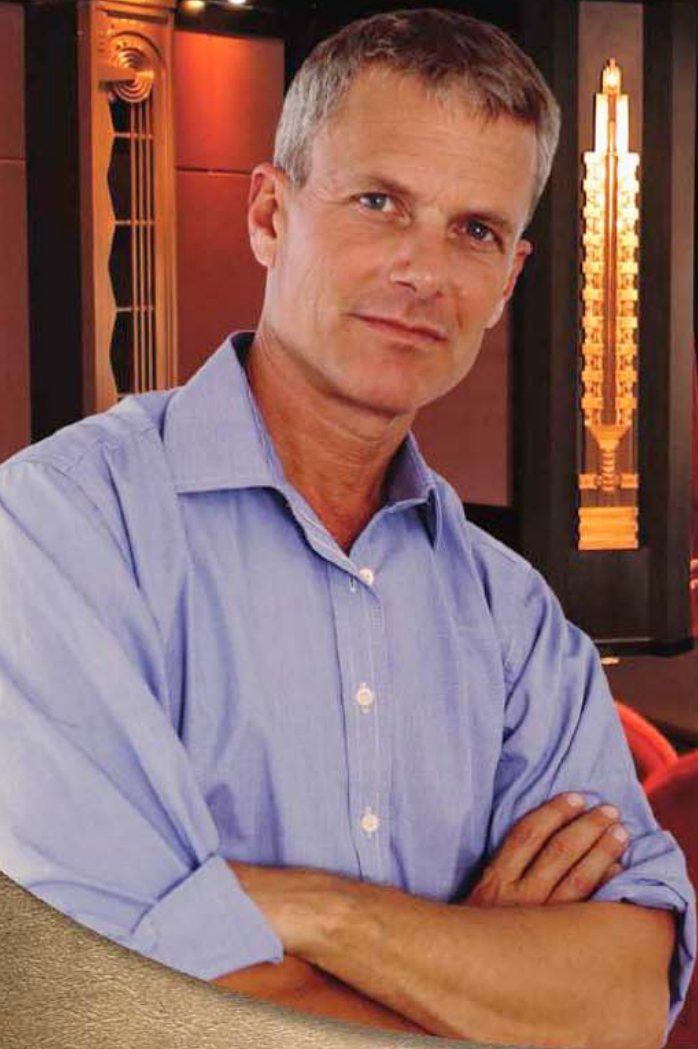
dwarfed by the 70-inch JVC. Compared with a 50-inch plasma, which would be a fair comparison from a price standpoint, the HD-70G886 has nearly twice the overall screen area, and it has almost three times the area of a 42-inch display. Kinda makes you want to second-guess that plasma purchase, doesn't it?

The HD-70G886, along with JVC's entire RPTV line, uses a

pixel twists to block the light from getting to the mirror. Liquid crystals never completely block all of the light, though, so a second polarizer blocks the light that each darkened mirror does still reflect on its way out. The end result is that the pixel appears dark on the screen.

In an LCD, there are electronic address elements alongside each





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**AT A GLANCE** JVC HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV



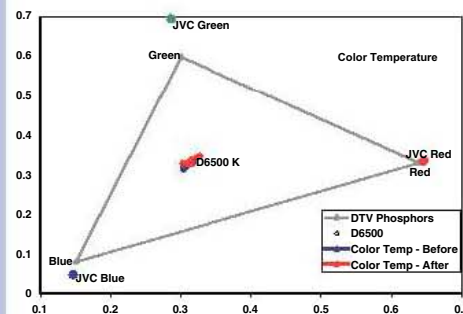
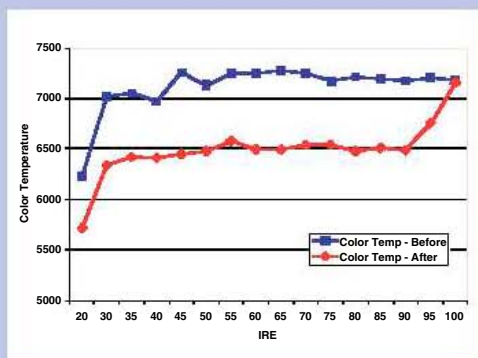
**CONNECTIONS**

- Inputs:**  
**Video:** HDMI (1), component video (2, 1 is shared), RGB-PC (1), S-video (3, shared), composite video (3, shared), RF (2)  
**Audio:** Analog stereo (5)
- Outputs:**  
**Video:** S-video (1, shared), composite video (1, shared)  
**Audio:** Optical (1), analog stereo (1)
- Additional:**  
 FireWire (2); CableCARD, Media Card Viewer for SD, MMC, MS, xD, and CF; AV Compulink (1)

**FEATURES**

- Type:** D-ILA (LCOS)  
**Screen Size (diagonal):** 70 inches  
**Scan Rate(s) or Native Resolution:** 1,280 by 720  
**Lamp Life:** 6,000 hours  
**Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):** 45.9 x 64.1 x 20.5  
**Weight (pounds):** 159  
**Price:** \$7,000

**HT Labs Measures: JVC HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV**



**0.14**      **130.1**

Full-On/Full-Off Contrast Ratio—929:1;  
 ANSI Contrast Ratio—110:1

Measured Resolution with the Leader LT-446:  
 480i: 480 (per picture height)  
 720p: 480 (pph)  
 1080i: 690 (pph)

DC Restoration (poor, average, good, excellent):  
**Excellent**

Color Decoder (poor, average, good, excellent):  
**Excellent**

Measured Color Points:  
**Red Color Point: x=0.646, y=0.335**  
**Green Color Point: x=0.285, y=0.695**  
**Blue Color Point: x=0.146, y=0.048**

The left chart shows the HD-70G886's gray scale relative to its color temperature at various levels of

intensity, or brightness (20 IRE is dark gray; 100 IRE is bright white). The gray scale as set by the factory, in the low color-temperature mode and the Theater Pro picture mode, measures slightly warm with the darkest images but somewhat cool with the rest of the gray-scale range. After making adjustments using the Photo Research PR-650, the gray scale still measures too warm with the darkest images, accurate with midtones, and back to cool with the brightest images. It is within 783 Kelvin of D6500, the accurate color temperature, across the entire range.

The right chart shows the gray scale (or color temperature) relative to the color points of the display's red, green, and blue LCOS panels. These are somewhat off those specified by SMPTE. Red is very slightly oversaturated, and blue is oversaturated and slightly bluish-purple. Green is very oversaturated.

Using a full-field 100-IRE white (130.1 foot-lamberts) and a full-field 0-IRE black (0.140 ft-L), the contrast ratio was 929:1. Using a 16-box checkerboard pattern (ANSI contrast), the contrast ratio was 110:1.—GM

pixel (resulting in the screen-door effect so common to LCDs). On an LCOS chip, the address electronics are positioned behind the mirrored layer, which allows the pixels to be closer together. They are closer together than even DLP mirrors. The result is that there's no noticeable pixel pattern on the screen, unless you are really, really close. Why don't more companies use LCOS? If you ask JVC, they just smile and shrug. Apparently, they're the only company that can get enough LCOS chips to work and still produce the displays within a decent price range. Sure, Sony has a few LCOS products (known as SXRD in Sony speak), but, at the moment, they are a lot more expensive.

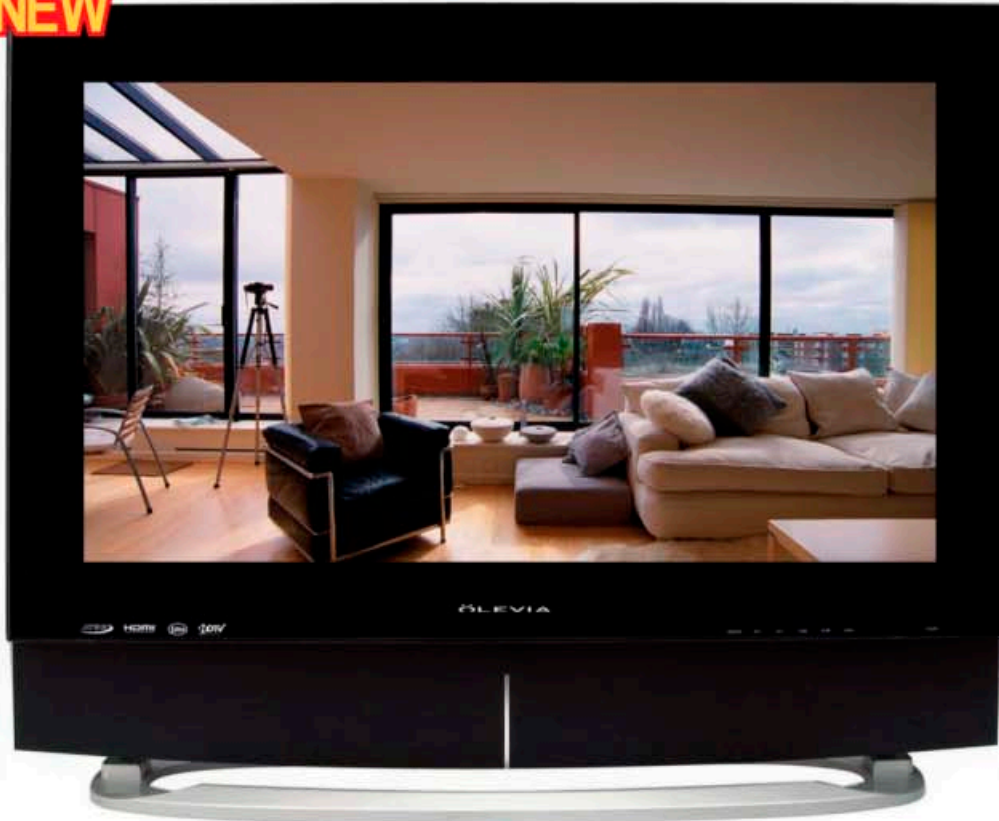
**Back to the Topic at Hand**

What little there is of the JVC's cabinet is quite attractive. JVC made what would otherwise have been a boring box into a curvy, sexy centerpiece for a room. The unit is also quite thin for the technology, at just over 20 inches deep. This makes it one of the thinnest RPTVs we've reviewed, in addition to having one of the largest screen sizes.

As is the trend with many TVs these days, the HD-70G886 is very bright. I measured 130.1 foot-lamberts, which is thankfully not as bright as the JVC HD-61Z575 D-ILA HD monitor that I reviewed in the December 2004 issue, which was 166 ft-L. A screen this size at that light output would be bright enough to see from space, or at least bright enough to blind your pets. So, at 130.1 ft-L, it's plenty bright. One side effect of this brightness is a fairly high black level. At 0.140 ft-L, it is lower than most of the flat-panel LCDs we've reviewed



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# OLEVIA

By **SYNTAX**



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but higher than almost everything else. While the full-on/full-off contrast ratio is 929:1, which is quite good, the ANSI contrast-ratio measurement is far lower. This is most likely because the light parts of the image reflect around the inside of the cabinet and wash out the dark parts of the image. With actual video, this was less noticeable on most selections. With a really bright image, any black in the image seemed high. Logically, darker scenes didn't have this problem and, as a result, looked fairly dark.

**A** You can turn off the backlighting via a glow-in-the-dark button, and there is a direct-access button for Theater Pro, the HD-70G886's most accurate picture mode.

### Process Me a Picture

Processing seems to be the weakest aspect of the HD-70G886's performance. With test patterns, it didn't seem to pick up the 3:2 sequence at all. Using actual video, with the Natural Cinema setting on, the TV took a long time to pick up the sequence. In the Natural Cinema's auto mode, it took even longer.



A fair amount of jagged edges were present in the video processing (with Natural Cinema off or in auto mode). With the flyover scene at the end of chapter 12 of *Gladiator*, the rooftops had noticeable jagged edges. I plugged in the Bravo D2 upscaling DVD player, which removed almost all of the jagged edges. The Bravo made imaging a little sharper, as well. While test patterns seemed to indicate some edge enhancement, it wasn't apparent in actual video material.

Not all of the JVC's processing was bad, as evidenced by a gray ramp (title 18, chapter 6 of *Video Essentials*). The gradation was very smooth, with only a slight amount of noise. While you can fix (OK, bypass) the set's processing to a large extent by using a good scaler or a scaling DVD player, you can't get around a display with noisy or stepped gradations. The HD-70G886 also has two

## HIGHLIGHTS

- A ginormous screen
- Very small footprint for an RPTV
- Crazy bright

aspect-ratio modes (and an additional mode only available with 480i/p) if your HD material doesn't fit the screen correctly.

Thanks to the HD-70G886's light output, actual video material really pops off the screen. When I turned down the detail control, it didn't affect the perceived detail, but it did reduce the visible noise (not that there was a lot to begin with) to make for an extremely clean image. The smoothness that I've seen in other LCOS displays is readily apparent here.

HD is obviously very detailed. I was concerned that, at 70 inches, the screen would be too big for 720p. But, because the pixels are so close together, it's not really an issue. If you sit too close, the image will start to look soft before you notice pixels. I used FireWire (JVC calls it iLink) to connect a JVC HM-DH30000U D-VHS deck. The TV recognized the D-VHS

### JVC HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV

| Build Quality                            | Value                                    | Features  | Performance  | Ergonomics  |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| → Very solidly built<br>→ Loud fan noise | → Huge screen<br>→ Lots of input choices | → HD tuner works great<br>→ FireWire connectivity | → Lots of light and OK black levels<br>→ Smooth HD | → Backlit remote has lots of discrete buttons<br>→ No direct-input access |
| 89                                       | 86                                       | 90  | 87   | 88  |

### General information

HD-70G886 D-ILA HDTV, \$7,000 → JVC, (800) 252-5722, [www.jvc.com](http://www.jvc.com) → Dealer Locator Code JVC

### OVERALL RATING

88

For this kind of money, you're certainly not going to get a flat panel in this size. Add in lots of light, smooth-looking HD, an HD tuner, and lots of useful features, and you have a huge TV that should be on any big-screen shopper's list of products to check out.

deck once I'd turned it on, and I had total control through the TV. (The TV's remote is also pre-programmed to work a JVC VCR.) As I flipped back and forth between the digital FireWire signal and the component analog signal, I saw a very slight increase in detail with the digital connection.

### Pictures From the Air

The HD-70G886's internal ATSC tuner also works great, and the channel scan was among the fastest I've seen. It pulled in all of our local HD channels with just a cheap indoor antenna. Surfing between channels was about average. Our local PBS affiliate used to show beautiful HD loops for most of the day. Then someone at the station must have discovered multicasting, and now they have 28-1, 28-2, and sometimes even 28-3, so the beautiful HD is compressed all to hell and looks pretty terrible. Thanks, KCET! Rudy Maxa and his European travels looked blocky. Compared with how I've seen this station look on some displays, though, the HD-70G886's smoothness and lack of noise almost made this station watchable again.

While its build quality is good, the HD-70G886 is fairly loud. The fan

noise is audible during any quiet passage of a movie. To make matters worse, the remote's lovely blue backlight makes a weird whining sound. This isn't the first remote that I've heard make this noise. The first was a Toshiba display from our February 2004 issue. I've only heard the sound from blue backlights; some are quieter, and some, like this one, are fairly loud. Otherwise, the remote is pretty good. You can turn off the backlight (and its sound) from a dedicated glow-in-the-dark button (this is the only way to do backlighting). Along with several buttons to access tweaky home theater-type stuff, there is a button that lets you directly access the Theater Pro mode, the TV's most accurate picture mode. Sadly, there are no direct input-access buttons, but you can rename the inputs to make selection that much easier.

If you're looking for a huge display that you can watch at any hour of the day, the HD-70G886 should be on your list. While its processing performance is a little disappointing, it's not a deal breaker, given the price of scaling DVD players. Just keep in mind, the screen is larger than it appears in pictures. **T**

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# Orb Audio Mod1 Speaker System

A new global power?



BY KEVIN HUNT

## Orb Audio thinks globally.

There's just no way around it when the only speaker you make is a modular, one-size-fits-all ball of carbon steel with a 4-inch waistline. Orb also sells a traditional subwoofer, but it sports rounded edges and a circular cloth grille. That's it for now in the Orb speaker department.

Yes, it's an extremely small Orb world. You couldn't track down Orb's Mod1 speaker system with a GPS device, even if you tried. Like all Orb products, it's only available online. You'll need a mouse to

sniff out this little system, which is \$749 for five Mod1 satellites and a Super Eight subwoofer. (Add \$9 for shipping.) It's worth a global search, though. At the very least, it's the most significant minispherical-speaker system since, oh, the Gallo Nucleus Micros of the late 1990s.

In fact, the Orb Mod1 could be the Micro's long-lost twin brother. (Conspiracy theorists point out that "Orb" is "bro" spelled backward.) Well, maybe it's not such a coincidence. Gary Pelled, who founded Orb Audio with Ethan Siegel in 2002, was once a partner of Anthony Gallo's at Gallo Acoustics.

Orb has apparently modified the Gallo formula enough to avoid a conflict. "Other than being round," says Siegel, "there is actually nothing that similar about the speakers." Except for a few things, like the big, open, smooth sound. These are not, mind you, a poor man's Micro. Yes, the Mod1 satellite uses a single 3-inch full-range driver—the tweeter sits out this dance—but it's constructed with a neodymium magnet, which is smaller and more potent per ounce than the common ferrite or ceramic magnet.

The less bulky magnet, says Siegel, allows for more useable air space inside the cabinet. This, combined with the driver's increased excursion, enhances performance, including output capability in the low-midrange frequencies. That's how the Mod1 sounds: much bigger than its size.

The spherical cabinet isn't designed simply for decorative purposes, either. It also reduces sonic coloration and, in extreme emergencies, makes a mean bocce ball.

For the hand-polished-steel set that I auditioned, or for the new antique-copper finish, add up to \$150 to the system's price. The Mod1 system comes with desk stands in either pearl white or metallic black gloss. Orb also offers assorted stands, from stud wall mounts (\$12.50 each) to the upscale HOSS (hunk of solid steel) floor stands (\$299 per pair).

Orb recommends the 5.1-channel Mod1 system for any room smaller than 14 by 20 feet. Any bigger, and you'll need more Mod1 satellites. Using this modular system, you can create a lineup of bigger speakers—your own Mod Squad. Just piggy-back the satellites using jumper cables and a desk-stand extension bracket attached to the speakers' 0.25-inch threaded inserts. Combine two speakers, and you've got a Mod2. Next from Orb, a Mod Quad: the floorstanding Mod4 consisting of four Mod1 modules.

You shouldn't underestimate the upgrade option. Budget buyers could start with as few as two Mod1 speakers, then work up to a 5.1-, 6.1-, or 7.1-channel setup. A basic Mod1 home theater could also potentially benefit from adding a second speaker to the center channel, an \$85 upgrade that's available in the basic colors. With the modular options, it's tough to outgrow the Mod1 system. Call Orb Audio for more possibilities.

The basic Mod1 system was more than big enough for my 10-by-14-foot home theater. The steel Mod1s were color-coordinated with my Dell W4200HD, a slick 42-inch plasma, and the center Mod1 was small enough that I could place it directly in front of the Dell's low-profile pedestal stand without violating the screen's space. The satellites' effortless sound instantly brought me back to earlier speakers—not the Gallos, but the tiny Cambridge SoundWorks cubes designed a decade ago by the legendary Henry Kloss.

The Super Eight subwoofer was an even bigger surprise. As I ran the customary test tones through the system to see how low it could go, the Super Eight kept chugging all the way down to 25 hertz in my

room. That's deep-bass territory for a budget sub, although it won't play loudly at those depths. Aside from the big boom, it also negotiated tricky terrain, picking up the mid-bass region where the Mod1 left off. For a system at this price point, the Super Eight is an outrageous little subwoofer in a 12-inch cube.

Setup was simple except for using

the satellites' little spring-loaded binding posts. Although they're of noticeably high quality, these gold-plated, push-down connectors don't allow enough room to easily accommodate wire much thicker than 16-gauge. When I wired a Mod2 setup, with speaker wire and the jumper cables together, I felt like I was threading a needle.

## AT A GLANCE ORB AUDIO MOD1 SPEAKER SYSTEM



### SUBWOOFER: SUPER EIGHT

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Connections:                    | Line-level input, speaker-level inputs/outputs |
| Enclosure Type:                 | Vented (flared snorkel port, bottom)           |
| Woofer (size in inches, type):  | 8, composite paper, high-density ABS cone      |
| Power Rating (watts):           | 150 (400 peak)                                 |
| Crossover Bypass:               | No   |
| Available Finishes:             | Black (detachable gray cloth grille)           |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 12 x 12 x 12                                   |
| Weight (pounds):                | 31   |
| Price:                          | \$399; \$749 for system                        |

These listings are based on the manufacturer's stated specs; the HT Labs box below indicates the gear's performance on our test bench.

### SPEAKER:

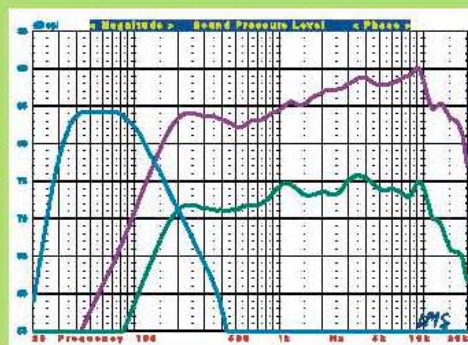
|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Type:                     | Full-frequency driver (size in inches, type): |
| Nominal Impedance (ohms): | Recommended Amp Power (watts):                |
| Available Finishes:       |   |

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | Weight (pounds): |
| Price:                          |                  |

### MOD1

|  |
|--|
| One-way, satellite   |
| 3, polypropylene cone  |
| 8  |
| 15–110   |
| Pearl White Gloss, Metallic Black Gloss, Hand-Polished Steel (\$100 system option), Antique Copper (\$150 system option) |
| 4.19 x 4.19 x 4.88   |
| 17 ounces  |
| \$219/pair; \$749 for system; \$85 each additional speaker in packaged system  |

## HT Labs Measures: Orb Audio Mod1 Speaker System



••• Satellite Sensitivity:  
84.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

••• Center Sensitivity:  
90.5 dB from 500 Hz to 2 kHz

This graph shows the quasi-anechoic (employing close-miking of all woofers) frequency response of the Mod1 satellite (purple trace), Mod2 center (green trace), and Super Eight subwoofer (blue trace). All passive

loudspeakers were measured at a distance of 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input and scaled for display purposes.

The Mod1's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +5.60/-2.63 decibels from 200 hertz to 10 kilohertz. The -3dB point is at 170 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 144 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 7.84 ohms at 609 Hz and a phase angle of -57.06 degrees at 224 Hz.

The Mod2's listening-window response (a five-point average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal and vertical responses) measures +3.19/-1.56 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. An average of axial and +/-15-degree horizontal responses measures +2.83/-1.47 dB from 200 Hz to 10 kHz. The -3dB point is at 173 Hz, and the -6dB point is at 146 Hz. Impedance reaches a minimum of 4.47 ohms at 531 Hz and a phase angle of -54.70 degrees at 224 Hz.

The Super Eight's close-miked response, normalized to the level at 80 Hz, indicates that the lower -3dB point is at 34 Hz and the -6dB point is at 30 Hz. The upper -3dB point is at 111 Hz with the crossover control set to maximum. —MJP



Kentucky Derby day arrived, and I couldn't let it pass without giving this system a workout with *Seabiscuit*. It was a breeze for the Mod1. The system captured the clank of the metal starting gate and the rush of horses' hooves, yet it also flared the fiddle accompaniment to Seabiscuit's test run at Santa Anita across the room.

At times, the single-driver center channel also proved to be even more adept at delivering dialogue than the familiar center-channel speaker with a woofer-tweeter-woofer configuration. Such speakers sometimes suffer when the listener isn't sitting directly in front of them. When you're seated off-axis, the woofers tend to cancel one another, making for lumpy response. Things got so bad with my own horizontal-type center-channel speaker that I recently resorted to closed-captioned subtitles while I watched HBO's *Deadwood*. Its brand of X-rated, Shakespearean frontier dialogue is already tough enough to follow. Not so with the Mod1.

A DTS demo disc demonstrated that the Mod1 system could shake the floor with *X2: X-Men United* and negotiate the storm sequence from *Pirates of the Caribbean* with excellent dispersion, imaging, and dialogue intelligibility. *The Incredibles* then walked on water. At this rate,

maybe the Mod1 system could, too.

Music sounded so good for speakers of this size that I would recommend the Mod1s for even a 2.1-channel stereo setup in an office or den, or hooked up to a computer. The Mod1s have a lot of sonic integrity—they sound good under almost any circumstance. Certainly, there were some limitations. A particularly heavy bass line on "Luisas" from Cibelle, a Brazilian Beth Orton, sounded boomy, but only slightly. Vocals were a little dry but not shrill. With their huge soundstage, slight midbass emphasis, and restrained midrange, the Mod1s are built for long-term listening.

Acoustic instruments sound almost too good through the Mod1s. Jane Monheit's vocals, by comparison, were somewhat detached on "Taking a Chance on Love." An exhilarating exchange between saxophonists Joel Frahm (tenor) and Donald Harrison (alto) overshadowed her, with Frahm in the right speaker and Harrison's response in the left. When I reconfigured the system to a Mod2 stereo setup, I heard what the extra Orbs can do: Music became more dynamic while retaining the same character and smoothness, without any hint of top-end sheen. Vocals became notably better, catching up with the acoustic

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Theater-in-the-round speakers at a direct-sales price
- Huge, nonfatiguing sound
- A subwoofer that rocks is rare in a budget package

instruments. Likewise, a Mod2 in the center channel of a 5.1 system produced even better dialogue clarity and more punch across the front soundstage.

Throughout more than a month of daily listening, not once did I have to interrupt the music or movie to adjust the Super Eight subwoofer. This is a nicely integrated system. Orb Audio says the Mod1 system would cost far more—even more than the still-vibrant Gallo Micros—if they marketed it at regular retail markup.

Like many other Internet-only companies, Orb Audio offers a risk-free, 30-day trial. It'll be difficult to do much better for \$749 at your local retailer. Even though you might want to act locally, you're probably better off thinking globally this time. At this price for a small-scale system, the little Mod1 is in a world of its own. **T**

| ORB AUDIO MOD1 SPEAKER SYSTEM   |  |   |  |   | OVERALL RATING   |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Build Quality   | Value  | Features  | Performance  | Ergonomics  | 92   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Balls of carbon steel</li> <li>→ Binding posts are constructed of gold-plated metal, not plastic</li> <li>→ Metal speaker grilles</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Direct, online sales eliminates retail markup</li> <li>→ Comparable in both looks and quality to Gallo Micro spheres</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The modular design allows for upgrades and customized systems</li> <li>→ Ounce for ounce, the Mod1 is one tough speaker</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Sound is sweet and enveloping</li> <li>→ Excellent sub/sat integration</li> <li>→ Good enough for a music-only, 2.1 system</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Threaded inserts accept a variety of stands</li> <li>→ Easy placement on or near a TV</li> <li>→ Push-button binding posts are too small for thick wire or banana plugs</li> </ul> |  |
| 93  | 94   | 88  | 94   | 88  | <p>These little Orbs will steal your heart with their combination of rugged construction, a modern look, and nonfatiguing sound. They're a budget alternative to some of the brand-name little cubes and spheres. It's hard to believe you're listening to a 4-inch, 17-ounce satellite.</p> |
| <b>General information</b><br>Mod1 Speaker System, \$749 → Orb Audio, (877) ORB-AUDIO, <a href="http://www.orbaudio.com">www.orbaudio.com</a> → Dealer Locator Code ORB               |  |   |  |   |  |

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# Don't Panic

A home theaterphile's guide to universal remotes. **BY JOHN HIGGINS**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Commercials disappear at the touch of a button
- Priced to get you into the game



conditioners. On occasion, one of these remotes might be able to control multiple components, but it's rare that a single remote will be compatible with every component in your system. Hence the market for universal remotes. We've all seen them, either on the racks at electronics stores for \$30 or

**A** Contributor John Higgins isn't a model, but he should be.

**Most audio/video buffs would** agree that the most frustrating thing about having a home theater is the loss of coffee-table space. Magazines have been replaced by numerous remotes to control receivers, televisions, DVRs, DVD players, even air

## AT A GLANCE ONE FOR ALL URC 8910 UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL

### FEATURES

|                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| RF or IR:                       | IR                    |
| Other connection types:         | None                  |
| Learning or Preprogrammed:      | Both                  |
| Buttons reassignable:           | Yes                   |
| Number of devices controlled:   | 8                     |
| Number of macros:               | 3                     |
| Backlighting:                   | Yes                   |
| Batteries:                      | 4 AAA, not included   |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 9.13 x 2.63 x 2.19    |
| Weight (ounces):                | 8 (without batteries) |
| Price:                          | \$35                  |

## ONE FOR ALL URC 8910 UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL

| Build Quality                                      | Value                                  | Features   | Performance  | Ergonomics  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| → Sturdy, plastic casing<br>→ Firm button response | → You get plenty of bang for your buck | → Never miss the return of your show while checking the football score during a commercial | → LCD shows which code is being used<br>→ Limited memory for programming buttons | → Display can be difficult to read unless you look straight at it |
| 89   | 93                                     | 92   | 89   | 88  |

## OVERALL RATING

90

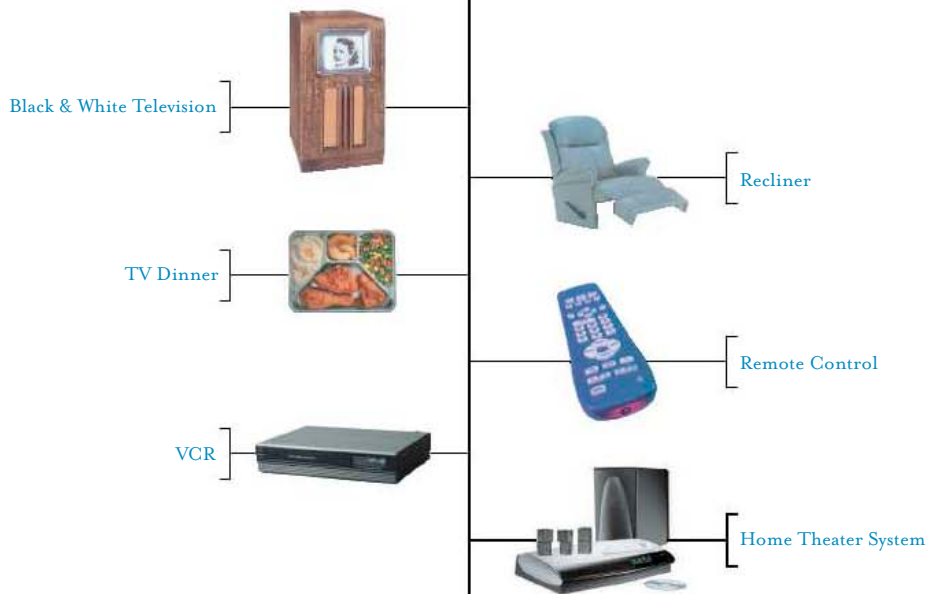
This is a solid starter remote for someone who does not want to delve deep into the remote world.

### General information

URC 8910 Universal Remote Control, \$35 → One For All, [www.ofausa.com](http://www.ofausa.com) → Dealer Locator Code ONE

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Futuristic, mesmerizing backlit display
- Super-sleek, lightweight design

reviewed here, retailing in the neighborhood of \$700. However, many of us are hesitant to spend more on a remote than on a DVD player. But don't panic. Those \$30 remotes may be just the thing you and your coffee table are looking for. Some of them are easy enough to use that any non-buffs in your household won't have to go back to school for their electrical-engineering degrees.

### One For All URC 8910, \$35

Starting off, the One For All URC 8910 can control eight components,

and it includes some nice features. If you add a new piece of equipment to your system, you can access upgrade codes over the phone. So, unlike most computers, the URC 8910 won't go out of date in six months. The URC 8910 also remembers your personalized settings when the batteries run out, and it's those personalized settings that make this remote interesting. In the Home Theater mode, you can operate specific functions on different components without having to use the remote to switch between them. For example, all of the playback controls can handle the DVD player, while the audio controls adjust the receiver, and the channel controls alter the television. This will help keep family members sane, as will the Commercial Skip button. Once you program and

enable this feature, you'll be able to switch to another channel while a commercial is on, and the remote will change the channel back after a designated time period. With these functions and the ability to upgrade, this remote packs quite a punch for its price.

### RadioShack Kameleon 6-in-1, \$60

RadioShack's Kameleon remote, measuring only 0.69 inches deep, brings a sleek, futuristic look to this group. The entire front of the remote lights up when you touch it. Unlike conventional LCD touchscreens, though, the Kameleon has hard buttons below the face that give tactile and aural confirmation for the finger and ear. Conveniently, the remote only



## AT A GLANCE RADIOSHACK KAMELEON 6-IN-1 UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL

### FEATURES

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| RF or IR:                       | IR                       |
| Other connection types:         | None                     |
| Learning or Preprogrammed:      | Both                     |
| Buttons reassignable:           | Yes                      |
| Number of devices controlled:   | 6                        |
| Number of macros:               | 4                        |
| Backlighting:                   | Yes                      |
| Batteries:                      | 4 AAA, not included      |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 9.38 x 2.79 x 0.69       |
| Weight (ounces):                | 5.76 (without batteries) |
| Price:                          | \$60                     |

## RADIOSHACK KAMELEON 6-IN-1 UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL

## OVERALL RATING

### Build Quality

→ Aluminum case gives it a different feel from other remotes  
→ Screwdriver required to access the battery compartment

91

### Value

→ Over-the-phone upgrading keeps the remote on your coffee table for more years

92

### Features

→ No more switching between components to change the volume

89

### Performance

→ Can be difficult to differentiate between buttons without looking at the screen

90

### Ergonomics

→ Ultra-thin feel takes some getting used to but is worth it  
→ Beautiful, bright display

94

91

The Kameleon is slightly limited in the features department, with most of the money going to the stylish look.

## General information

Kameleon 6-in-1 Universal Remote Control, \$60 → RadioShack, (800) 442-7221, [www.radioshack.com](http://www.radioshack.com) → Dealer Locator Code RSK



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**A** John liked the URC-100 Unifier's intuitive button placement. The MRF-100 RF receiver is a handy option.



illuminates the controls for the selected component. Like the One For All, you can upgrade this remote with current codes over the phone to keep it up to date. It also has a volume-lock feature that allows you to assign the volume control to one device no matter which mode the remote is in. While the backlit display is attractive and could become conversation fodder at your next dinner party, it is very sensitive and sometimes lights up seemingly on its own. Nonetheless, the Kameleon combines the smooth looks of an LCD display with the sensitivity of hard buttons.

**Universal Remote Control, Inc. URC-100 Unifier, \$100**

The URC-100 Unifier, Universal Remote Control, Inc.'s entry-level offering, can control eight separate components. To help

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- With its RF signal, you can control the stereo from the backyard
- Setup DVD for users who are afraid of manuals

with setup, it comes with a DVD tutorial that shows you exactly how to get the remote up and running. A wonderful addition to the tutorial is a section that shows some of the advanced possibilities, such as the option of setting up macros or changing device names in the display. Perhaps the most intriguing facet of this remote is its expandability. For another \$75, you can add the MRF-100 Expander RF receiver, which will pick up the remote's RF signals from a distance of 50 to 100 feet. The Expander sits

**AT A GLANCE UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL, INC. URC-100 UNIFIER UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL**

**FEATURES**

|                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| RF or IR:                       | Both               |
| Other connection types:         | None               |
| Learning or Preprogrammed:      | Both               |
| Buttons reassignable:           | Yes                |
| Number of devices controlled:   | 8                  |
| Number of macros:               | 24                 |
| Backlighting:                   | Yes                |
| Batteries:                      | 4 AAA, included    |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 8.5 x 2.5 x 1      |
| Weight (ounces):                | 8 (with batteries) |
| Price:                          | \$100              |

**UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL, INC. URC-100 UNIFIER UNIVERSAL REMOTE CONTROL**

**OVERALL RATING**

| Build Quality   | Value   | Features  | Performance  | Ergonomics   |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| → Highly durable buttons keep their click<br>→ Feels sturdy in the hand | → The expandability of this remote makes it worth the price<br>→ Includes batteries | → Both IR and RF signals offer usage flexibility<br>→ Setup DVD covers loads of options | → Provides a strong signal<br>→ Quick, (relatively) painless setup | → Fits well into either hand<br>→ Intuitive button placement |
| <b>93</b>   | <b>93</b>   | <b>96</b>   | <b>95</b>  | <b>92</b>  |

**94**

Universal Remote Control, Inc. knows what they are doing and shows it with this offering to the remote world. Plenty of features, a plethora of customization options, and loads of expansion make it worth the price.

**General information**

URC-100 Unifier Universal Remote Control, \$100 → Universal Remote Control, Inc., (914) 835-4484  
www.universalremote.com → Dealer Locator Code UNV



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**A** John was man enough to handle Sony's whopping RM-AV2500 remote, which has an astounding 24 macros.



inside your component cabinet and converts the RF signal it receives into an IR signal. The six included flashers then transmit the IR signal. It's a great way to control the stereo if you are sitting outside barbequing and listening to music, or even if you have furniture blocking the IR signal. The MRF-100 is compatible with the other remotes that URC, Inc. has to offer, as well, which allows your remote-control possibilities to grow with your system.

**Sony RM-AV2500, \$150**

At the upper end of our list is Sony's RM-AV2500 Integrated Remote Commander. This is the perfect remote for someone who has always wanted to pilot the *Starship Enterprise*. (A word of caution: At approximately 7 by 4.5 by 1.5 inches, some non-enthusiasts

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Enough component-control options for a small country
- Macro-mania

might be intimidated by this remote's size. It is more of a lap or table-top remote than it is a hand-held one.) The top third of the remote is a touch-sensitive LCD screen that contains the majority of the buttons, while the lower section has hard buttons for the most-used controls (volume, channel, and navigation), as well as twelve component-selection buttons. It even has a designated button for a MiniDisc player, along with two extra buttons for whatever components you like. You can use the enclosed component codes to hook up, say, a DAT machine,

**AT A GLANCE SONY RM-AV2500 INTEGRATED REMOTE COMMANDER**

| FEATURES                        |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| RF or IR:                       | IR                        |
| Other connection types:         | None                      |
| Learning or Preprogrammed:      | Both                      |
| Buttons reassignable:           | Yes                       |
| Number of devices controlled:   | 12                        |
| Number of macros:               | 24                        |
| Backlighting:                   | Yes                       |
| Batteries:                      | 4 AA, not included        |
| Dimensions (H x W x D, inches): | 7 x 4.5 x 1.5             |
| Weight (ounces):                | 12.35 (without batteries) |
| Price:                          | \$150                     |

**SONY RM-AV2500 INTEGRATED REMOTE COMMANDER**

**OVERALL RATING**

| Build Quality  | Value  | Features   | Performance  | Ergonomics  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| → Solid construction<br>→ Hard buttons are not all illuminated | → Includes a good number of features<br>→ Doesn't control all Sony products, as advertised, which makes the price questionable | → Buttons to control any remote device in your house<br>→ An enormous wealth of macros | → Did not control all Sony components out of the box<br>→ Touch buttons sometimes do not respond | → Its large size can be an acquired taste<br>→ Hard buttons are easy to find and identify in the dark |
| <b>93</b>  | <b>87</b>  | <b>94</b>  | <b>88</b>  | <b>88</b>   |

**89**

While the RM-AV2500 has loads of options, its size and lack of compatibility might make you hesitate. If you get by that, this remote can last you many years.

**General information**

RM-AV2500 Integrated Remote Commander, \$150 → Sony Electronics Inc., (800) 865-SONY  
www.sonystyle.com → Dealer Locator Code SNY

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### Logitech Harmony 676 Universal Remote Control, \$200

For those of you who want to step up to the next level, there is the Logitech Harmony 676. It includes everything you need to get started, even the batteries, and setup is relatively painless. Just pop in the installation CD (PC or Mac), hook the remote up to your computer with the supplied USB cable, and log on to Logitech's Website. The online walk-through is straightforward and allows you to customize the remote functions (including button-response speed) as you go along and, later, to update the remote with the latest firmware release. Plus, when you go out and buy a new piece of gear, you can just hook the remote back up and change your settings online. Perhaps the two most impressive aspects of this remote are the intuitive nature of the button placement and the built-in macros. If you have family members or roommates who don't want lengthy instructions on how to use the remote, the macro buttons are perfect. They're color-coded and have pictures for the assigned task. As an added cosmetic bonus, the remote comes with two extra faceplates, so you can have a red, blue, or silver remote depending on your mood. While the Harmony 676 is expensive, its customization and ease of use make it worth the price.

Logitech, (800) 231-7717, [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

39299-HTMP-050800 5/27/05 10:08 AM Page 1



or maybe even dig the Betamax out of the attic. You can teach the remote commands from an old remote using the Learn function, which is easy to accomplish, but can be time consuming.

Sony says that the RM-AV2500 is preset at the factory to operate Sony-brand components and should be useable out of the box to control all Sony A/V components. After I tested it, I found that this is not necessarily true. When I used the presets on a few different components, I found that the Sony STR-K840P and STR-K850P A/V receivers did not respond to the remote, and the

supplied Sony codes did not rectify the matter. If this is your situation, be prepared to program your remote one function at a time.

That being said, once everything is set up, the Integrated Remote Commander lives up to its name. And, with 24 macro control functions, one touch is all you will need.

### So Long, and Thanks for All the Remotes...

There are plenty of possibilities out there—the trick is filling your own personal needs. In an ideal situation, check out a friend's remote, and see how you like it. Whatever your decision, the idea of a universal remote is to make the viewing experience more enjoyable and accessible for you and your family, so make sure they like it, too.

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# LTB Audio LTB-AC3 5.1 Surround Sound Headphone System

5.1 for your head.



BY CHRIS CHIARELLA

▶ The amp unit (right) has inputs for your TV, DVD player, Xbox, and PlayStation 2.



After more years writing about sound technology than I care to count, I've had two revelations of note: A full 5.1-channel speaker system is too much for some people, while, for many of those same folks, traditional stereo just isn't enough. With content—movies and games—growing ever more sophisticated, we need adequate gear on which to enjoy it. However, not everyone has the space, the budget, or even the basic

technical know-how to wire five speakers and a subwoofer.

## Listen Up

For some people, Listen To Believe (LTB) Audio's new LTB-AC3 "true 5.1" headphones might be the key. Targeted first and foremost at the high-end gaming market, the system's decoder/amplifier module offers a digital optical audio input to mate with Xbox or PlayStation 2. There's also a coaxial digital connection for just about any DVD player, with a hard selector switch in between. The padded, over-the-ear headphones park a total of six "independent speaker chambers" right where you need them, three on each side: left and right versions of front, surround, and center channels. Although the LTB-AC3 doesn't include a dedicated microsubwoofer, it piggybacks bass reproduction into the left and right main drivers. LTB's SafeBass technology decreases low-frequency output and mixes it down into the left and right channels to protect the listener's hearing. LTB

Audio positioned and angled each chamber to work with the shape of the ear to yield an effect similar to that of a properly configured 5.1-channel speaker system. (See the cutaway illustration on the following page.) It's pretty convenient, especially with the tiny remote control that raises and lowers the volume for two sets of headphones individually or mutes the system.

A PS2 console can connect directly to the rear of the outboard amp unit via optical cable, and a DVD player connects via optical or coaxial cable (both are included). To connect an Xbox console, you'll need an upgraded A/V cable with an optical port or, even better, an A/V cable that outputs via coaxial (also included). There's also an analog stereo input for sources such as TV, CD players, etc., which are then upmixed to a simulated surround format. The amp requires AC power, and the headphones



Cordero Studios

## LTB AUDIO LTB-AC3 5.1 SURROUND SOUND HEADPHONE SYSTEM

## OVERALL RATING

| Build Quality  | Value   | Features   | Performance   | Ergonomics   |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Comfortably lightweight, with generous padding</li> <li>→ Mostly molded-plastic construction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Outstanding complement of accessories: everything needed for digital surround</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ True Dolby Digital decoding</li> <li>→ Ample digital and analog inputs plus a handy remote control</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Provides a full, spacious surround effect with excellent detail</li> <li>→ Bass is distractingly lacking due to SafeBass implementation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Simple to connect</li> <li>→ Only a few necessary buttons for system control</li> </ul> |
| 85   | 91  | 89   | 83  | 90   |

# 87

LTB delivers a complete Dolby Digital headphone kit at a reasonable price. While bass reproduction is problematic, the experience is otherwise quite convincing and is a cut above others' faux-surround approach.

## General information

LTB-AC3 5.1 Surround Sound Headphone System, \$119 → LTB Audio Systems, (201) 883-1869, [www.listentobelieve.com](http://www.listentobelieve.com)

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Surround your skull with discrete front, rear, and center-channel signals
- Reproduces high frequencies better than lows
- A handy complement to your Xbox, PS2, or DVD player

plug into one of the two jacks on the front of the amp. This proprietary plug is rather unusual. It combines three separate contact points along the 3.5-millimeter miniplug, and another in the RCA-type base carries the discrete information from the Dolby Digital decoder to the multiple independent speaker chambers inside the earcups.



## Highs and Lows

I auditioned a variety of movies and games and found that, when these LTB headphones were good, they were *very* good. The experience is more akin to a spacious, highly detailed stereo mix with extremely clear dialogue than it is to a traditional 5.1-channel environment. The many separate drivers impart a definite directionality and exquisite nuance. I

noticed this particularly with some quieter bits, mostly in the higher frequencies, that might otherwise have been lost. The open-air design also prevents an unnatural isolation from the real world. As with all surround sound headphones used in video applications, the soundfield will detach from the image if you turn your head drastically, so try to do so sparingly. Unfortunately, LTB's efforts to shield the listener from potentially harmful bass levels have resulted in a demonstrable clipping. This transforms many low-frequency effects into a hollow ringing sound that I can only compare to bowling pins being knocked over. This is an undeniable reminder of just how much boom is present in modern soundtracks, as the ringing was prevalent in many film sequences. The lack of sufficient bass in most headphones has been a longstanding gripe among audiophiles, and, well, the SafeBass feature is certainly no solution.

Considering how well these LTB-AC3 headphones work with portable DVD players, a battery-operated model would be a welcome addition. Since LTB Audio manufactures other 2.4-gigahertz products, perhaps wireless 5.1 is also a possibility. 📺

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## AT A GLANCE LTB AUDIO LTB-AC<sub>3</sub> 5.1 SURROUND SOUND HEADPHONE SYSTEM

### CONNECTIONS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Inputs:</b>                         | Digital Optical (1), Digital Coaxial (1), Analog Stereo (1) |
| <b>Outputs:</b>                        | Proprietary 5.1 (2)   |
| <b>Power Rating:</b>                   | 15 watts  |
| <b>Crossover Bypass:</b>               | No  |
| <b>Frequency Response:</b>             | 20Hz-20KHz  |
| <b>Available Finishes:</b>             | Black/Silver  |
| <b>Dimensions (H x W x D, inches):</b> | 7.3 x 6.1 x 3.2 (headphones); 1.3 x 6.3 x 3.5 (amp)         |
| <b>Weight (pounds):</b>                | 0.37 (headphones); 0.35 (amp)                               |

|                                       |                           |                           |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Independent Speaker Chambers:</b>  | <b>Front</b>              | <b>Center</b>             | <b>Surround</b>           |
| <b>Driver (size in inches, type):</b> | 1.6 (2), neodymium magnet | 0.6 (2), neodymium magnet | 0.6 (2), neodymium magnet |
| <b>Nominal Impedance (ohms):</b>      | 32                        | 16                        | 8                         |



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by the CineMotion 3-2 Reverse feature. This technology overcomes problems when movie film (which is shot at 24 frames per second) is displayed on progressive scanning televisions (which operate at 30 frames per second). In order to display 30 frames, some televisions take scanning lines from two adjacent movie frames and force-fit them into one television frame. This causes artifacts, those unwanted visible effects in the picture created by disturbances in the video transmission of processing. And this frequently happens, too—occurring on two out of every five video frames! But, this problem isn't just limited to movies, it happens during prime-time TV. Many dramas, music videos, and commercials are also shot at 24 frames per second and that's why CineMotion 3-2 reverse pull-down is so important. It analyzes the picture, identifying the difference between footage shot on interlaced video and footage shot on film.

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WEA

## Rewinding Peter Gabriel

Back to the future.

by Steve Guttenberg

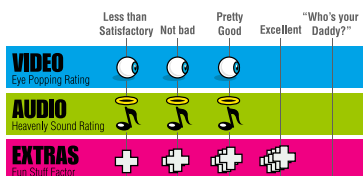
I first became aware of rock videos when the Beatles and Moody Blues made virtual appearances on *The Smothers Brothers Show* in the late 1960s. But videos came of age in the early days of MTV, and it was Peter Gabriel's work that elevated the medium from shameless self-promotion to an art form. His groundbreaking videos were bona fide collaborations with his animators and filmmakers. (Yes, even in the '80s, many "videos" were actually shot on film. See my interview with Peter Gabriel in this issue.)

Peter Gabriel's *Play: The Videos* features 23 original videos made over a 25-year span, starting with the "Solsbury Hill" video that combines original elements from the 1977 video with bits and pieces from the 1990 video. Some of the early videos look a little washed out and drab, but the new surround mixes bring them into the 21st century and dramatically open the sound beyond its original stereo confines. "Lovetown" and "Steam" are my favorite subwoofer-workout tunes.

Extras are plentiful: Brief comments by Gabriel and other musicians precede each video. There's a new live version of "Games Without Frontiers," a gorgeous abstract video for "The Nest That Sailed the Sky," and trailers for Gabriel's *Growing Up Live* and *Secret World Live* tour DVDs.

The picture format varies; most are 1.33:1, but some material is 1.78:1. *Play's* missteps include the visual and sonic incongruities that occur on Gabriel's duet with Kate Bush on "Don't Give Up." The images of Bush and Gabriel's embrace were beautifully shot, and Gabriel's vocals are properly front-and-center in the mix, but Bush's vocals wind up in the surround channels. Huh? Bush and Gabriel are both on the screen, so why are their voices separated? Another curiosity: the 96/24 tracks are much lower in volume than the Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo mixes. My sources at DTS informed me that the DTS flag was set incorrectly to -30 decibels. The boo-boo only occurs if you play the DVD over a 2005 receiver with the latest generation of DTS decoder chips. The DTS 96/24 decoders

that reside in pre-2005 receivers and pre/pros play the DTS bitstream at the correct level, and the Dolby Digital 5.1 and 2.0 bitstreams are at a normal volume level. At press time, Warner was remastering the DVD and sent along test pressings with the DTS tracks at the normal volume level, so it should be good to go now.



## ON THE SHELF

### AUGUST DVDS ANNOUNCED AFTER LAST MONTH'S DEADLINE:

#### August 2:

Blue's Clues: Blue's Room: Alphabet Power (Paramount)  
 Dragon Tales (Sony Pictures)  
 The High and Mighty Special Collector's Edition (Paramount)  
 Island in the Sky Special Collector's Edition (Paramount)  
 The X-Files Mythology: Black Oil (20th Century Fox)

#### August 9:

The Andy Griffith Show: The Complete Third Season (Paramount)  
 Because of Winn-Dixie (20th Century Fox)  
 Look at Me (Sony Pictures)  
 Off the Map (Sony Pictures)  
 Roswell Season Three DVD Collection (20th Century Fox)

#### August 16:

Alien Planet (Sony Pictures)  
 The Ballad of Jack and Rose (MGM/UA)  
 Brown Bunny (Sony Pictures)  
 Dave Chappelle: For What It's Worth (Sony Pictures)  
 The Deal (Sony Pictures)  
 I Love Lucy: The Complete Fifth Season (Paramount)  
 Lazytown: New Superhero (Paramount)  
 The Simpsons: The Complete Sixth Season (20th Century Fox)  
 The Wedding Date (Universal)

#### August 23:

The Adventures of Ociee Nash (20th Century Fox)  
 Boohbah: Big Windows (Paramount)  
 Cyberspace: Ecohaven CSE (Paramount)  
 Garfield and Friends Volume Four (20th Century Fox)  
 Gladiator Extended Edition (DreamWorks)  
 Good Times: The Complete Fifth Season (Sony Pictures)  
 Homeland Security (Paramount)  
 Layer Cake (Sony Pictures)  
 A Lot Like Love (Touchstone)  
 Red Tent (Paramount)  
 The Ring 2 (DreamWorks)  
 The Truman Show Special Collector's Edition (Paramount)  
 Witness Special Collector's Edition (Paramount)

#### August 30:

The Blues Brothers 25th Anniversary Edition (Universal)  
 Clueless: The Whatever Edition (Paramount)  
 Sahara (Paramount)  
 The Shirley Temple Collection (20th Century Fox)  
 Strawberry Shortcake: Moonlight Mysteries (20th Century Fox)  
 Tommy Boy Holy Schnike Edition (Paramount)  
 The Transporter Special Delivery Edition (20th Century Fox)  
 Victory in the Pacific (Paramount)  
 Walk on Water (Sony Pictures)

### SEPTEMBER DVDS ANNOUNCED BY PRESS TIME:

#### September 6:

Den of Lions (Miramax)  
 Haven (Miramax)  
 Lost Season One (Buena Vista)  
 Millennium Season Three (20th Century Fox)  
 Nero (Sony Pictures)  
 Written in Blood (Dimension)

#### September 13:

Chicago Collector's Edition (Miramax)

#### September 20:

Desperate Housewives (Buena Vista)  
 Don't Be a Menace Special Edition (Buena Vista)  
 Mindhunters (Dimension)  
 The Outsiders: The Complete Novel (Warner Brothers)  
 The Parent Trap Collection (Disney)  
 Robots (20th Century Fox)  
 Scary Movie 3.5 (Buena Vista)

#### September 27:

Family Guy Presents Stewie Griffin: The Untold Story (20th Century Fox)





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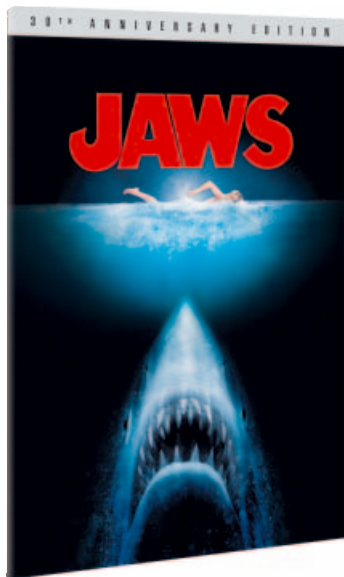
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## Reference CORNER



### The Monaural Monster Is Back

A new *Jaws* disc takes a bite out of home video blasphemy.

by Chris Chiarella

Often, a new edition of a movie on DVD can dazzle you with its extensive supplements or raise the bar with its heretofore unattainable technical quality. Once in a while, it can rectify a glaring oversight. Universal's *Jaws 30th Anniversary Edition* looks to the past to provide the latter. Far more than a mere adaptation of Peter Benchley's bestselling

novel, *Jaws* became a timeless crowd pleaser. It routinely sends audiences into spontaneous applause at the end of Quint's *U.S.S. Indianapolis* speech and inspires cheers when the nasty fish finally gets his comeuppance. This is a product of all of the filmmakers' contributions, especially the young director, Steven Spielberg.

The video master appears to be the same as on the 25th-anniversary release, although it has been reauthored for the combination of the Dolby Digital 5.1 and DTS tracks (previously available separately) and for the new addition of French and Spanish Dolby Digital 5.1 audio options. The 2.35:1 anamorphic image remains colorful and displays substantial levels of grain and occasional instances of visible digital artifacting. The other contents of the dual-layered disc one are the deleted scenes and bloopers, still in nonanamorphic widescreen, and the real bonus gem: a newly unearthed on-the-set featurette from 1974, consisting largely of a one-on-one interview with a 27-year-old Spielberg. "The Making of *Jaws*," which dates back to the laserdisc, is included in a two-hour-plus cut on disc two, along with assorted still-frame archives of photos and storyboards. If you prefer your DVD extras in book form, a handsome little 60-page photo booklet is tucked inside the slipcase, too.

The 5.1 remixes are indeed impressive. They reveal fine detail in both the original dialogue and effects that might have been missed in past presentations. The surrounds are used primarily for atmospheric fill. There can be no denying that some sound effects have been outright changed. (Where's the ricochet of the bullet off of the compressed air tank?) But, at the same time, the tinkering done with other sound effects offers a newfound clarity borne of separation, such as the shatter of glass when the shark breaks through the boat's window late in the film. The fidelity restored to John Williams' iconic musical score is downright inspiring, but the modern touch does expose certain limitations in dynamic range inherent to early/mid-'70s recording. For example, it enhances perhaps a little too much the echo of a fisherman talking down a shark's throat.

What makes this new edition truly special is the inclusion—for the first time ever on DVD—of the classic 1975 mono soundtrack. In a two-channel configuration, this track is something of a marvel in itself; it is spacious, realistic, warm, and surprisingly full. While some bits of dialogue are not as crystalline as in the 5.1-channel spawn (Spielberg loves multiple actors speaking at once), or even if a measure of the ambience seems to be lacking, the original audio certainly should never have been dropped. This *is*, after all, the way the movie was meant to be heard. Don't take my word for it: Ask Robert L. Hoyt, Roger Heman, Earl Madery, and John Carter, all of whom won the Academy Award for Best Achievement in Sound for their magnificent mono creation.

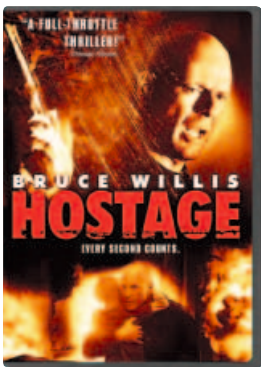
**DVD: Hostage**—Buena Vista

A tormented and burned-out former LAPD hostage negotiator named Jeff Talley (Bruce Willis) takes a job in a sleepy Ventura County police department and ends up having one really bad day in *Hostage*. Three punks decide to rob a rich family, and, when it all goes wrong, they end up trapped inside. It has the elements of a good actioner, yet it's dull, convoluted, and ultimately just kind of boring.

The Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack is fair, with the usual pumped-up explosions, breaking glass, and fireballs.

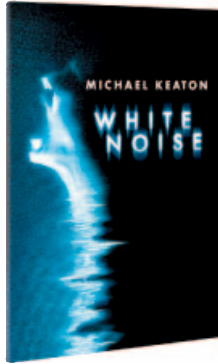
The 2.35:1 anamorphic picture luckily stays away from nighttime murkiness, and the look is the best part of the disc. But it's not enough to save it. Extras are no great shakes, with the standard commentary track (sans Willis), deleted and extended scenes, and behind-the-scenes features that are all decidedly average.

Kevin Pollak has a thankless role as Walter Smith, the robbery victim with a secret. But that secret, which involves other bad guys, offshore accounts, and bags of money, is not especially compelling. Ben Foster (*Six Feet Under*) is the only one of the teen robbers who comes close to embodying a real dysfunctional creep. It is the juiciest role and the easiest to dig into. Willis has done all of this before, and why he does it again in such a snoozer is anyone's guess. But, hey, it's still Bruce Willis in an action film, and I guess that counts for something.—*Tony DeCarlo*



**DVD: White Noise**—Universal

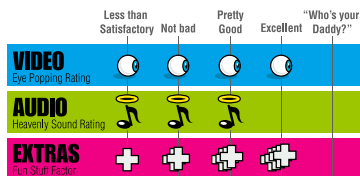
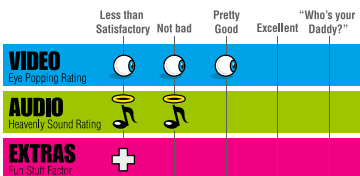
Using technology as their medium, voices from the grave make contact with the living in *White Noise*, which stars Michael Keaton as bereaved husband Jon Rivers. When a mysterious man approaches Rivers, claiming to have contacted his deceased wife, the grieving man stumbles upon the mysterious world of electronic voice phenomena, or EVP, by which the dead contact their loved ones, either appearing in the static of video and audio tapes or placing cell-phone calls from the great beyond.



While skeptics will find themselves smirking through much of the film, the DVD's plethora of extras helps support the movie's outlandish premise. Two experts provide background on EVP in the documentary "Making Contact," and the disc even includes an instructional segment on how to record EVP sessions in the comfort of your own home. In addition to a commentary track from Keaton and director Geoffrey Sax, there are a half-dozen deleted scenes with Sax's explanations for why he excised them.

Although the Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack produces dialogue that's occasionally difficult to decipher, the spooky surround-channel usage helps to enhance the suspense, with creepy voices bouncing from speaker to speaker. And, despite the fact that an abundance of static is part of the plot, the 2.35:1 anamorphic picture boasts a lot of contrast, with rich blacks and very crisp highlights.

It's tempting to refer to this movie as "Appliances Behaving Badly," but fans of the genre will find its otherworldly dimension appealing.—*Christy Grosz*



“... **WOW** ...  
darn near impeccable.”

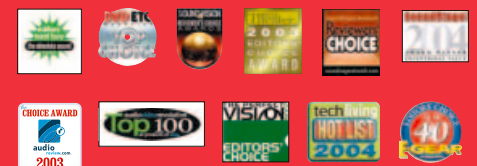
- Wes Phillips, onhometheater on the AVM 30



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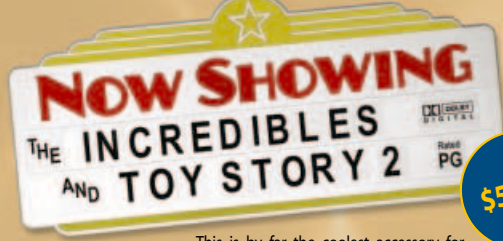
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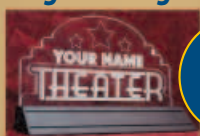
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**UMDs 4U**

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As I write this, we are in a relative lull of new game releases for the gotta-have-it Sony PlayStation Portable, but we can still watch plenty of major Hollywood movies. Predictably, Sony Pictures is coming on strong with an aggressive slate of titles repurposed for the Universal Media Disc, or UMD, format. Some are presented (and, in the case of *Spider-Man 2*,



reformatted) in a 16:9-perfect 1.78:1, while others are in their original theatrical aspect ratio of 1.85:1. *Charlie's Angels*, the video-game-inspired *Resident Evil* and its sequel, the arty *House of Flying Daggers*, the

director's cut of *Hellboy* (don't be fooled by the cover artwork for the PG-13 version), and recent hits such as *Hitch* and *Kung Fu Hustle* were released day-and-date with their DVD counterparts.

What might be surprising is that a rival studio, namely Buena Vista, is tying Sony as first to market with their own UMD slate. In addition to a steady stream—four per month—of some of their best movies, they are leading the pack in terms of special features on almost every title. There are deleted scenes, featurettes, interviews, storyboards, music videos, making-of documentaries, and more for the likes of *National Treasure*, *Hostage*, the retro-techie *Tron*, and the Christian Bale vehicle *Reign of Fire*. Buena Vista is also unafraid to show 2.35:1 films like *Hero* and *Kill Bill: Volume 1* and *Volume 2* in their full aspect ratios. The stunning *Sin City* will be released day-and-date with the DVD, while extended/unrated cuts are also en vogue, namely of *Coyote Ugly*, *Cursed*, *King Arthur*, and *Gone in Sixty Seconds*. —Chris Chiarella

**DVD: The Upside of Anger**—New Line

Joan Allen is really good. *Really* good. She stars as Terry Wolfmeyer, a suburban Michigan mother whose husband suddenly, unexpectedly—and mysteriously—leaves her in *The Upside of Anger*. Her performance as a boozy, embittered, and struggling woman coming to grips with being alone and keeping it together for her kids is fabulous. In the midst of all of this turmoil, she develops a relationship with ex-baseball player and radio-talk-show host Denny Davies, played by an in-top-form Kevin Costner. Terry's dialogue and interaction with her daughters is first-rate and heartfelt.



The 2.35:1 anamorphic picture wonderfully showcases the summery greens of upper-middle-class suburban life, and the cinematography captures the actors' faces and emotions, drawing you in close. The Dolby Digital 5.1 surround mix is unobtrusive, letting the scenes dictate the sound instead of the other way around. Extras are the standard fare, with commentary from Allen and director Mike Binder, along with deleted and behind-the-scenes clips.

Despite how it sounds, this isn't a downbeat film. There are laugh-out-loud moments, and, even if you don't like the ending, it's not enough to affect the originality of the rest of the film. Binder adds some comic relief as sleazy radio producer Shep, as does Costner. Keri Russell (*Felicity*), Erika Christensen (*Traffic*), Evan Rachel Wood (*Thirteen*), and Alicia Witt (*Two Weeks Notice*) are stunning, individualistic, and completely unified in their portrayals of the daughters. This is a smart, first-class movie. —Tony DeCarlo

|                                       | Less than Satisfactory | Not bad | Pretty Good | Excellent | "Who's your Daddy?" |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>VIDEO</b><br>Eye Popping Rating    | ●                      | ●       | ●           | ●         |                     |
| <b>AUDIO</b><br>Heavenly Sound Rating | ♪                      | ♪       | ♪           |           |                     |
| <b>EXTRAS</b><br>Fun Stuff Factor     | +                      | +       |             |           |                     |

**DVD: *The Machinist***—Paramount

Christian Bale dropped a third of his body weight at no one's insistence to take on the role of a guilt-wracked insomniac in this haunting, psychological mystery. Like *Memento* and *The Sixth Sense*, this craftily produced thriller demands eagle-eyed viewing and pays off at the end. But, by that time, the movie will be well entrenched under your skin.

*The Machinist* boasts a desolate, monochromatic look that emphasizes the isolation and paranoia of industrial worker Trevor Reznik, who claims not to have slept in a year. The 2.35:1 anamorphic transfer captures that look nicely. It's intentionally soft at times, as if you're viewing the proceedings through Reznik's weary eyes. The Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack offers nothing particularly surprising but richly delivers the ominous, Bernard Hermann-inspired score.

The extra materials—which include a 25-minute documentary and a commentary track by director Brad Anderson—reveal that the movie was shot entirely in Barcelona, Spain, which wasn't without its challenges, as the story is set in L.A. or a similar West Coast metropolis. The fact that the producers had to shoot overseas “gives a little insight into the state of independent filmmaking in the U.S.,” Anderson notes in his commentary. The track is a worthwhile listen, as he also calls attention to the clues sprinkled through the film.

Bale's career will no doubt soar as a result of his turn as Batman. But give this method actor his due, and give this movie a try. It's worth losing some sleep over.

—Gary Frisch



**DVD: *Bigger Than the Sky***—MGM/UA

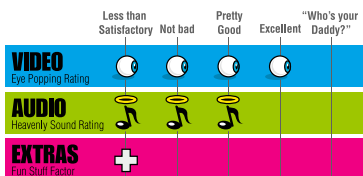
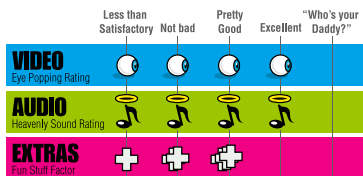
Following a difficult breakup with his girlfriend, Peter (Marcus Thomas) decides to audition for a community-theater production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, even though he



lacks any acting experience. Despite a less-than-stellar reading with the theater's star actor, Michael (John Corbett), the show's producer sees a spark in Peter and gives him the part. With a lot of advice from the rest of the cast, Marcus eventually finds his inner actor—and learns a little bit about himself along the way.

The DVD's 1.85:1 anamorphic picture offers an adequate amount of contrast and a vibrant color palette, delivering detail even in darker scenes. However, the Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack gets nothing more than a few music cues and a lot of dialogue with which to work, making for a decidedly drab home theater presentation.

In the way of extras, don't look for anything more than a static menu, which seems almost quaint in today's world of special editions and director's cuts. In fact, supplemental material has become something that most viewers almost take for granted when they plunk down \$15 on a new DVD. It's not so much that every film requires a comprehensive level of examination, but it's nice to know that it's available. The fact of the matter is, most extras on major-studio releases are produced during a film's shoot, so, when a new film hits DVD with nothing in the way of commentary tracks or even a lame making-of documentary, it's a bit of a head-scratcher.—Christy Grosz



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# CRITIC'S COUCH

## DVD: *Rescue Me*—Sony Pictures

The TV show *Rescue Me* may be set in a post-9/11 New York firehouse, but the mere presence of Denis Leary (who also co-created the series and frequently writes the installments) as Tommy Gavin ensures a show that doesn't dwell on dark themes. In the pilot episode, one of Gavin's colleagues says of his sex life, "It's getting slow out there. All that [action] I was getting right after 9/11; now nothing. People forget." According to Leary, in his pilot-episode commentary track with partner Peter Tolan, that line pretty much sets the tone for the series.



Now in its second season on FX, the series reveals the foibles of newly separated Gavin and his fellow firefighters. Gavin, who lost his cousin in the terrorist attacks (echoing Leary's loss of his real-life firefighter cousin in a blaze), is dealing with suppressed anger and visions of dead victims, while he carries on a taboo affair with his kin's widow. Despite—or maybe because of—his comic underpinnings, Leary pulls it off, making Gavin a sympathetic hero with self-destructive aspirations.

The 13 episodes in this three-disc set are presented in a 1.78:1 anamorphic format, and the natural colors perfectly reflect the show's gritty authenticity. The Dolby Digital 2.0 track produces clear dialogue and subtle ambiance when sirens blare and flames engulf Gavin and his crew.

Commentary tracks on the first and last episodes are joined by four featurettes, a fun gag reel, and a preview of the second season. But it's the show's witty writing, well-drawn characters, and spot-on casting that carry the set, creating a compellingly incendiary brew.—*Gary Frisch*

|                                       | Less than Satisfactory | Not bad | Pretty Good | Excellent | "Who's your Daddy?" |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>VIDEO</b><br>Eye Popping Rating    | ○                      | ○       | ○           | ○         | ○                   |
| <b>AUDIO</b><br>Heavenly Sound Rating | ○                      | ○       | ○           | ○         | ○                   |
| <b>EXTRAS</b><br>Fun Stuff Factor     | +                      | +       | +           | +         | +                   |

## DVD: *Beyond the Sea*—Lions Gate

In this biopic of Bobby Darin, Kevin Spacey accomplishes quite a surprising feat: In addition to writing and directing the film and playing the role of Darin, he provides the vocals for all of the musical numbers featuring the entertainer. And he does a fine job. But, outside of this, the film sinks from the sky like a flaming zeppelin.

The movie lightheartedly follows Darin's seemingly unabated rise to fame in both music and movies. His relationship with his wife, fellow teen icon Sandra Dee, is rendered confusingly and two-dimensionally. In fact, it seems that all of the characters are intentionally shallow as part of the movie's whimsical, irreverent feel. Because the audience never really gets much opportunity to understand or connect with the characters, when the one plot twist arrives and the film suddenly becomes a somber, character-driven drama, it just doesn't make much sense. The reasons for Darin's emotional, existential crisis are more or less a complete mystery.

In spite of these failings, the video is presented quite nicely in a 1.78:1 anamorphic aspect ratio with lively colors and a smooth appearance. The Dolby Digital 5.1 audio is great during the musical sequences. The surrounds receive good use, while the dialogue-based scenes are very clear and intelligible.



Extras include a commentary track with Spacey and producer Andy Paterson and a making-of featurette. The booklet insert lists two more extras that I was strangely unable to locate on my disc: an interview with Darin's manager, Steve Blauner, and archival footage of Darin's estate.—*Nikhil Burman*

|                                       | Less than Satisfactory | Not bad | Pretty Good | Excellent | "Who's your Daddy?" |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>VIDEO</b><br>Eye Popping Rating    | ○                      | ○       | ○           | ○         | ○                   |
| <b>AUDIO</b><br>Heavenly Sound Rating | ○                      | ○       | ○           | ○         | ○                   |
| <b>EXTRAS</b><br>Fun Stuff Factor     | +                      | +       | +           | +         | +                   |

**DVD: *The Pacifier***—Buena Vista

I was fully prepared to not like this film. Vin Diesel as a Navy S.E.A.L. turned softie baby-sitter? It doesn't look good from the outset, yet it works if you're looking for a decent family movie. Think *Kindergarten Cop* meets *Home Alone*. Diesel is Lt. Shane Wolfe, assigned to protect a household of kids from the evildoers who killed their father. In the meantime, the kids rebel with the typical too-adult remarks and goofy pranks, and it's up to Shane to put them in line with his military training—all in the midst of one poo joke after another. This sounds bad, but I've seen it done worse. So I'd say *The Pacifier* exceeds expectations, which is fine for a Saturday-



night rental.

On to the disc itself: The Navy S.E.A.L. action scenes in the first part of this movie save it from being the completely dialogue-driven movie you might

expect. From the deep military drumming to the shrill quality of the helicopters, the sound is decent in Dolby Digital 5.1. Visually speaking, the 2.35:1 anamorphic picture is also up to par, with good clarity and color. The disc is a little disappointing on the extras side (an unfunny bloopers reel and a behind-the-scenes with Diesel that is crushingly too short), but, overall, if you're buying this for the kiddies, it's not a bad choice.—*Ekua Hagan*

**DVD: *Bill & Ted's Most Excellent Collection***—MGM/UA

Earning the cinephile treatment in a new three-disc collection, the *Bill & Ted* oeuvre is a sweet-natured reminder that movies



don't have to be art to entertain. For anyone who grew up in the neon-colored '80s, this proto-*Wayne's World* duo of bumbling wisdom represented the heart of teenage angst without all of the rough edges. Their concerns were simple: impending homework, elusive girls, and ill-gotten beer.

Dolby Digital 5.1 provides the audio for both features, offering dialogue that's easy to understand, rockin' treble-heavy music, and action-packed surround effects. The anamorphic picture (2.35:1 on *Excellent Adventure* and 1.85:1 on *Bogus Journey*) has good detail and a vibrant, '80s-era color palette. The highlights tend to blow out in really contrasty scenes, though, and some of the more complicated outdoor scenes get a little noisy. Bogus, dude.

A full disc's worth of extras, appropriately dubbed "Bill & Ted's Non-Bogus Disc," delve deeply into many aspects of the production. There's a lengthy, illuminating conversation with screenwriters Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon, in which they discuss the film's evolution from comedy workshop to the big screen. Silly supplements—such as a video dictionary of the duo's unique language, an interview with guitar legend Steve Vai, and an air-guitar tutorial—maintain the films' appealingly goofy attitude. *Bill & Ted* scholars will also appreciate the inclusion of a full-length episode of the animated series.—*Christy Groz*

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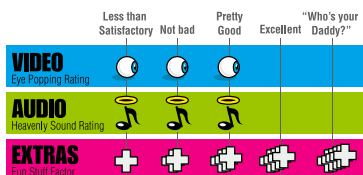
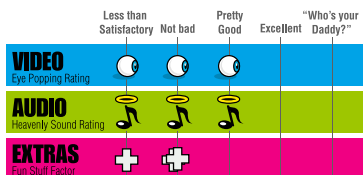
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| Page #     | Manufacturers  |
|------------|--|
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| Page #     | Manufacturers   |
|------------|---|
| 13, 71 ... | <b>Polk Audio</b><br>Phone (410) 764-5275<br><a href="http://www.polkaudio.com">www.polkaudio.com</a>   |
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| 105.....   | <b>Totem Acoustic</b><br>Phone (514) 259-1062<br><a href="http://www.totemacoustic.com">www.totemacoustic.com</a>                                     |
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BY MICHAEL J. NELSON

# Celluloid Freeway?

**I**f there is one question I get more than any other, it is this: Mike, could you give me some advice on how, in broad daylight and on a ruler-straight bike path, I might become involved in a high-speed, head-on collision with another bike?

Happily, because of a recent episode, I am now an expert on the subject, and I think I can help.

First, get up to speed, stay alert, and keep your bike on a straight path in your lane. Then, simply watch in horror as a skinny 20-year-old speeding toward you on an impossibly robust mountain bike crosses into your lane and smashes his 50-pound bike spang into yours! As you lie dazed and bloody on the path, chunks of your mangled bike strewn yard-sale fashion around you, he will undoubtedly try to soothe you with the comforting words, "Dude, I'm, like, so sorry. I didn't see you." More than likely, his words will utterly fail to soothe you.

That, anyway, was my experience.

In the aftermath, I was tempted to attribute the cause of the accident to excessive use of a water bong during a *World's Wildest Police Videos* marathon on Spike TV, but, truthfully, I think it was simple driver distraction.

This is why I'm somewhat alarmed to learn that DVD players are increasingly a standard feature in many

minivans, SUVs, and luxury cars. If a biker can be distracted by that weird little freckle on his left forearm that's shaped like a Chalupa Supreme (I assume that was the case with my

guy), how much more likely is a driver doing 75 on the interstate to be distracted by, say, a fish-tank cleaner who becomes a male prostitute? Why, it's a lead-pipe cinch that

*Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo* is

responsible for more rollovers than all the blizzards of the last ten years put together.

"But wait," some users may object. "The screen is behind the driver, and the occupants all use headphones." As true as that may be, for my own part, simply knowing that an image of Adam Sandler was lurking somewhere over my right shoulder would cause me to seek out a tall bridge and crash my car through the guardrail and into the icy water below.

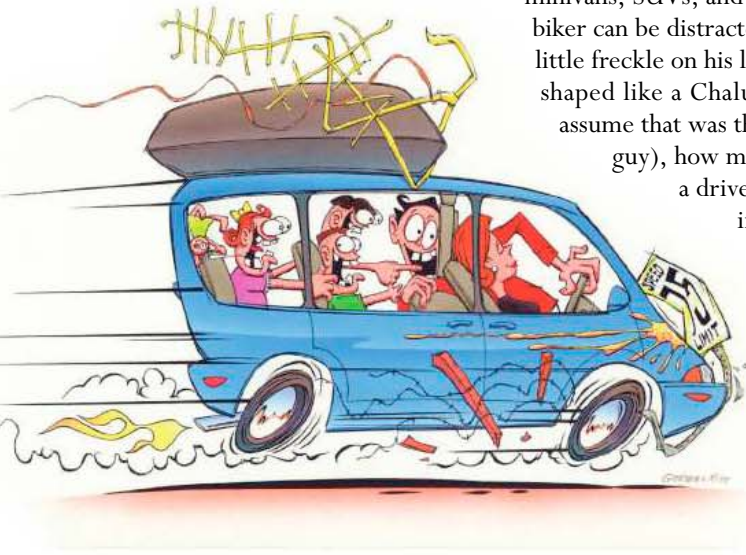
Further, I wonder if all these car-based systems aren't somehow disrespectful to the film experience. Think of it: We work slavishly to build and tweak our home theater systems in an effort to get us as close as we can to that magically sensual experience of the darkened movie theater. Is one really giving *Casablanca* its due by screening it in the back of a Dodge Caravan at noon on a sunny day, sitting next to a couple of noisy grade-schoolers drinking from juice boxes, the air redolent of Strawberry Splash Fruit Gushers?

Yes, on long car trips, parents need pastimes for their children, but isn't that why God gave us the songs *Jimmy Crack Corn* and *Granny's in the Cellar*? (My favorite technique? I give my kids large chunks of generic beef jerky. It's 250 miles before they even soften it up enough to take their first bites.)

It seems to me that, if we want theaters in our cars, we shouldn't go at it halfheartedly. Tear out the 7-inch fold-down screen. Take out the front bench seat and put in its place a 50-inch LCOS flanked by a couple of good tower speakers. Punch out the side windows and mount some good-sized in-wall speakers. Now that I think of it, you'll need room for the sub. Better tear out the passenger's seat and put it there to take advantage of room reflections.

Oh, and spray-paint the remaining windows flat black, with special attention to the windshield. All that light will only distract the driver's attention from *The Fast and the Furious*. 🍻

\* *Michael J. Nelson is the former host and head writer of Mystery Science Theater 3000 and the author of three books, most recently the novel Death Rat! (HarperCollins). He has contributed commentary tracks for Fox's DVD re-release of Reefer Madness, as well as the classics Night of the Living Dead and Carnival of Souls.*



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## THE XM EXPERIENCE



8

## XM AT HOME



12



16

## ➤ Getting Started

7

### A LETTER FROM XM

Brian Shea, XM V.P. Retail Aftermarket Distribution, welcomes you to *The XM Experience*.

8

### EXPERIENCE XM

If you've heard about satellite radio and are not sure where to begin, or better yet, if you've heard about XM® Satellite Radio, and want to learn more, start here. This overview of XM covers their great programming lineup, excellent products and satellite technology.

## ➤ XM at Home

12

### GETTING XM AT HOME

XM Satellite Radio is not just for the car, you can enjoy XM's programming right from the comfort of your own home.

13

### REVIEW: POLK AUDIO XRt12 XM SATELLITE RADIO COMPONENT TUNER

15

### XM SATELLITE RADIO IN-HOME PRODUCTS

## ➤ XM Plug-and-Play

16

### A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Want an XM receiver that moves easily between environments? Try an XM Plug-and-Play receiver. You can use these handy receivers in the car, in the home or on-the-go.

17

### REVIEW: DELPHI XM SKYFi2® PLUG-AND-PLAY RECEIVER

18

### XM SATELLITE RADIO PLUG-AND-PLAY PRODUCTS

## > XM In The Car

20

### THE OPEN ROAD AWAITS YOU

Getting XM in the car has never been easier. Use this guide to enjoy XM's tunes, news, talk, sports, traffic, weather and more in your automobile. XM makes driving fun.

21

### REVIEW: TERK XM COMMANDER RECEIVER

22

### GET XMDIRECT® FOR YOUR XM READY® RECEIVER

## > XM2go™

24

### ON-THE-GO WITH XM2go™

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25

### REVIEW: DELPHI XM MyFi® XM2go PORTABLE XM RECEIVER

26

### XM2go ACCESSORIES

## > Programming

28

### XM PROGRAMMING GUIDE

XM has more than 150 digital channels of music, news, sports and information from coast to coast. Our programming guide will help you find the channels you want to listen to.

33

### CHANNEL GUIDE

Want to know what's on Channel 45 or 113? This at-a-glance guide will help.



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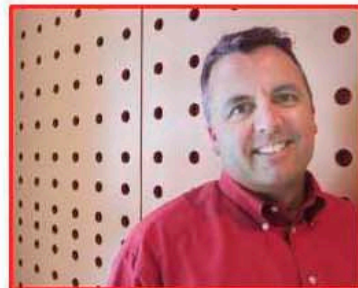
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The fact is, when you hear XM you're hooked. It's radio like you've never heard. With more than 150 channels to choose from, XM delivers over 80,000 hours of diverse programming a month. Our DJs and program directors keep the mix of entertainment fresh, full of energy and life.

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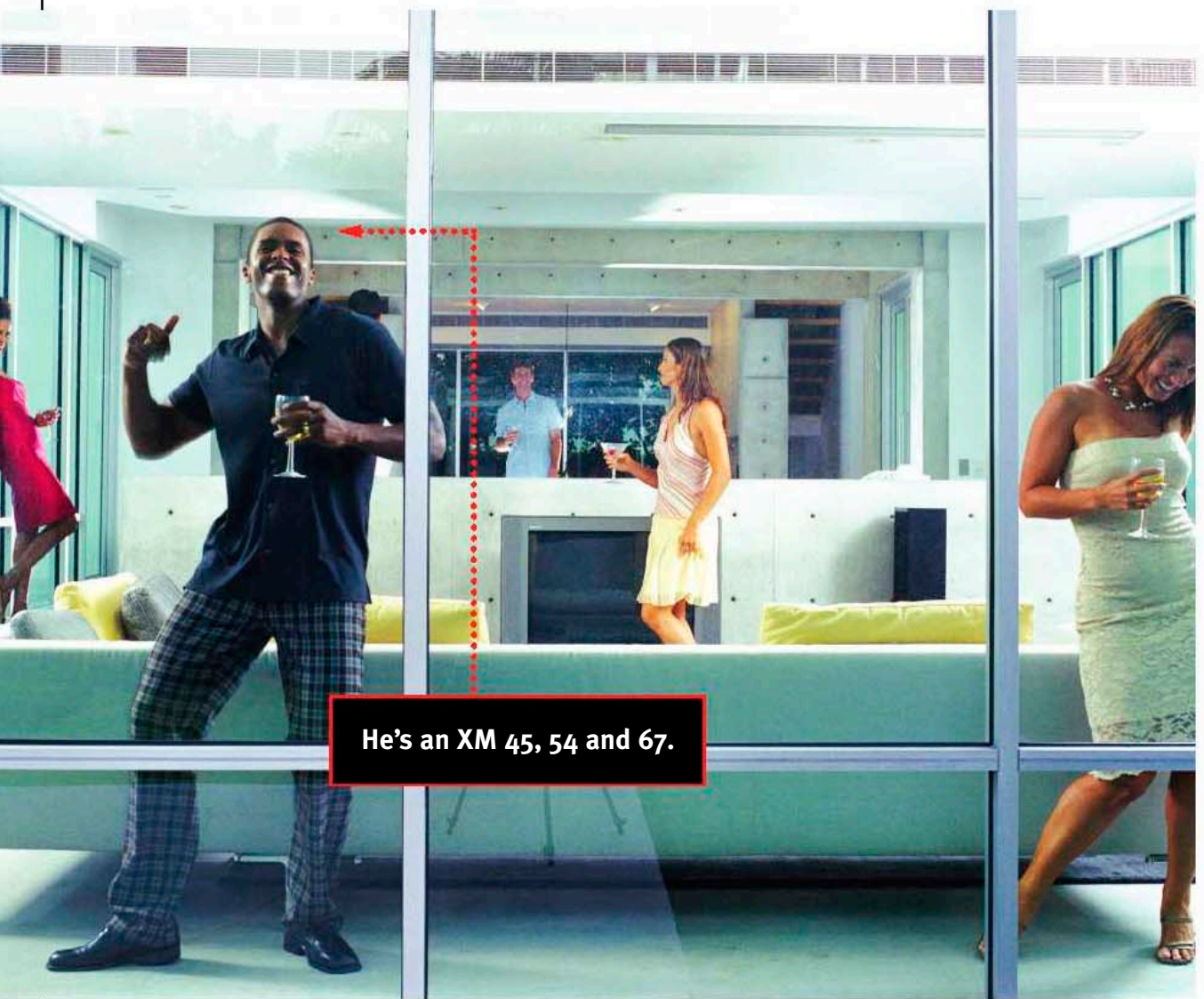
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Brian Shea  
V.P. Retail Aftermarket Distribution,  
XM Satellite Radio





He's an XM 45, 54 and 67.

# EXPERIENCE XM

**An overview of XM® Satellite Radio, from great programming to cutting-edge technology.**

**>>> WHAT IS XM?**

Why settle for ordinary radio, with its limited playlists and excessive commercials? XM® Satellite Radio delivers more than 150 channels of digital-quality music, news, sports, entertainment, comedy, traffic and weather to your home, car and beyond. That's more than 80,000 hours of programming each month. XM's music library is among the world's largest, featuring over 2 million titles.

**>>> WHAT HARDWARE DO I NEED?**

Thanks to a diverse product lineup, all of that great XM programming can follow you wherever you go. The hardware breaks down into four main categories: In-Home, In-Car, Plug-and-Play and XM2go™.

If you're looking for a higher-end listening experience at home, consider adding a standalone XM receiver or an XM Ready® A/V receiver to your home

theater system. Polk, Russound, Krell and other respected audio manufacturers offer standalone receivers, some with multi-room capability. This year, Denon and Yamaha have released the first XM Ready A/V receivers. To get XM, all you do is connect an XM Connect & Play™ home antenna to the receiver and then subscribe to the service.

If you spend a lot of time in your car, perhaps a dedicated in-car system is the

way to go. Terk's XM Commander gives you everything you need to add XM to any car radio. Or you can buy an XM Ready® car stereo along with XMDirect® and a manufacturer-specific adapter (sold separately) for stereos from Pioneer, Sony, Alpine, Kenwood and others.

The heart of the Plug-and-Play system is an XM receiver, such as the Delphi XM SKYFi2® or Audiovox's XR9. Select a receiver based on the features that best suit your needs. Adapter kits (sold separately) allow you to use this single receiver at home, in the car or in a boombox.

XM2go™ devices are the newest addition to XM's product lineup. Forget the MP3 player. Enjoy XM's extensive programming effortlessly using one of the new XM2go handheld portables from Pioneer, Delphi and Tao.

An XM2go is effortless because you get XM's 80,000 hours of monthly programming without having to download or manage files. Absolutely no computer is required.

»»» **WHAT KIND OF PROGRAMMING WILL I GET WITH XM?**

**Music**

Tired of listening to the same songs—and the same commercials—over and over again? XM offers 67 commercial-free music channels that cover nearly every genre—from rock, country and hip hop to classical, jazz, world music and many more. The days of waiting for the DJ to tell you the name of a song are over. Every XM radio features an onscreen display that provides artist and song info. In addition to XM's team of DJs, artists like Snoop Dogg, Quincy Jones, Trick Daddy and Tom Petty host their own shows.

XM broadcasts great live programming every month. Plus, you can enjoy concerts, festivals and special features on the XM Live channel. Artist Confidential™ invites musical acts like Coldplay, Lenny Kravitz, Rush, Bonnie Raitt and Wynton Marsalis to play live in XM studios and engage in conversation, resulting in unique

and intimate artist portraits. On Then...Again...Live!™ you can hear your favorite albums of all time reinterpreted and performed live by the original artist.

**Sports**

XM is the Official Satellite Radio Network of Major League Baseball®, NASCAR®, World Cup™ Soccer, the PGA TOUR®, the Indy Racing League® and ACC, Big Ten and Pac-10 football and basketball conferences. Follow your favorite MLB™ teams all season long, from Spring Training™ to the World Series®—with live play-by-play action. NASCAR fans can listen to live race coverage and even hear their favorite driver's in-car audio during the race.

There are also plenty of channels dedicated to sports news, updates and analysis—including ESPN Radio, ESPN News, FOX Sports Radio and Sporting News Radio.

**News**

XM offers over a dozen 24-hour news channels, satisfying even the most hardcore news junkies. XM brings you FOX News Channel, CNN, CNN Headline News and BBC World Service, among others. Get your business news from CNBC and Bloomberg Radio, and your weather information from The Weather Channel.

**Talk & Entertainment**

Whether you live in a blue state or a red state, there's a talk-radio channel for you—from Dr. Laura to G. Gordon Liddy to Al Franken. Start your morning with former NPR *Morning Edition* host Bob Edwards or, for something a tad different, the outrageous comedy of Opie & Anthony. Radio Classics lets you hearken back to the glory days of radio and hear bits from Abbott & Costello, George & Gracie and Jack Benny.

**Traffic and Weather**

XM provides up-to-the-minute traffic and



weather information for 21 major markets, including Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Dallas and Seattle. Want to avoid traffic? Consider a navigation system from Pioneer or Alpine that uses XM's NavTraffic™ service to show you exactly where the worst traffic spots are.

»»» **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

The XM signal originates from the company's state-of-the-art Broadcast Center in Washington, D.C. This 150,000-square-foot facility contains 82 studios—including a live performance studio—broadcasting an all-digital signal to three satellites, including the original two Boeing 702 satellites, appropriately named "Rock" and "Roll."

In addition to the direct satellite signal, XM has more than 800 terrestrial ground repeaters around the United States to help ensure that you get a strong signal, no matter where you live. Your XM radio contains a proprietary chipset that decodes the signals from the satellites and repeaters.

To bring its listeners the absolute best in sound quality, XM uses the aacPlus format, a third-generation audio-encoding technology that combines Advanced Audio Coding (AAC) and Spectral Band Replication (SBRTM), a revolutionary technology developed by Coding Technologies.



# WHICH XM PRODUCT IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

## XM In the Home

XM home receivers are for first-time



XM users and true audiophiles alike. Those looking for the absolute best XM sound integrated into the rest of their home stereo components will not be disappointed. Already have a nice set of speakers? Add an XM home receiver and enjoy all your XM programming at home!

## XM2go™

XM2go™ handheld portable receivers let you take XM with you wherever you go!



On the plane, to the gym, on that long commute, on a hike—wherever your plans take you, XM can go too.

## GREAT PROGRAMMING

Only XM® Satellite Radio has The Ultimate Playlist™, which gives you the best radio entertainment possible. More than 150 channels of music, news, sports, talk and entertainment, coast to coast. More than 80,000 hours of entertainment every month!

## XM Plug-and-Play

XM Plug-and-Play receivers



are versatile and an excellent entry point into the XM® Satellite Radio realm. They are small units that fit into the palm of your hand and can be used either in the car or in the home, or even in a portable boombox.



## XM In the Car

Getting XM® Satellite Radio in your car is easy. You have options. You can get an aftermarket XM Ready® stereo receiver with XMDirect®. You can outfit any existing FM car stereo with XM using XM Commander. Or, get XM through a factory-installed XM Ready receiver,

which is ready for activation and requires no additional hardware or installation. Car installation is flexible, non-invasive and most importantly, fun!


To further improve sound quality, XM uses a customized version of Neural Audio optimization. This process enhances aacPlus by optimizing temporal and spectral elements prior to encoding to help improve soundstage clarity and intelligibility. The Neural Audio algorithm also preserves the imaging and spatiality of stereo and surround sound content, so

those of you who have matrix-style surround processors like Dolby Pro Logic II can enjoy an improved surround sound experience. Of course, all this translates simply to great-sounding audio.

### >>> HOW DO I GET XM RADIO?

Once you've purchased an XM receiver, all that remains to do is activate your serv-

ice. To do that, you'll need your XM radio's ID number. Then, simply call (800) XM RADIO or log on to [www.xmradio.com/activation/](http://www.xmradio.com/activation/). The basic subscription price is \$12.95/month (there is a one-time activation fee that will apply). XM offers multi-year discounts, as well as reduced rates for multiple radios.

It's that easy. 

# [ DENON AVR-4806 ]



Get XM® in **More Than One Room** of Your Home

**DENON**

- The popular receiver is now XM Ready®
- Add XM to the receiver's existing functions
- Play different XM channels in different rooms
- Distribute three different channels to three different zones — all from one unit



**SATELLITE  
RADIO**

Discover the full sonic potential of  
XM Satellite Radio with Denon

Visit [www.denon.com](http://www.denon.com)

Required basic monthly subscription and hardware sold separately. Only available in the 48 contiguous United States. ©2005 XM Satellite Radio Inc. All rights reserved.





# GETTING XM AT HOME

**An XM home receiver is the perfect addition to any home entertainment system.**

A lot of people still equate XM® Satellite Radio to listening in the car—cruising down endless miles of highway enjoying the same great programs no matter where they roam with no worries about losing the station from one state to the next. But XM isn't just for the car; you can savor the exquisite sound quality and bountiful programming choices at home, as well.

Thanks to XM's new Connect & Play™ technology, a growing number of brand-name manufacturers are developing XM Ready® receivers for the home. Connect & Play offers a universal adapter that connects all XM Ready home receivers to the

Connect & Play antenna, available at your local XM retailer.

Any of these home receivers will let you listen to the progressive country of X Country® during your backyard barbecue, enjoy Opie & Anthony while you're checking your email in the morning or turn on Radio Disney for the kids when they get home from school.

With Connect & Play, getting XM in your home is simple. So there are no excuses for not adding XM to your home entertainment system—the sound is great, the programming is awesome, the technology is a cinch to use and XM is just plain fun.

## WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE PLAYLIST™?

XM® Satellite Radio's Ultimate Playlist™ consists of more than 150 digital channels broadcast coast to coast (at only \$12.95/month!). It means more than 80,000 hours of entertainment every month. XM offers the most 100% commercial-free music, exclusive live concerts and interviews available on satellite radio. It has the most sports play-by-play channels, plus 24/7 sports scores from Major League Baseball®, NASCAR® and more. You can also stream more than 75 channels online, which is included with your monthly subscription.

Review

# Home Is Where XM® Satellite Radio Is

## Party at home with Polk Audio's XRt12 XM Satellite Radio Component Tuner.

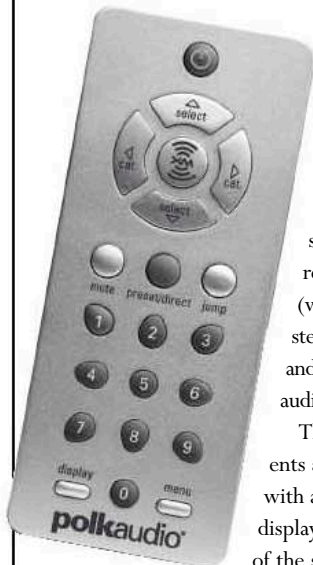


By Sol Weintraub

Long known for their high-quality speakers and other audio equipment, Polk is now delving into the world of XM® Satellite Radio. Now, you can get XM in your home, without a fuss, and with unparalleled sound quality. Their new XRt12 XM Satellite Radio Reference Tuner is a welcome addition to any living room.

**AT FIRST GLANCE**

The Polk package comes with everything you need to start enjoying



Polk Audio XRt12 remote control

XM Satellite Radio in your home A/V system. In addition to the unit itself, you get an XM satellite antenna, remote control (with batteries), stereo A/V cable and optical digital audio cable.

The XRt12 presents a simple visage, with a large, blue display in the center of the slim front panel. The display can be dimmed, and the text can be enlarged for easy reading from across the room. The display is flanked by two rocker switches to select categories of programming and channels within each category. Four buttons on

the left side of the front panel provide access to all functions.

The back panel is similarly straightforward. There's one A/V output with composite video and stereo audio as well as two digital audio outputs: coaxial and optical. An RS-232 port and 12V trigger input make it easy to integrate the XRt12 into an automated-control system. Finally, an antenna input lets you connect the XM antenna.

The small remote is marvelously simple, with category- and channel-selection but-

tons surrounding a central Enter button. A numeric keypad lets you select any channel directly by number, or you can select from channels you've designated as presets. (Assign up to 20 presets in two banks of 10 each.) You can call up the menu and display options with separate buttons, and even mute the audio from the tuner without having to mute the entire audio system. The jump button takes you back to the previously selected channel.

**SETUP IS A SNAP**

First, you connect the XRt12 to your home A/V system (typically an A/V receiver). Use one of the digital audio outputs if possible for the best sound quality. Connecting the video output to the A/V receiver lets you see the tuner's status on your TV screen, which presents a much larger display than the front panel.

The next step is positioning the small, square antenna, which ideally should be placed on a flat surface near a south-facing window so it has a clear line of sight to the XM satellite. It can also be mounted on an interior or exterior wall. The antenna comes with 20 feet of cable, which should be enough for most installations. If you need more length to position the antenna where it will get a good signal, you can buy a 50-foot extension cable from Polk, and you can use up to two extension cables for a total of 120 feet.

Once the antenna is connected to the tuner, you must make sure it's oriented properly to receive a strong signal from the satellite. When you first turn on the tuner, it may display "No Signal," or it may

**MANUFACTURERS SUPPORT XM**

Many manufacturers are getting clued in to the value of XM by making their products XM Ready®, or by creating products specifically designed for XM® Satellite Radio.

Manufacturers who are participating in the XM revolution are: ADA, Antex, Boston Acoustics, Crestron, Crosley, Denon, Eton, GPX, Harman/Kardon, Krell, LGE, Onkyo, Orient Power, Pioneer/Elite, Polk, Thomson/RCA, Yamaha and more. Check with the manufacturer to see what specific XM products they carry.





**POLK XRt12**

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Performance:</b>   | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Ease of Use:</b>   | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Value:</b>         | <b>A</b>  |
| <b>Build Quality:</b> | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Features:</b>      | <b>A</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>         | <b>A+</b> |

**Highlights:**

- Crystal-clear sound, for even the fussiest audiophile.
- Provides wonderful music at parties.
- Saves artist name and track info.
- Fits seamlessly into your home theater system.

*For more information go to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com).*

display the XM Preview channel. Even if you are receiving the Preview channel, it's a good idea to aim the antenna for the best possible reception. The display indicates the signal strength with three bars, but you can get a more accurate indication by entering the menu and selecting the "Antenna Aiming" option. Adjust the antenna's orientation until you see the maximum number of "Satellite" bars filled in on the display. If you can't get a satellite signal (which is extremely rare, such as if you live under a viaduct), you can receive a terrestrial signal, which is indicated by the "Terrestrial" bars.

I happen to have a south-facing window with a wide sill in my media room. Placing the antenna on the sill, I found that the signal strength was at maximum, with no need to adjust the antenna's orientation. It was just that easy.

Next, you must activate the XM service for your tuner. To activate the service, you need to know the tuner's unique ID number, which can be found by selecting channel 0. Then, all you do is call (800) XM RADIO or log onto their Web site, [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com)/activation. After entering your tuner's ID number, the tuner is activated within 30 minutes or so. Once it's done, you have instant access to all of XM's incredible programming.

**IT'S FUN TO USE**

Once you've activated the service, it's time to explore the world of XM® Satellite Radio. There are 19 categories of programs, each with several channels: Decades (6 channels, with popular songs from the '40s through the '90s), Country (7 channels), Pop & Hits (9), Christian (3), Rock (13), Hip Hop & Urban (7), Jazz & Blues (5), Lifestyle (3), Dance (4), Latin (4), World (3), Classical (3), Kids (2), News (12), Sports (35), Comedy (3), Talk & Entertainment (11), Special Events (2, including Emergency Alert) and Traffic/Weather (for 21 different cities around the country). That's more than 150 channels of programming!

With so many channels, it takes quite a while to scroll through them all, so the XRt12 lets you mark any channels you want to skip so that you scroll through only those channels you listen to regularly. Of course, you can call up any channel at any time, but browsing is much more efficient if you skip the channels you're not normally interested in.

Another cool feature is the ability to scan through the channel names, artist names or song titles while listening to a channel. If you find something you'd rather listen to, hit Enter to select it. Until you do, the current channel continues to play.

If you come across an artist or song title you want to remember, all you have to do is press the Memory button on the front panel. Up to 10 artist names and song titles can be saved; to recall them, simply hold the Memory button for 2.5 seconds and scroll through them with the Select Up/Down buttons. This is great for when you hear new artists or songs that you

don't know about. You can check the memory and then run out and buy the CDs when you have the time.

I especially enjoyed the '80s channel, which took me right back to my college years. I'm also a news junkie, so having 12 news channels is heaven. Another favorite category is talk radio; mostly, I listen to programs that are oriented toward my own views, but occasionally, I listen to those who hold differing opinions just to see what the other side is thinking. This can get me pretty riled up, which doesn't help my blood pressure, so I limit my opposition listening to a few minutes at a time. After such episodes, I often tune in one of the classical channels to soothe my bubbling brain.

One of the greatest applications of XM's commercial-free music channels is party background music. Just tune in the appropriate type of music and let the good times roll! No need to select CDs to shuffle play or even create a playlist in your iPod; push a couple of buttons and you're back to the party.

The crystal-clear sound quality of the XRt12 is above reproach. The entire frequency range, from the deepest bass to the highest treble, is effortlessly reproduced with none of the grunge or interference that often accompanies terrestrial radio. All you get is super-clean sound that envelops and engages—nothing gets in the way of your enjoyment.

If you've been wondering about this whole satellite radio thing, or if you already have XM in your car, you owe it to yourself to bring the music home with the Polk XRt12. The sound quality will satisfy even the fussiest audiophile, and you're bound to find many channels to feed your need for music and information. So what are you waiting for? 🎧🎧

**ADD XM TO YOUR GOOD SYSTEM TO MAKE IT GREAT**

- »» Starter System      Try a Plug-and-Play receiver or XM2go™ portable handheld receiver
- »» Getting Warmer      Use existing XM Ready® receiver with a Connect & Play™ antenna
- »» Loving XM      Upgrade your home entertainment system with Polk XRt12 tuner
- »» Must Have XM in Every Room      Try a multizone XM Ready receiver, such as the Denon or Antex unit

**XM READY®  
HI-FI RECEIVER**

**XM CONNECT &  
PLAY™ ANTENNA**



## NEW XM® SATELLITE RADIO HOME THEATER PRODUCTS



Yamaha XM Ready® Receiver

Antex TriplePlay Multizone XM-3000  
XM® Satellite Radio Receiver



### »» CONNECT & PLAY™ ANTENNA

With Connect & Play™ you can add XM functionality to any XM Ready® receiver for peanuts, plus the price of an XM subscription (\$12.95/month). XM shrunk the receiver and put it inside the Connect & Play antenna, which makes getting XM easier than ever. Yamaha is the first manufacturer to bring to market XM Ready home entertainment products using Connect & Play technology, and the list of Manufacturers making XM Ready devices is constantly growing.

The Connect & Play antenna fits all home audio models labeled as “XM Ready.” This universal adapter is a one-size-fits-all solution, meaning that when Connect & Play technology is preinstalled into an electronics device at the factory, then regardless of the make, model or brand, the Connect & Play Antenna delivers XM® Satellite Radio without confusion.

### »» DENON AVR-4806 RECEIVER

The popular Denon AVR-4806 is now XM Ready®! In addition to the receiver’s other functions, you can now get XM® Satellite Radio through your receiver by adding an XM Connect & Play™ antenna.

By making their new receiver XM Ready, Denon allows everyone from the newbie to the enthusiast enjoy satellite radio. And the 6.1-channel Denon AVR-4806 is one receiver that will please both. The receiver also sends XM to three different areas, or “zones” of your home—so you can enjoy XM wherever you are.

Denon AVR-4806 XM Ready® Receiver



### »» ANTEX TRIPLEPLAY XM-3000 RECEIVER

Getting XM in more than one room of your home just got easier with Antex’s new TriplePlay. What that means is that you can distribute three different channels of XM® Satellite Radio to three different zones—say the kitchen, patio, and upstairs study—all from one unit. It has IR and RS-232 control, and will integrate easily with any control system, such as a Crestron or AMX. The unit is ideal for a custom installation or a distributed-audio household. Clearly marked buttons allow users to select zones, scroll between stations and content categories or choose from up to 10 preset stations for each zone (30 total). You can program the receiver to skip specified channels during channel scrolling, and even enable a parental lock feature that requires a code before the contents of specific channels can be heard. The TriplePlay is a great way to get all that amazing XM programming into every room of your home.





# A SIMPLE SOLUTION

**Versatile and portable, XM Plug-and-Play receivers are great for the home, the car and on-the-go.**

Why tie yourself to the home or the car when you can buy one XM receiver that easily moves between both—and snaps just as quickly into a boombox so you can take it with you wherever you go? The Plug-and-Play receiver is perfect for the XM® Satellite Radio fan who just can't sit still. These receivers are extremely popular because they are so versatile. They aren't intimidating, the setup is a cinch and they're affordable. Plug-and-Play receivers

ease the first-time user into the XM experience and serve as an excellent starting point for getting XM into your life.

Plug-and-Play receivers are small units that fit into the palm of your hand. They have XM Radio digital displays and control buttons built into them for easy portability. Each receiver has a simple connector device, unique to the manufacturer. The connector lets you snap-and-click this single receiver into various

adapters for use with your home stereo, car stereo or even a portable device, such as a boombox or a headphone adapter (sold separately). The Delphi XM SKYFi® Audio system, for example, is a portable boombox that lets you plug in your portable Plug-and-Play SKYFi2® receiver directly to the unit.

The primary Plug-and-Play receivers on the market are the Delphi XM SKYFi2 and the Audiovox XR9.

Review

# XM Wherever, Whenever

## Pause and rewind your XM® Satellite Radio with the new Delphi XM SKYFi2® Plug-and-Play receiver.



by Joan Carter

The Delphi XM SKYFi2® is the follow-up to the hugely popular SKYFi® XM receiver. Delphi has made only minor physical changes to the new model and its remote. But look closely, and you'll spy a few new buttons on the front panel and remote that weren't on the original SKYFi. These buttons hint at the SKYFi2's most exciting feature: the ability to pause and rewind the XM broadcast. How many times has your favorite song come on the car radio at the exact moment you have to get out of the car to run in the store? Never again does that business called life have to get in the way of your music enjoyment. Just hit the pause button, and the SKYFi2 will pause playback for up to 30 minutes.

You can also rewind the broadcast. The SKYFi2 automatically backs up the last 30 minutes of programming, regardless of channel—provided the receiver has been powered on for 30 minutes. (Once you turn it off, it loses the programming in its memory.) Hit the rewind button, and the receiver jumps back to the beginning of the song you're currently listening to. Hit it again, and it jumps back to the song before that. Hit the forward button to jump ahead in the same fashion. A handy "live" indicator beeps at you when you've caught up to the live broadcast.

Pause and rewind aren't the only new additions to the SKYFi2. TuneSelect™ lets you enter up to 20 of your favorite artists or songs in the receiver's memory, and it will notify you whenever that song or artist is playing on any designated channel in the XM lineup. A new ticker scrolls stock prices and/or sports scores of your choosing

across the bottom of the display. Last but not least, the SKYFi2 features a built-in FM modulator, which transmits the XM signal wirelessly to a designated channel on your FM radio.

To enjoy all of these new features, you need to mate the SKYFi2 receiver with at least one of three adapter kits: a home kit, a vehicle kit that works with any car stereo or the SKYFi Audio System (each sold separately). If you get all three, there's almost nowhere you can go that your XM can't follow.

During my time with the SKYFi2, I jumped often between the obscure retro on Fred™ (XM 44), the acoustic rock on The Loft® (XM 50) and the alternative hits on Lucy™ (XM 54).

XM has exclusive satellite radio rights to Major League Baseball®, NASCAR®, The PGA TOUR®, World Cup™ Soccer and ACC, Big Ten and Pac-10 football and basketball. I took in a couple of Dodger games and occasionally paused on a talk radio channel to listen to pundits yell at each other.

The pause function came in handy when I was listening to the Laugh USA comedy channel (XM 151) and had to take a phone call right in the middle of a Kathleen Madigan routine I'd never heard. I was able to pick up the joke right where I left it. Another feature that I found especially useful was the search function, which lets you view all the channels in a certain category by channel name or by the song/artist/game playing at that moment.

I was impressed with the quality of the XM signal. The antenna-aiming function helps you determine which direction the antenna needs to face to get the strongest signal; in my case, that was south. The SKYFi2 consistently pulled in the XM signal when I was indoors, with only the occasional disturbance from a passing plane or helicopter. The audio didn't sound compressed or nasally, either. Obviously, the overall quality of the home or car system will depend largely on your existing setup. The SKYFi boombox produced a much fuller, more dynamic audio than I expected.

Satellite radio has clearly moved from stage one—where just having it is cool—to stage two, where consumers are looking for products that help them make the most of the experience. Delphi's SKYFi2 XM receiver does just that. 📶📶

**DELPHI XM SKYFi2®**

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Performance:</b>   | <b>A</b>  |
| <b>Ease of Use:</b>   | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Value:</b>         | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Build Quality:</b> | <b>A</b>  |
| <b>Features:</b>      | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>         | <b>A+</b> |

**Highlights:**

- **Great for the first-time XM user.**
- **Highly versatile. You can use it in the car, at home or in a portable boombox.**
- **No complicated installation.**
- **Pause function lets you pause live radio up to 30 minutes!**

*For more information go to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com).*



**>>> AUDIOVOX XR9  
PLUG-AND-PLAY  
RECEIVER**

The Audiovox XR9 is a full-featured XM Plug-and-Play receiver that is not only economical, it's also easy to set up and use. Designed for use with home, vehicle or boombox kits, the system's superior performance and simple installation are a direct reflection of its winning design and user-friendly front-end. Turn one on, and you'll be greeted by a brilliant 6-line LCD display (depicting artist and track information) complete with easy-to-read blue backlighting, which you can customize. The TuneSelect™ feature alerts you when your favorite songs are playing on any of more than 150 satellite channels, while an on-screen clock, alarm and sleep timer add extra functionality. You can even display up to 20 customizable stock quotes or sports scores/updates, while an auxiliary input allows for connectivity with MP3 players and other portable devices. The XR9 has a built-in wireless FM modulator that allows you to listen to XM on any FM radio. The



receiver comes packed with a remote control as a standard accessory.

As with any XM Plug-and-Play, receiver, the XR9 moves easily from the vehicle to the home or office. You can plug the unit in your vehicle with an Audiovox car stereo kit, and you can listen on your stereo with an Audiovox home kit. Also, look out for the new Audiovox XB9 XM boombox, coming soon.—*Scott Steinberg*

**>>> DELPHI XM SKYFi® AUDIO SYSTEM**

You're the proud owner of a Delphi XM SKYFi2® Plug-and-Play receiver. You've got a vehicle adapter kit in your car to enjoy XM® Satellite Radio during your workday commute and a home adapter kit lets you listen to the broadcast through your home entertainment system. But you still want more satellite radio. You want it in the backyard. You want it in the bedroom. You even want it in the bathroom. And you don't want to run wires all over your house to get it.

That's where the SKYFi® Audio System comes in. We old-schoolers call it a boombox. If you're looking for a product that nicely fills the gaps in your listening, the SKYFi Audio System is it.

In terms of setup, it doesn't get much easier than this. You just pop your SKYFi receiver into the boombox's cradle and attach the supplied antenna and power adapter. Wait, you might be asking, "What good is a boombox if you have to plug it in and deal with an antenna cable?" You don't. You can substitute six D batteries for the power adapter, and there's a convenient compartment on the back in which you can hide the 20-foot antenna cable and connect the antenna discreetly to the box.

I was worried that affixing the antenna directly to the boombox would affect its ability to pull in the satellite signal, but

that wasn't the case. As long as I made sure the antenna was facing south—the direction in which my receiver picked up the strongest signal—my SKYFi2 successfully tuned in the signal in every room in my house.

I was quite impressed with the boombox's audio quality. It played surprisingly loud and produced a relatively full sound for such a small system. The SKYFi2 boombox features bass and treble controls that allow you to tailor the sound a bit to suit your taste. There's a single 3.5mm headphone jack on the front panel, as well.

I've had a Plug-and-Play setup in my home and car for almost a year now, and I must confess that I've never listened to it as much as I do now that I've added the SKYFi Audio System. This thing follows me all over the house. When I'm working in my office, I usually listen to music on my hard drive through an uninspiring set of stereo speakers. As much as I love my various mixes, variety is the spice of life, and XM's channel lineup certainly has plenty of that to go around. I can break up my musical sessions with a bit of news, weather or comedy.



I have my morning coffee at the kitchen table to the sounds of the Hear Music™ channel. I listen to the Dodger game while I work outside in the yard. In fact, I find that I'm having trouble performing even the most menial task without XM.

Whether you're looking for a product to enhance your existing SKYFi Plug-and-Play system or to be the foundation for a new one, the SKYFi Audio System is a simple, inexpensive solution that doesn't disappoint.—*Joan Carter*

**>>> Delphi XM SKYFi2®  
ACCESSORIES**

**Delphi SKYFi2®  
Car Kit**

Designed for use with the Delphi XM SKYFi2, this adapter kit allows you to listen to XM through your radio's cassette deck. **Includes:** Car cradle, mini-micro magnetic roof mount antenna, audio cassette adapter, cigarette lighter power adapter, universal swivel mounting bracket with adhesive pads and cleaning kit and a Vent Mount Kit for easy installation. Sold separately.

**Delphi SKYFi2®  
Home Kit**

Designed for use with the Delphi XM SKYFi2 Radio, this adapter kit allows SKYFi to work with any home stereo equipped with RCA audio-in connectors or with any set of powered speakers. Compatible with popular aftermarket attachment accessories from leading manufacturers. **Includes:** home stand, antenna, mini plug-to-dual RCA stereo out put cables and AC power adapter. Sold separately.

# [ DELPHI XM SKYFi2® ]



The Industry's **Most Advanced**  
Plug-and-Play Satellite  
Radio Receiver

Selected as "Best of  
What's New"

*Popular Science, 2004*

**DELPHI**

- 30-minute replay/pause feature
- InfoExtras: stock quotes, sports scores, clock and more
- TuneSelect™ finds your favorite songs or artists
- Home and car kits, boombox available



**SATELLITE  
RADIO**

Take XM® Satellite Radio from your  
home, car, and on the go  
Visit [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com)

Required basic monthly subscription and hardware sold separately. Only available in the 48 contiguous United States. ©2005 XM Satellite Radio Inc. All rights reserved.





# THE OPEN ROAD AWAITS YOU

**Getting XM® Satellite Radio in your car is quick, easy, painless and fun!**

There are three ways that XM is permanently installed in your vehicle:

You can purchase an XM Ready® stereo receiver. To activate XM on these receivers, you must install XMDirect® and a brand-specific (to your receiver) Smart Digital Adapter (sold separately). XM Ready receivers already possess a satellite radio interface for displaying song, artist and

channel listings. XMDirect provides the connection to the micro antenna.

XM Commander connects to any existing stereo with an FM radio. The XM Commander provides a satellite radio interface to non-XM Ready receivers and connects to the micro antenna.

XM® Satellite Radio also comes facto-

ry installed on a growing number of new vehicles. The receivers in these cars are ready for activation and require no additional hardware or installation.

Of course, you can take your Plug-and-Play receiver in and out of the car, or use the wireless FM transmission on an XM2go™, but these are not permanent installations.

Review

# Breaking the FM Habit with the XM Commander

**From LA to Austin, one man's journey from commercial radio to XM® Satellite Radio wonderland.**

by Chris LeGrange



Since I'm a creature of extreme habit, change of any kind can be a bit traumatic. So, when asked to install the XM Commander and review XM® Satellite Radio, I felt uneasy.

However, my curiosity was piqued. I'd heard great things about XM and the timing was right. I was about to take a trip from Los Angeles to Austin, Texas. I'd have 24 hours worth of driving to give the XM Commander receiver a whirl. The XM subscription is \$12.95 a month—the price of a large pizza.

I went to my neighborhood stereo installer, and was immediately at ease because they were an authorized XM dealer. The installer showed me how they can install the compact receiver in the small storage compartment near the sunroof that was dedicated for sunglasses! That way, I could hide the receiver when I wasn't using it. The antenna could be installed at the top of my dash, out of view. There would be no drilling or invasive contact with my dash.

The XM Commander also came with a remote control with scan and jump features, so I didn't need to worry about sacrificing performance when considering a novel place to install the receiver.

The installation took a little under an hour and cost less than \$100. When I came back, I was shown how my new XM Commander blended into my existing system like a technological chameleon—I couldn't see it at all. When he revealed the XM Commander in the sunglass compart-

ment, the device actually accentuated the aesthetics of my car's cabin, and looked impressive as it slowly emerged from its dedicated hiding place. On the way out, the installer explained that I could still listen to my regular FM and AM stations, "that is, if I still wanted to."

The moment I hit the road, I learned that my trusted terrestrial radio routine that I relied upon to get through the day was simply a consequence of inferior radio programming, replete with inconsistent

radio content and tons of commercials. When I listened to music, XM's service mooted the need for me to jump from station to station to avoid commercials, because there are no commercials on music channels.

Further, I was now privy to a whole new and consistent world of XM content that was far from hit-or-miss. Indeed, I now had 67 commercial-free music channels to listen to on my drive (not to mention the other 83 digital channels with content like Radio Disney, MSNBC and ESPN). The selections ranged from mainstream to eclectic. The open road always gets my rock juices flowing, so I spent my drive-time listening to: Bone Yard®, where I got my old school hard rock fix; Ethel®, with its alt-rock hits that helped me get through the California desert and The Loft®, a channel that helped me ease into the nighttime drive with traditional folk rock. And that was just three of the 13 stations dedicated solely to rock. Talk about mining the eclectic—I'd hit the mother lode.

I was thrilled that I could also enjoy all nine innings of my beloved Dodgers on the Major League Baseball® play-by-play channels. After the game was over, I simply switched to MLB Home Plate™ to listen to the specialized MLB™ radio shows. For the next hour, I heard fans across the country call in and talk about the Dodger's poor pitching performance. I realized that like me, there were thousands of Dodger fans spread across the country that were now able to hear their home team from distant

**NAVIGATION MADE EASY**

Not only will XM® Satellite Radio make your car ride more enjoyable, it can make it easier, too. Pioneer and Alpine both recently introduced XM NavTraffic™ aftermarket in-car navigation systems that use XM NavTraffic programming, powered by NAVTEQ Traffic. Pioneer's AVIC-N2 displays traffic conditions on a motorized 6.5-inch touchscreen monitor. Traffic icons tell you of road events near you, and even suggest alternate routes. Alpine's NVE-N872A navigation system also uses XM NavTraffic, and it won the CES 2005 Innovations Award for Mobile/Vehicle Electronics Navigation Safety and Security.





**TERK XM COMMANDER**

**Performance:** A+  
**Ease of Use:** A+  
**Value:** A  
**Build Quality:** A  
**Features:** A  
  
**TOTAL:** A

**Highlights:**

- Great way to get XM into your car using your existing FM radio.
- TuneSelect™ feature lets you know when your favorite songs are on any station.
- Installation is quick and painless, no drilling or holes in your dash.
- Continuous, commercial-free music channels.
- Full-function remote control included.

For more information go to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com).

locales. Indeed, for half my drive through Arizona I felt like I was right in the

dugout instead of on a wickedly hot stretch of I-10.

I also didn't need to change the channel from state to state. Normally, I'd need to initiate the "scan" mode on my radio to find something decent to listen to after I drove out of my comfort zone of the LA basin. It didn't occur to me until I got to my motel room that I hadn't conducted the frustrating FM airwave scan-o-thon. It also occurred to me that I didn't experience the fuzz and static that inevitably haunts my state-to-state drives. In fact, because every channel is beamed to my SUV digitally, the sound from my speakers was consistently clear and crisp.

Before heading off on the second leg of my drive, I started playing with the cool features of the XM Commander. First, I programmed my receiver to my 10 new favorite channels, including the Pac-10 football stations. I also read that the XM Commander allowed you to save and

recall information about songs you hear on the XM channels. I simply pressed the memory button to store the name and track information. I could save up to 15, which was plenty.

I then played with the TuneSelect™ feature. This blew me away. TuneSelect allowed me to "tag" up to 15 songs that I liked and would alert me when the songs were playing on any XM channel. To activate TuneSelect, just press and hold down the Commander dial until you hear the beep.

Eventually, to my dismay, I reached Austin. Normally, I'm tired after a long drive. But, with my new XM programming, I was eager to hit the road again.

Even though I have the option of using the AM/FM dial in conjunction with my XM service—like the installer implied, I have absolutely no desire to jump back to the land of commercial radio. 📻

**STEREO RECEIVER COMPATIBILITY**

| HEAD UNIT     | XM  | SIRIUS |
|---------------|-----|--------|
| Alpine        | YES | YES    |
| Sony          | YES | NO     |
| Kenwood       | YES | YES    |
| Pioneer       | YES | YES    |
| JVC           | YES | YES    |
| Clarion       | YES | YES    |
| Panasonic     | YES | NO     |
| Audiovox      | YES | NO     |
| Jensen        | YES | NO     |
| Dual          | YES | NO     |
| Audiobahn     | YES | NO     |
| Digital Audio | YES | NO     |
| Swiss Audio   | YES | NO     |
| DUB Audio     | YES | NO     |
| Pyle          | YES | NO     |



**>>> Get XMDirect® for Your XM Ready® Receiver**

In order to activate the XM service, all XM Ready® stereo receivers require XMDirect®.

XMDirect is an unobtrusive black box that seamlessly installs behind the dash and connects the XM Ready receiver to the micro antenna. The installer will run a single low-profile cable from the box to the antenna placed on the exterior of the vehicle. No drilling needed.

The best part: You navigate XM's over 150 channels of programming using the existing controls of the XM Ready receiver.

XMDirect is purchased in combination with a Smart Digital Adapter appropriate to the brand name of your XM Ready receiver.

Smart Digital Adapters (sold separately) are available for leading audio manufacturers such as Alpine, Panasonic, Sony and Pioneer, as well as many others. Get to your local

retailer today and snag one. It's a sure-fire way to instantly supercharge your driving experience.



# [ XMDIRECT<sup>®</sup> by Terk ]



Universal Tuner Box for  
**Satellite-Ready** Car Stereos

**TERK**

- Delivers XM to virtually any vehicle with a satellite-ready head unit
- Direct connection for true digital sound
- Quick and seamless installation behind the dash
- Adapters available for: Alpine, Audiobahn, Audiovox, Dual, DUB, Jensen, Kenwood, Panasonic, Pioneer, Pyle, Sony, Terk



SATELLITE  
RADIO

Activate your satellite-ready  
car stereo today

Visit [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com)

Required basic monthly subscription and hardware sold separately. Only available in the 48 contiguous United States. ©2005 XM Satellite Radio Inc. All rights reserved.





# ON-THE-GO WITH XM2go™

**Forget MP3 players, XM2go brings music, news, and entertainment to the palm of your hand. No computer required.**

If you think the portable MP3 player is the be-all, end-all of digital music, think again. The XM2go™ handheld portable is an exciting new category of XM receiver that allows listeners to take XM with them wherever they go. On errands. While commuting. To the gym. On vacation.

In addition to receiving the live XM broadcast, XM2go contains a hard drive that stores up to five hours of XM programming, ensuring great entertain-

ment, no matter where you are.

Unlike MP3 players, XM2go receivers are effortless, because they don't require the sustained work of MP3 portables. XM's Ultimate Playlist™ delivers more than 80,000 hours of radio entertainment a month—without requiring you to download or manage files.

Currently, there are three models in the XM2go lineup. Delphi's XM2go MyFi® (reviewed on the following

page), was the first to market. Now XM is expanding this product category with Airware® models from Pioneer and XM2go from Tao.

All XM2gos are truly portable, because they meet the criteria of a true portable: they have a built-in, rechargeable battery, integrated antenna and the ability to receive and play live XM broadcasts. Beware of imitations claiming to be a portable, but which meet none of these criteria.

Review

# XM—Wherever You Go!

**Delphi's XM2go™ MyFi® handheld portable XM receiver with memory makes it easy to take XM anywhere.**

By Bob Giles



The XM2go™ is the most versatile product XM has to offer. You can use it in the car, in the home, at the office, in the gym or on a trail. Anywhere you go, it goes with you. You'll love the Delphi XM2go MyFi® for at least a half dozen other reasons. For instance, the MyFi comes with a built-in hard drive on which you can record up to five hours of XM programming. This means you can use it places you can't normally get radio reception, such as on a subway. Plus, with the wireless transmitter, you can play XM through any FM radio, so you can provide great party music anywhere you go. The XM2go has become the star of my cadre of gadgets, right up there with my cell phone and digital camera.

**GETTING STARTED**

Don't be intimidated when you open the box. There are loads of goodies in there that let you use your XM2go in any environment, but you don't need them all to get started. All you need is the MyFi itself, the charger and the headphones.

Setting up the MyFi is easy. I charged

mine first, so that when setup was complete, I'd be ready to rock and roll. Next, I activated the XM service, which took less than 15 minutes. Once you get your subscription underway, getting a signal to the XM2go receiver is mindlessly easy. You want to plug your receiver into the cradle, and plug the cradle into the wall, then aim your antenna at a south-facing window. Boom, you're done.

**PLAY TIME**

Now it's time to start enjoying XM's diverse programming wherever you go. Forget about gadgets, XM's programming is really what it's all about. I'm an eclectic music freak—loving everything from country to punk. When I turned on Fred™ (XM 44), which is described as "Deep Classic Alternative," I was struck by the quantity of songs I heard that I'd completely forgotten about. It was a trip down memory lane.

XM really prides itself on deep tracks that you won't hear on standard radio—little gems that you can sink your ears

into, creating that emotional connection to the music that is non-existent on AM/FM, or anywhere, really.

While hiking, I listened to XMU® (XM 43), which is described as "College/ Indie/New Music." I heard a song from Elliot Smith, my dearly departed favorite songwriter, that I'd never heard before. Needless to say, I'm thrilled with my XM subscription.

**FUN FEATURES**

In addition to the fun I had browsing the channels and tinkering with the MyFi, I was delighted by the built-in hard drive that stores up to five hours of programming. Set the MyFi to record a channel at a specified time, then navigate the programming like you would on an MP3 player (only look Ma, no downloading!). You can even scroll through artist and track info.

Another option you have for recording great songs on the fly is by using the "2go" button on the MyFi. This button allows you to record in an instant. Hit the "Mode" button and you can retrieve your recorded material. As I am writing this, I am recording the lonesome sounds of an old song on Hank's Place®, where I find traditional country hits that make me long for the cowboy life. There are 10 preset buttons on the MyFi, and you

**XM2go™ ADAPTS TO EVERY ENVIRONMENT**

- »» At Home: Plug it into your stereo and home theater speakers
- »» In the Car: Use the Car Adapter Kit to listen to XM in your car
- »» In the Office: Plug it into your computer speakers
- »» In the Gym: Use the Personal Antenna and headphones



**DELPHI XM2go™ MyFi®**

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Performance:</b>   | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Ease of Use:</b>   | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Value:</b>         | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>Build Quality:</b> | <b>A</b>  |
| <b>Features:</b>      | <b>A+</b> |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>         | <b>A+</b> |

**Highlights:**

- Perfect in the gym, in the car on a long hike, even in the subway.
- TuneSelect™ feature lets you know when your favorite songs are playing on another XM station.
- No installation required.
- Stores up to five hours of recorded XM programming.
- Full-function remote control included.

For more information go to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com).

can program them each three times, for a total of 30 preset stations.

You can set the interface to display stock quotes and sports scores so you're continually in the loop with all your favorites. You can also press and hold down the mute button to render your keypad inactive so you won't inadvertently press any buttons while walking or running, or doing whatever you're doing with your XM2go™.

**ON-THE-GO AND PLUG-AND-PLAY**

One of the best things about the MyFi® is that I can use it in every environment imaginable. When I wanted to listen to it at home, I simply used the RCA cable (included) to plug it into my receiver and enjoyed XM programming through my home theater speakers. If I wanted to listen to it in the car, the car adapter kit



**New XM2go™ Models**

Look for these new XM2go models from Tao (left) and Pioneer. They will have features similar to the MyFi's, including MyXM, the time-shifting memory mode.

allowed me to do that. I was even able to use the MyFi at my desk with my computer speakers. And when I found myself on the subway in New York, and unable to get a strong signal, I listened to the memory mode, MyXM, which I had recorded the night before. In short, I love my MyFi, and you'll love yours too. 📶

**>>> FEATURED ACCESSORIES**

**MyFi® Silicone Skins**

Form-fitting skins protect your MyFi from the nicks, scratches and bumps that can happen during everyday use. Each pack includes two skins, one for use with MyFi's belt clip, the other without. Available in Ice Blue, Ice White, Pink, Smoke, Lime and Tangerine.



**MyFi Protective Slip Case**

Protect your MyFi with this form-fitting, protective slip case. Includes belt clip. Available in Blue and Black.

**XM2go™ Replacement Li-Ion Battery**

Normal Life Li-Ion battery for All XM2go receivers.

**XM Sound Isolating Earphones**

Lightweight, sound-isolating earphones with gold-plated connector offer improved sound dynamics. In-ear, passive noise isolation offers the best noise cancellation without sacrificing sound quality.

**Shure E2 Isolating Earphones**

Featuring Dynamic MicroDriver technology that delivers a full-frequency soundstage originally developed for professional musicians, the E2 is an ideal upgrade for today's portable audio devices. An included selection of interchangeable sleeves allows for a comfortable, personalized fit—and the E2 ships with a zippered carrying case for easy storage.

**Shure E5 Sound Isolating Earphones**

The E5 earphone delivers the same reference-quality audio enjoyed by professional musicians. Dual Live Performance drivers, coupled with an Inline

crossover, faithfully reproduce precision highs, natural mids and full-bodied bass. The E5 ships in a sleek, brushed aluminum box with a variety of interchangeable sleeves, volume control and a zippered carrying case.

**Shure E3 Sound Isolating Earphones**

With a sleek, low-profile design, the E3 combines wideband MicroDriver technology and incredible sound isolation for detailed highs and enhanced bass across an extended frequency soundstage. Originally designed for the demanding audio specifications of professional musicians, the E3 is an ideal choice for any home or portable audio device.



**Etymotic ER-6i Noise Isolation Earphones**

The ER-6i noise isolation earphones are designed specifically for use with small portable audio players. Lightweight and compact, the ER-6i earphones provide the second-highest noise isolation in Etymotics line.



**>>> OTHER ACCESSORIES**

- Delphi MyFi Home Kit
- Delphi MyFi Car Kit
- XM Home Antenna
- XM2go Personal Antenna
- XM2go Vehicle Power Adapter

All Accessories sold separately.

# XM2go™ PIONEER AIRWARE®



XM2go: The **First Portable**  
Satellite Radios

**Pioneer**

- Portable — live mode, rechargeable battery
- Wireless — built-in wireless FM transmitter
- Effortless — time-shifting memory mode, personal stock ticker, sports scores, clock and more



SATELLITE  
RADIO

Take XM with you wherever you go

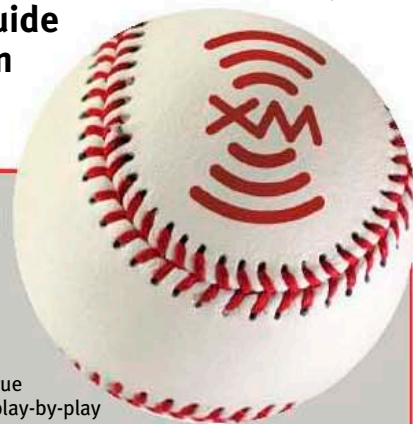
Visit [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com)

Required basic monthly subscription and hardware sold separately. Only available in the 48 contiguous United States. ©2005 XM Satellite Radio Inc. All rights reserved.



# WHAT'S PLAYING ON XM

**XM® Satellite Radio has more than 150 channels of music, sports, news and information coast to coast. With more than 80,000 hours of programming each month, XM's award-winning programming is the best in the industry, and the digital audio quality is unparalleled. This guide will help you figure out what you want to listen to on your XM!**



## >>>SPORTS<<<

In one of the most spectacular plays ever to hit big-league broadcasting, XM® Satellite Radio has assembled an amazing lineup of coast-to-coast Sports programming. You'll hear Sports news, Sports talk and coverage of live events.

For starters, there's wall-to-wall Major League Baseball®. There are 16 dedicated channels for America's favorite pastime.

XM Satellite Radio is also the Exclusive Satellite Radio Service of NASCAR® and the Indy Racing League®. You'll find in-depth features and live, flag-to-flag, race-day coverage. Not to mention NASCAR in-race driver audio coverage.

Tune into play-by-play action of ACC, Pac-10 and Big Ten football and men's and women's basketball games—over 30 colleges and universities are covered.

Hear live tournament coverage, news, tournament scores and player highlights from the PGA TOUR®, Champions Tour and Nationwide Tour on the PGA TOUR Network.

For general sports coverage, listen to the experts at ESPN Radio, ESPNEWS, FOX Sports Radio, Sporting News Radio and others.



## SPOTLIGHT

### MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL® ON XM!

As the Official Satellite Radio of Major League Baseball®, XM has no less than 15 MLB™ play-by-play channels that begin with Spring Training™, cover every MLB team and run all season long.

On MLB Home Plate™, you won't miss a minute of your favorite teams, announcers and moments in baseball history. You'll learn about the upcoming season, as well. Get the best games and highlights of the week, or listen to classic games from years past. MLB Home Plate has up-to-the-minute baseball news, and is a place for fans to speak their minds.

Cal Ripken Jr., the legendary Baltimore Orioles shortstop and record holder for most consecutive games played, hosts an exclusive, weekly show on MLB Home Plate. Joining Cal on the show is his brother, fellow MLB veteran Bill Ripken.

Tune in each morning to *Baseball This Morning* for the baseball information you need to know: news, scores, stats, player information and upcoming games on XM. This show features leading sportscaster Mark Patrick, former Philadelphia Phillies All-Star shortstop Larry Bowa and veteran player, manager and broadcaster Buck Martinez.

Join FOX Sports baseball commentator and former Boston Red Sox® manager Kevin Kennedy and former Cincinnati Reds® star pitcher Rob Dibble on *The Show*, a fast-paced afternoon show with top guests, game previews and listener call-ins.



Catch Cal Ripken Jr. on MLB Home Plate™



Radio personality Bob Edwards hosts *The Bob Edwards Show* exclusively on XM.



Liberal satirist Al Franken talks about the issues on Air America.

>>>NEWS<<<

Let XM® Satellite Radio's News channels be your information lifeline. Choose your point of view and topic—top-line, in-depth, financial or international.

FOX News Channel gives you information presented in a fair and balanced format with Bill O'Reilly, Geraldo Rivera, Hannity and Colmes. CNN and CNN Headline News feature breaking news with up-to-the-minute updates, and CNBC, the global leader in business news, provides real-time financial market coverage and information.

From Wall Street to London to Tokyo, Bloomberg News draws on its global news team of 1,200 reporters in 80 news bureaus worldwide to deliver coverage of financial markets as news happens.

XM Public Radio™ provides listeners with insightful, entertaining and provocative programming produced by some of the most respected names in public broadcasting. Here you'll find radio legend Bob Edwards on *The Bob Edwards Show* coast to coast every weekday morning.

For a complete list of XM News channels, see the XM Channel Guide on pg. 33 or log on to [www.xmradio.com/](http://www.xmradio.com/) programming for more information.

>>>TALK & ENTERTAINMENT<<<

From fresh entertainment news and new scientific discoveries to classic radio dramas and non-stop talk, XM's Talk & Entertainment channels cover almost everything—a truly diverse mix of talk and entertainment content.

Another XM exclusive, Opie & Anthony's show airs every weekday morning with encores throughout the day for both east coast and west coast drive times.

Flip back and forth between America Right™—which features a host of talk radio personalities with conservative voices, such as Dr. Laura, Laura Ingraham, Matt Drudge and more—and Air America Radio—a liberal channel with opinionated on-air personalities, including satirist Al Franken and comedienne Janeane Garofalo.

On Extreme XM you might get enraged at what you hear, but you'll never be bored! Hear G. Gordon Liddy, the outspoken political commentator, hosting *The G. Gordon Liddy Show*, a nationally syndicated radio program. Refer to pg. 33 for more info.

>>>COMEDY<<<

Side-splitting, rip-roaring laughs spilling out of the air waves from some fresh and classic comedians. On XM Comedy® you'll find the hottest short segments of standup pulled from thousands of hours of comedy club gold. Laugh USA provides family-oriented hilarity. Bill Cosby, Bob Newhart and Jerry Seinfeld lead the fun. For more on XM's Comedy channels, see pg. 33.



>>>XM INSTANT TRAFFIC & WEATHER<<<

XM Instant Traffic & Weather offers 24/7 coverage in 21 major markets, each with its own dedicated channel. From Los Angeles to Boston, if you live in one of these markets, your commute will be a breeze.

Visit [www.xmradio.com/programming](http://www.xmradio.com/programming) or see pg.33 for a listing of all XM's Traffic and Weather channels.





**>>>MUSIC<<<**  
**ROCK**

XM's got channel after channel (13 to be exact) of every flavor of Rock, cerebral to ear-numbing. Their DJs give you the songs you want—whether they've earned classic status or are underground. Tune in to hear the songs you love and the songs you will love. Across all their Rock channels, XM provides a wide array of artist interviews and exclusive live performances.

Channels like BoneYard® will rattle your bones with AC/DC, Ozzy, Metallica, Iron Maiden and Guns n' Roses. XMU®, modeled after college radio stations, plays what's next, now. And Fred™ gives a home to the alternative sounds of the '70s and '80s with bands like Depeche Mode and The Smiths, liberally seasoned with Grunge and Punk.

And if you want something a little softer, check out The Loft®, where you'll find timeless acoustic rock.

Refer to the XM Channel Guide on pg. 33 for the complete listing of XM's Rock channels, or log on to [www.xmradio.com/](http://www.xmradio.com/) programming for more details.



**HIP HOP & URBAN**

It starts in the streets. It may call to you with the soulful expressiveness of R&B, make you dance to the rhythm of a rapper's beat or sing out with gospel music. It could be decades old or released that very day. It's Urban.

See the complete XM channel lineup on pg. 33 or log on to [www.xmradio.com/](http://www.xmradio.com/) programming for a complete list of Hip Hop and Urban channels.



**POP & HITS**

Solid gold from coast to coast. No matter what kind of Hits you like, the best of the best have been culled here for your enjoyment—with dedicated channels for Rock, Adult Contemporary and Vocal favorites.

XM has nine Pop and Hits channels, see pg. 33 for the complete list.



**DANCE**

The best music is the music that makes you want to move. XM has four excellent Dance channels (see pg.33 for the complete list).

BPM® was named "Best Satellite Radio Channel" at the 2005 International Dance Music Awards (IDMA). BPM is the first radio channel in the U.S. to give you the non-stop dance-floor hits 24/7.



**CHRISTIAN**

Faith-based guidance and musical lineups for today's Christian family. XM brings you channels that deliver Christian music from upbeat Rock to Adult Contemporary hits. The Torch, The Fish and Spirit provide all your favorite spiritual music.



**JAZZ & BLUES**

Tune to XM® Satellite Radio for Jazz and Blues anyway you like it. In a mellow mood? Time for something hot? Choose your moments with channels for every hue of the Jazz & Blues palette.

Real Jazz brings you songs from the Jazz pioneers of the '20s to the young lions making history today. Head over to Frank's Place® for a rich celebration of the Great American Songbook with a little help from the Sinatra Family. See the XM Channel Guide on pg. 33 for more Jazz & Blues channels.



**LIFESTYLE**

While hit records are the lifeblood of pop culture, there is another side to music, founded on an eclectic and organic approach rarely heard in mainstream media. XM offers several fresh Lifestyle music channels.



XM has 82 state-of-the-art studios at its Broadcast Center in Washington, D.C.

## XM EXCLUSIVE MUSIC SERIES

XM has loads of special programming that is spread across its 150 channels. Dubbed the XM Exclusive Music Series, this special lineup features live performances, conversations and even your favorite artists and personalities spinning tunes of their choice.

### THEN...AGAIN...LIVE!

Imagine taking one of the most classic albums of all time, and asking the original artist to reinterpret it LIVE—in sequence, before an audience of fans—from today's vantage point and with the benefit of 21st century technology...

That's what you'll find on Then...Again...Live!™ With stunning recreations of albums that are musical touchstones to entire generations of fans, including Jethro Tull's *Aqualung*, Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Pronounced Leh-Nerd Skin-Nerd* and REO Speedwagon's *Hi Infidelity*. Each XM presentation of a legendary album is inter-cut with the artist's personal observations on their landmark work.



This unique session spotlights one artist per episode. XM's George Taylor Morris sits down with music's most fascinating personalities for revealing and candid one-on-one interviews. This intimate conversational forum unfolds before an audience of fans and friends in XM's Performance Theater.

In addition to hearing music legends offer insights into their life, art and the creative process, listeners experience XM-exclusive musical performances that are part of every episode.

From Rush sharing an adventurous personal journey to Neil Sedaka recounting the dawn of rock 'n' roll first-hand, many before-unheard tales are told.



### Snoop Dogg

Welcome to Da Chuuch with Snoop Dogg! This musical tour de force features the one and only Snoop Dogg dropping tracks, previewing cuts and welcoming friends to the XM airwaves direct from his own

Los Angeles crib. A music icon, film star and hip hop Renaissance man, Snoop Dogg hosts and calls all the shots on this monthly 90-minute marathon of music, mayhem and more on The Rhyme®.

## SPOTLIGHT



XM's engineers work behind the scenes in the XM Live Master Control Room to make live music broadcast from the studio sound its best.

### Tom Petty

Each week from his Los

Angeles home, Rock-and-Roll Hall-of-Famer Tom Petty takes his place as XM Radio's raconteur and on-air host par excellence on *Tom Petty's Buried Treasure*. The Grammy-winning singer-songwriter, Heartbreakers ringleader, Traveling Wilbury and rock legend puts together a set of little-known musical delights and classic tracks.



### Special Live Programming

XM features special programming as it happens. *Live 8*, for example, brought artists from around the globe together to help end global poverty. From concert settings all over the world, XM broadcast live U2, Coldplay, Pink Floyd, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, REM and many more. Log on to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com) for news on special programming.



**SPOTLIGHT**

**XM DIGS DEEP**

In order to

bring you complete coverage of every music genre, XM divides each music category, such as Country, into several smaller subcategories. In the Country genre, they have seven channels devoted specifically to Country.

X Country®—pronounced “cross country”—honors the roots of Country while infusing a modern sonic personality, whether it’s down-home Texas, the “other row” in Nashville or artists from all over America. Today’s musicians are taking the sound of Country, re-interpreting its spirit and taking it places where it’s never been.

What music makes the grade on X Country? They’ve got Honky Tonk, Western Swing, Swamp Rock, Alternative Country, Rockabilly, Southern Boogie and Roots Rock. Artists like Charlie Robison, Allison Moorer, Jack Ingram, Drive By Truckers, Kasey Chambers, Cross Canadian Ragweed, Kelly Willis and BR549 can be heard here. Features like *Cross Checking*, a weekly three hour new album countdown show; *Rogue Calls* request show; *The X in Texas* and *Wired In*, the weekly concert series, make X Country a welcome stop on the XM map.



Program director Jessie Scott heads up X Country, where she spins progressive Country and hits the road to broadcast live from venues across the U.S.

**COUNTRY**

More than one sound, Country is a whole range of musical styles. And most of all, it’s a state of mind. Seven channels, including America and Hank’s Place®, highlight classic and traditional Country. Highway 16® features current and progressive Country songs, and Nashville! focuses on today’s current top 40 Country hits. XM’s even got a channel devoted specifically to Bluegrass.

For a complete listing of XM’s Country channels, check out the XM Channel Guide on pg. 33 or go to [www.xmradio.com/](http://www.xmradio.com/) programming.



**LATIN**

XM has several great Latin sounds—from the Caribbean to Mexico and the Texas border. Whether it’s top-40 hits or adult contemporary you’re looking for, the Latin channels have something to offer.

Check out *Alegría™* for the continual synthesis of sounds from the Americas, or *Luna®*, where you’ll hear Latin Jazz from artists like Chano Dominguez, Mongo Santamaria, Cal Tjader and Poncho Sanchez.

For a complete list of XM’s Latin channels, refer to pg. 33, where you’ll find the XM Channel Guide.



**WORLD**

Hope you have your passport handy, because XM is taking you across the globe with their World music channels. If your musical tastes include Asian, African, Caribbean or World music, then XM’s World channels are right in your musical neighborhood.

World Zone® is the best of World Music—the music that mixes styles and transcends borders. The Joint® is your daily trip to Jamaica. Or head to Africa and experience the musical diversity of Ngoma.



**CLASSICAL**

XM serves up all the major forms of the Classical repertoire however you like in several focused channels. Find choices that fit any setting or mood—both instrumental and vocal, from the Renaissance to today. XM’s Classical channels also include live performances, informed commentary and guest interviews to deepen your enjoyment of Classical music as a living art.

Find all the traditional classics on XM Classics®. VOX® focuses on opera and Classical vocals and if you like the Classical “hits” take a listen to XM Pops.



**DECADES**

Don’t just imagine the old days. Relive them. XM’s Decades channels bring you the hits from decades past and authentically recreate each era. From World War II through the end of the millennium, XM puts the best songs from the past in their historical context. Experience war news from the European front, Ike and Mamie, Jack and Jackie, Brylcreem and hula hoops, Watergate and Whitewater. See the XM Channel Guide on pg. 33 to find the Decade you are looking for.



**KIDS**

XM offers programming that both you and your children will love. Your kids will enjoy entertaining programs as they allow their imaginations to roam. They’ll hear wacky original content from on-air hosts Kenny Curtis and “Absolutely Mindy.” The party at Radio Disney rocks with the music kids and tweens want to hear, while XM Kids® is part playhouse, part songfest. If you’ve got young ones, XM can help keep them entertained.



For more information on all of XM’s programming, log on to [www.xmradio.com](http://www.xmradio.com).

# XM CHANNEL GUIDE

AN AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO ALL OF XM'S 150+ MUSIC, NEWS, SPORTS, KIDS, TALK AND TRAFFIC CHANNELS.

## MUSIC THE MOST 100% COMMERCIAL-FREE CHANNELS

### DECADES!

- 4 **40** BIG BAND/SWING/FORTIES
- 5 **50s** FIFTIES HITS
- 6 **60s** SIXTIES HITS
- 7 **70s** SEVENTIES HITS
- 8 **80s** EIGHTIES HITS
- 9 **90s** NINETIES HITS

### COUNTRY

- 10 **Country** CLASSIC COUNTRY
- 11 **Mus Nashville!** 90s & TODAY'S COUNTRY
- 12 **X-COUNTRY** PROGRESSIVE COUNTRY
- 13 **Country Junction** TRADITIONAL COUNTRY
- 14 **Bluegrass Junction** BLUEGRASS
- 15 **The Village** FOLK
- 16 **Highway 66** TOP COUNTRY HITS

### POP & HITS

- 20 **Top 20** TOP 20 HITS
- 21 **KISS** TODAY'S HIT MUSIC
- 22 **Mix** MODERN POP HITS
- 23 **the heart.** LOVE SONGS
- 24 **Sunny** BEAUTIFUL MUSIC
- 25 **blend** ADULT HITS - PAST & TODAY
- 27 **CineMagick** MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS
- 28 **ON BROADWAY** SHOW TUNES
- 29 **U2** EURO & GLOBAL CHART HITS

### CHRISTIAN

- 31 **Toroh** CHRISTIAN ROCK
- 32 **REFRESH** CHRISTIAN POP
- 33 **SPIRIT** GOSPEL

### ROCK

- 40 **Reed Tracks** DEEP ALBUM ROCK
- 41 **Hard Rock** HARD ROCK XL
- 43 **XMU** COLLEGE/INDIE/NEW MUSIC
- 44 **Fred** DEEP CLASSIC ALTERNATIVE
- 45 **xm cafe** SOFT ALTERNATIVE
- 46 **FREEFORM** CLASSIC ROCK
- 47 **ETHEL** 90s & TODAY'S ALTERNATIVE
- 48 **Savitz** HARD ALTERNATIVE XL
- 50 **the loft** ACOUSTIC ROCK
- 51 **musiclab** JAMBANDS/PROG ROCK

### ROCK

- 52 **UNSIGN'D** UNSIGNED ARTISTS
- 53 **FUNGUS** PUNK/HARDCORE/SKA XL
- 54 **Lucy** ALTERNATIVE HITS

### HIP-HOP & URBAN

- 60 **SOUL** CLASSIC SOUL
- 61 **the flow** NEO SOUL
- 62 **Suite 612** TODAY'S R&B
- 64 **IBRODUE** OLD SCHOOL R&B
- 65 **Rhythme** CLASSIC HIP-HOP/RAP XL
- 66 **HAW** UNCUT HIP-HOP XL
- 67 **the City** URBAN TOP 40

### JAZZ & BLUES

- 70 **Jazz** TRADITIONAL JAZZ
- 71 **Watercolors** CONTEMPORARY JAZZ
- 72 **Jazz** MODERN JAZZ
- 73 **Frank's Place** AMERICAN STANDARDS
- 74 **bluesville** BLUES

### LIFESTYLE

- 75 **HEAR** THE VOICE OF MUSIC AT STARBUCKS
- 76 **FINE TUNING** ECLECTIC
- 77 **AUDIO VISIONS** NEW AGE

### DANCE

- 80 **MOVE** UNDERGROUND DANCE
- 81 **bpm** DANCE HITS
- 82 **THE SYSTEM** ELECTRONICA
- 83 **Chrome** DISCO

### LATIN

- 90 **ALGERIA** LATIN HITS
- 92 **aguilas** REGIONAL MEXICAN
- 94 **Sabor** TROPICAL
- 95 **Luna** LATIN JAZZ

### WORLD

- 100 **World** WORLD
- 101 **Joint** REGGAE
- 102 **Ngoma** AFRICAN

### CLASSICAL

- 110 **Classics** TRADITIONAL CLASSICAL
- 112 **VOX** OPERA/CLASSICAL VOCALS
- 113 **XM Plays** POPULAR CLASSICAL

## NEWS THE BIGGEST NAMES IN NEWS & INFORMATION

- 121 **FOX NEWS** FOX NEWS
- 122 **CNN** CNN
- 123 **CNN HEADLINE NEWS** CNN HEADLINE NEWS
- 124 **ABC NEWS & TALK** ABC NEWS & TALK
- 125 **THE WEATHER CHANNEL** THE WEATHER CHANNEL
- 127 **CNBC** CNBC
- 129 **Bloomberg** BLOOMBERG RADIO
- 130 **MSNBC** MSNBC
- 131 **BBC WORLD SERVICE** BBC WORLD SERVICE
- 132 **C-SPAN RADIO** C-SPAN RADIO
- 133 **XM PUBLIC RADIO** THE BOB EDWARDS SHOW, PRI, APM & WBUR
- 134 **CNN EN ESPAÑOL** CNN EN ESPAÑOL

## SPORTS THE MOST PLAY-BY-PLAY ON SATELLITE RADIO

- 140 **SPORTS TALK/PLAY-BY-PLAY** SPORTS TALK/PLAY-BY-PLAY
- 141 **SPORTS NEWS** SPORTS NEWS
- 142 **SPORTS TALK** SPORTS TALK
- 143 **SPORTS TALK** SPORTS TALK
- 144 **24/7 NASCAR RACING/TALK** 24/7 NASCAR RACING/TALK
- 145 **IN-RACE DRIVER AUDIO** IN-RACE DRIVER AUDIO
- 146 **THE PGA TOUR NETWORK/LIVE COVERAGE & GOLF TALK** THE PGA TOUR NETWORK/LIVE COVERAGE & GOLF TALK
- 147 **PLAY-BY-PLAY EN ESPAÑOL/WORLD CUP SOCCER** PLAY-BY-PLAY EN ESPAÑOL/WORLD CUP SOCCER
- 152 **INDYCAR RACING** INDYCAR RACING
- 175 **MLB HOME PLATE™** 24/7 MLB™ NEWS & TALK
- 176-189 **14 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL™ PLAY-BY-PLAY CHANNELS** 14 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL™ PLAY-BY-PLAY CHANNELS
- 190 **PLAY-BY-PLAY EN ESPAÑOL** PLAY-BY-PLAY EN ESPAÑOL
- 191-193 **ACC** ACC FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL
- 194-196 **PAC-10 FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL** PAC-10 FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL
- 197-199 **BIG TEN FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL** BIG TEN FOOTBALL/BASKETBALL

## KIDS AWARD-WINNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

- 115 **RADIO Disney** CHILDREN
- 116 **xm kids** CHILDREN

## TALK COMEDY & ENTERTAINMENT

- 150 **COMEDY XL** COMEDY XL
- 151 **LAUGH USA** FAMILY COMEDY
- 152 **EXTREME TALK** EXTREME TALK
- 162 **EI ENTERTAINMENT** EI ENTERTAINMENT
- 163 **BOOKS & DRAMA** BOOKS & DRAMA
- 164 **OLD TIME RADIO** OLD TIME RADIO
- 165 **ASK!** EXPERTS & ADVICE
- 166 **America Right** CONSERVATIVE TALK
- 167 **AIR** PROGRESSIVE TALK
- 169 **the power** AFRICAN-AMERICAN TALK
- 170 **FamilyTalk** CHRISTIAN TALK
- 171 **OPCR ROAD** TRUCKERS' CHANNEL
- \*200 **X.M. Live.** CONCERTS/FESTIVALS/SPECIAL FEATURES
- 202 **HIGH VOLTAGE** OPIE & ANTHONY SHOW XL

## TRAFFIC & WEATHER XM Instant Traffic & Weather

- 210 BOSTON, MA
- 211 NEW YORK, NY
- 212 PHILADELPHIA, PA
- 213 BALTIMORE, MD
- 214 WASHINGTON, DC
- 215 PITTSBURGH, PA
- 216 DETROIT, MI
- 217 CHICAGO, IL
- 218 ST. LOUIS, MO
- 219 MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL, MN
- 220 SEATTLE, WA
- 221 SAN FRANCISCO, CA
- 222 LOS ANGELES, CA
- 223 SAN DIEGO, CA
- 224 PHOENIX, AZ
- 225 DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TX
- 226 HOUSTON, TX
- 227 ATLANTA, GA
- 228 TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG, FL
- 229 ORLANDO, FL
- 230 MIAMI/FT. LAUDERDALE, FL
- 247 XM EMERGENCY ALERT

XM Previews on Channel 1.  
 \* May include frequent explicit language.  
 Please call XM Listener Care at 1-800-XM-RADIO (1-800-967-2346) for Parental Control/Blocking Option.  
 • Ch. 129 airs 5AM ET-6PM ET Mon-Fri.  
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 † Ch. 161 airs 6PM ET-5AM ET weekdays and all day Sat. & Sun.  
 ‡ Visit nascar.xmradio.com for NASCAR 2 Ch. 145 broadcast schedules. Visit collegesports.xmradio.com for college game schedules. Games subject to availability. All schedules subject to change.  
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Channel lineup effective 8/1/05 — All programming subject to change. Visit xmradio.com for updates. ©2005 XM Satellite Radio.



The XM basic monthly subscription includes XM Radio Online. Stream all commercial-free music channels, High Voltage, The Bob Edwards Show, comedy, kids programming and more. Visit xmradio.com for details.



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