

HDTV and why you should get it

So, Eastlink recently started offering a new set-top box that can decode and display HDTV. "Why is this significant to me?" you may ask? "Well", I would answer, "HDTV is not only the most significant update to television as we know it since black and white gave way to colour, but it also looks fucking fantastic.". Yes, I believe that's exactly how I'd answer.

HDTV offers about 16 times the resolution that traditional TV does. Think about it. How many of you have your computers set at 640x480? Traditional television is only about half that. Although HDTV capable sets are still fairly pricey, they're coming down quickly. As an early adopter (4 years ago), I paid through the nose for mine.

I'm not much of a football fan, but let me tell you, it's very cool seeing a game in the the clarity that HD offers and hearing the fans yell and cheer from behind you on a Dolby Digital 5.1 sound mix.

Eastlink's HDTV package has 6 channels, five of which you can get for free during their trial period and the sixth you get with a subscription to the movie network. So that's FOX, ABC, NBC, CBS, and two channels that they show everything else on. All of the prime time shows are in HDTV and they look fantastic. For anyone who didn't know, since HDTV's aspect ration is 16x9 instead of traditional television's 4x3, which means that these shows are all filmed in widescreen. It's a much more pleasant experience, like everything you watch is a movie instead of a television show. Some of them even come through in 5.1 sound.

Of all the channels, CBS really shines through with the best quality video. I don't know what it is, something intangible perhaps, but the crispness and clarity of the CBS channel is far better than the others. I would give second place to the PBS programs broadcast on the first "catch all" channel; high resolution images, to be sure, but I tend to notice some shimmer. All the rest are clearly better than standard television, but they just don't compare to the quality of the top two. When the HD channels are not showing native HD material, they show up-converted 480i programming. Even this looks staggering better than normal.

So, everyone go and get an HDTV compatible set, and get on the bandwagon. My dream is for one day to have every program on every channel to look this good. I know this is mandated by the CRTC, but they keep pushing the date back. You really haven't experienced television until you have seen HDTV.

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