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Internet-Based Television

When it comes to consumer electronics, the place to go to learn about evolutionary and/or revolutionary new technologies is the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), held in Las Vegas each January. At this year's CES, I discovered that the next big thing in television should be a shift to Internet-based TV viewing. However, the upcoming full marriage of the Internet and the TV set is currently experiencing technical difficulties. Not yet fully married and already lawyers are involved trying to work out a settlement!

The conflict basically comes down to TV networks, motion picture studios, and cable operators, each of which wants to control how Internet content is shown on your TV. They fear that a full Internet connection could destroy their current television business model. This model is now based on very expensive television advertisements, handsome payments to the networks and motion picture studios for broadcasting rights, and also the payment of expensive monthly access bills by consumers to their cable operators.

Before a true Internet TV merger

during a show. TV providers fear a personal financial disaster if content from the Internet could freely flow to your super-sized HDTV.

A January 2011 *Bloomberg Businessweek* headline heralded the fact that new TV sales have stalled because consumers fear that new technologies will quickly turn a new TV-set-to-envy into a less-than-the-greatest in a matter of months. Why buy a new TV if its Internet feeds of popular TV shows are being blocked and if next year's TV models might provide 3D viewing without the glasses?

I am glad to report that Internet TV is not on life support. It is up and running and if you have a truly super-sized HDTV, it is the perfect way to move special moments from your computer screen to the mega screen in your living room. Probably the best way to enjoy these tumultuous Internet TV times is with a set-top box or wireless connection between your computer and your HDTV.

The Logitech Revue is Google TV in a set-top box. (See Photo 1.) Of the devices described here, it is the one that I had the least time to test.

thumbnail. You can also download apps from the Android Marketplace and plug in all kinds of accessories to increase what your system does.

With Google as its progenitor, the system is very stable and will probably be the market leader set-top box. When this column went to press, Hulu and many other TV show providers were blocking their content from the Revue for the reasons explained earlier.

The Boxee Box is also a set-top box and it is experiencing the same show blocking as the Logitech system. What sets Boxee apart is the



D-Link

Photo 2—The developers of the Boxee Box consider social networking a key aspect of Internet TV.

creativity of the product designer who created the unit's form. The Boxee Box is a perfect cube that is truncated at its base. (See Photo 2.) If you teach computer-aided drafting (CAD), you might already be using this shape as a drawing assignment.

Probably the biggest difference between the functionality of Boxee and Logitech is the performance of their software and the shape and size of their keyboard controllers. (Refer to Photos 1 and 2 again.) If you link your Boxee account to your Facebook and Twitter account, the software helps you share your Internet experiences with your friends. If they also have a Boxee Box, you can click

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Logitech

Photo 1—The Logitech Revue has all the features of Google TV built into a set-top box.

was raised, watching a favorite TV show on a computer was a service that the networks and websites like Hulu felt they could freely provide. The programs they air are shown days or weeks after originally broadcast. They are also shown on a platform where consumers couldn't skip the commercials that run before or

I found its functionality to be very similar to the *littl webbook* that I covered in my November 2010 column.

You use the Revue's full-size wireless keyboard to go to websites. Each website you visit is turned into a thumbnail of its opening page on your HDTV desktop. To return to a site, you click on the appropriate

video over to their show listings. The Boxee software is not yet fully cooked, so everything doesn't always



Photo 3—The Link wirelessly transmits HD video and stereo audio from a computer to an HDTV or digital projector.

run smoothly. Improvements are downloaded to your unit frequently.

The Imentation Link is not a set-top box. Hats off to the industrial designer who fit all the electronics into such a small beautifully shaped wireless unit! (See Photo 3.) The small L-shaped transmitter plugs into a USB port on your computer. It transmits stereo audio and high-definition video to the receiver that sits near or on your HDTV or video projector. Setup is simple and the transmission speed is line of sight and faster than WiFi. Since this is not a set-top box, everything you can view on your computer you can also view on your HDTV or video projector.

Do you want your full computer to sit next to you while you enjoy your Internet shows on your super-sized HDTV? The IGUGU Internet TV system is a wireless remote control for your computer. The IGUGU system calls for you to plug your computer directly into your HDTV, start your computer, and then control what you see on your HDTV using their remote. (See Photo 4.) Sounds crazy but the arrangement could work. What worked even better was combining the IGUGU system with the Imentation Link.



Photo 4—The IGUGU remote wirelessly controls your computer. To acquire Internet TV, connect your computer to your HDTV with supplied cables or someone else's wireless solution.

The software that IGUGU provides for your Internet viewing pleasure is extremely powerful and can automatically find most popular TV shows. It works more like a Tivo than an Internet to television link. It provides a major list of TV shows. Click on a show title and you get a full listing of available episodes. Click on a title and you go straight out to the Internet to view the show full screen without having to press other buttons. Without pressing a button, you don't even know which website is supplying the show. You can also search through a major list of possible channels and pick the ones you want to place under the "My Channel" heading on the IGUGU software's home screen. Hulu's offerings and other popular shows aren't blocked.

A word of caution: During the testing of IGUGU, Norton Internet Security software on my computer has, more than once, blocked my computer from accessing a malicious website that contained the popular TV show that I wanted to watch. If your Internet TV experience is hosted by your computer, it is critical that you have up-to-date software to protect you from malicious websites. You will find a link to videos that show these systems in action at www.technologytoday.us/id27.htm.

Recalling the Facts

1. Why are some television channels and motion picture studios preventing viewers from watching their shows over a direct Internet television connection?
2. If you could design your own Internet TV system, what features would you include? ©

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