

Re: OT: TV converter boxes

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- *From:* Jonathan Kirwan <jkirwan@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 14 Jun 2008 04:08:41 GMT
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On Fri, 13 Jun 2008 16:21:16 -0700, Joerg
<notthisjoergsch@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Jonathan Kirwan wrote:

On Fri, 13 Jun 2008 15:30:01 -0700, Joerg
<notthisjoergsch@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Jonathan Kirwan wrote:

On Fri, 13 Jun 2008 12:53:52 -0700, Joerg
<notthisjoergsch@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
wrote:

Jan wrote:

And now
you are
exagerating
anyways,
most people
have the
boxes so
they can use
their old
analog 1958
CRTs ;-)

Then you don't really know
Americans :-)

He may know one of us, at least. I don't have
even 1 HDTV here and I
have two children still living with me. Just
picked up the prepaid
two converter boxes for NTSC sets we do

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have, last week. But I don't intend on purchasing HDTVs until they are MUCH lower in cost. I'm expecting the prices to be where I want them in about 5 years or perhaps a little longer, yet. I'm in no rush to pay the prices I see for such a near pointless gismo. (Though, with fuel prices and the housing market in a spiral in many places, I might be able to pick one up earlier in a fire sale.)

Those boxes aren't exactly prepaid. \$40 boxes don't exist, the \$50 tier is permanently unobtainium around here so people end up forking over another \$25 out of pocket per box. No analog feed-through and the VCR won't be able to auto-switch channels anymore.

I got mine, one at \$40 and one at \$50. My total outlay was \$10 for both. \$5/box, in effect. (Received two of those red cards to use.)

No sales tax?

Not in Oregon, where I live.

They appear to achieve what I needed here, which is simple access once in a while to broadcast TV for others in the house (I don't watch any broadcast or cable, at all, and haven't for more than 15 years... perhaps closer to 20 years, now.) Looks fine (I hooked them up and had to watch enough to make sure things were operating okay.)

I've no need for recording off of broadcast and generally don't use VCRs. My daughter uses them for playback (she is autistic and cannot really handle DVD menus), but that's about it.

We record old movies but I guess that'll be mostly over since the VCR cannot switch channels on the box. DVD recorders may be another choice but I don't trust all this DRM stuff. I don't want to buy one only to find out that most of the stuff we want is blocked for recording.

I use the PC to make backup copies of copy protected DVDs without

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trouble. (Actually, I play the backups and leave the originals alone.) I can let you know the free software I use for that. I also have the Honestech VHS copying device I got from Costco for something like \$30 (maybe as much as \$40), but I don't use it much.

WRT the HDTV sets you can find a decent 19–incher for around \$250. But you are right, mankind doesn't really need it so urgently. There are more important things.

I'm not interested in a 19" HDTV. But you probably nailed my price range for the 42" variety. I _do_ see a small desire inside my Old Order Amish soul for a large screen in the home for certain DVDs I might watch, like Koyaanisqatsi. It's rare that I'd appreciate the extra visceral feelings I might get from a movie theater's wide screen. But once in a while, I suppose I would. But for the low frequency of such events, I'm not paying \$1500–\$2500. They aren't worth that much to me. But they could pry \$250 out of my hand for it. Maybe.

Amish ancestry? Oh, make sure they don't hear about those kinds of desires. If you guys have kids I am sure the rumspringa phase is over by now ;–)

No Amish, so far as I know. I just enjoy working the fields, building barns, digging trenches and setting up structural walls for terracing, mucking the stalls, feeding the chickens, and so on. When I'm not doing embedded stuff. Just Hedvall family swedes that came through Canada to the US and some Irish who came from I don't know where (which gives me my last name.)

What stopped me from allowing TV or radio into my life, and what started me on using a lot more shortwave, was a series of experiences. The first thing that jogged my noggin was my celestial navigation instructor, back in 1981. I was on a sailing kick then and took lessons from him, taught through a university course. He had taken off from the US in 1969 in a 42' cement–bottom boat he'd built and he bummed around in the south pacific for 12 years. In class one day, after a slide show and discussion about his travels, he asked us each to ask him one question.

When my turn came around, I asked him, "When we see someone we haven't seen in a decade or more, there is usually something that has changed about them that we notice right away. When you came back to the US, what is it that struck you the most about what had changed here?"

He paused, thinking, and said that he hadn't really thought closely about that until I asked him. Then he answered, "The news media. It's all the same, now. And when I left in the '60's, CBS and ABC and NBC each had news programs but they didn't even cover the same things. Viewers would cleave to one or another because of the choices they would make about coverage, often enough. When I came back to the US, they all said the same things, at about the same times, and there was no difference really between them. It was all a single voice droning on, to me."

I hadn't expected that answer, obviously. I had no idea what he'd say, but was curious. His answer was his own, but it made me think.

Another thing was a story a few years later by UTNE Reader, talking about the consolidation of media outlets under Reagan. That reminded me of my celestial navigation teacher's comment, once again. Also, by that time, I'd become more sensitized to news sources and had started watching C-SPAN when we finally had access to cable services.

I had already begun to wean myself off of the news services, by that time, though I didn't really know it then. I simply watched less and less "news" at the standard times and started looking for a wider variety of sources. Commercials were also growing in length and shows shorter, news folks were learning to spend more of their time pimping what they would tell you later on and even less time telling you anything at all, etc. And when they did, it was more and more mere stenography and less and less investigative reporting and meaningful contexts provided out of an unwillingness to accept things on their face and a fervor to research what they were told before reporting it.

So it wasn't really hard on me. I chose to read books and periodicals where the authors had had time to do some diligence, instead, and to select a wide variety of sources so that I could get perspectives from a variety of angles. The late 1980's was about the time I started using shortwave a lot more, too. (Of course, the internet now makes some of this more convenient.) Since I can read German okay, I'd listen to Deutsche Welle, for one example. But actually, most anything I could catch I'd listen to for a while. It was interesting to just find out what others thought was important and the way they presented the information. I think the funniest for me to listen to was a North Korean broadcast I would catch once in a while. It was laughable!

I think I stopped all TV with the election of Clinton. By that time, I'd simply had it with the sameness of what we get here, I was no longer able to be entertained by most of the shows on the air, and I'd gotten fed up with the continual barrage of commercial messages. It's been so much peace for me, since then.

It was a personal choice that I didn't impose on others in my family, though. None of my children watch any broadcasts, now, though. They

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came to their own decisions in their own time. My wife still does watch, perhaps an hour a day. And since she works in the kitchen and with my autistic daughter downstairs from there, we have two sets and just got two of the converter boxes for them. That will make the kitchen TV more useful for her, now, so I suppose she might watch a little more each day. But she's the only one, these days. The other four of us do not watch broadcasts, at all.

That movie title doesn't sound Amish though, more like Native American language.

Hehe. It's not. It's Hopi, I think. If you get a chance, I definitely recommend the movie to you!! It is unique and worth watching at least once in your life.

Who knows, those HDTV sets aren't your grandpa's TV no more. When they break it can easily become uneconomical to repair or nobody in town has a clue how to. So chances are you might be able to pick one up earlier and fix it.

Hehe. Used to be, it was the horizontal flyback BJT that went boom most of the time on the cheapo IBM PC monitors. Under a lot of strain from voltage and bandwidth (do they make the really high end ones much anymore?)

I haven't looked into what functional blocks are in an HDTV and what can be learned about them, for repair purposes. Any suggestions about where to learn about such things? Somehow, in the back of my mind, I'm worried about "ICs that are unique and integrate various ad-hoc functions" and probably excessively expensive test equipment I'd need to get, besides. My scopes are merely an HP 54645D and a Tek 2245A.

Jon

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