I Want My HDTV

by Robert Atkinson

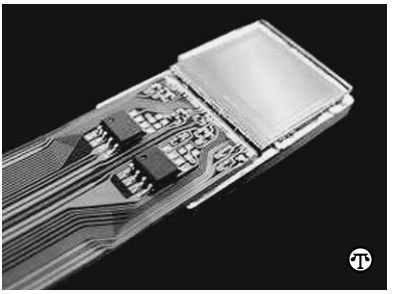
(NAPSA)—Years ago, television executives boasted that we would all soon be watching movies and football games at home on super-sharp televisions as big as movie screens. Yet so-called high-definition television, or HDTV, is still largely a fantasy, costing upwards of $10,000. Well, that may be about to change.

HDTV is a digital broadcast standard that offers more than twice the resolution of regular color TV broadcasts. What this means is that the television picture is dramatically sharper, offering more realistic images that are comparable to what you see in a theater. Unfortunately, few of us have been able to watch such programs. So, what's the holdup?

Until recently, big-screen televisions, the proper forum for HDTV, were either impractical or simply too expensive to make; a conventional set that measured 50 inches on the diagonal would weigh several hundred pounds and be several feet deep—unwieldy for most living rooms.

On the other hand, newer gas plasma televisions that are only a few inches thick and can hang on a wall cost around $10,000—and still suffer from a lack of picture brightness and color saturation. Even state-of-the-art rear-projection models don't do justice to the increased sharpness of HDTV programs like "Survivor" or NFL Football.

Fortunately, new technology holds the promise of affordable, crystal-clear, large-screen sets. Called LCOS (liquid crystal on silicon), it's essentially a TV on a computer chip. The chip uses liquid crystals sandwiched on a silicon processor to create a razor-sharp image, which is then beamed onto a screen using a high-intensity light.



SpatiaLight microdisplay chip: the brains behind future HDTV viewing.

"It's near film quality," says Miles Scott, vice president of engineering and manufacturing at SpatiaLight, Inc., a leader in LCOS technology. He describes SpatiaLight's chip as "an electronic 35mm slide that is similar in complexity to a Pentium III microprocessor."

Scott believes that we will see 52-inch, LCOS-based TVs available next year starting at around $4,500. While this still may not be inexpensive, as more sets are produced, prices should come down.

With increased clarity and picture sharpness, new rear-projection LCOS systems could enable television makers to design sets that are thinner, lighter and several times sharper than conventional TVs. This sets the stage for amazing HDTV viewing, as well as the ability to merge your PC with your television without the fuzzy display. Home theater never had it so good.

For more information on LCOS technology, visit the Web site at www.spatialight.com.

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