

RTN Satellite feature by Bill Pole, March 2010

Welcome to the first in a new series of monthly features about the world of British TV here on the northern Costa Blanca. My aim is to keep you up to date with the latest news, products and developments in the field of digital TV. Each month we will cover different items of interest to the local British-speaking expat community - subjects including Sky, FreeSat, TDT, accessories for your system, ways to get the most out of your system, useful checkpoints to make sure your system runs smoothly, and many more - in a plain English, easy-to-read format.

My background was originally IT back in the UK, until a motorcycle accident in 2001 left me badly injured, and eventually unemployed after 9/11. I moved to Javea in 2002 where I bought out and took over 'ConeXionS', an established firm in the local area which has been trading since 1988. I feel privileged to have been asked to write for RTN. My hobbies include dog-walking and amateur magic. Please feel free to email me at bill@conexions-javea.com with your thoughts, comments, corrections and news. I actively encourage discussion and questions, and will do what I can to provide clear, relevant information on current local TV issues.

Flat-screen 'HD-Ready' LCD TVs have been plummeting in price recently due to the arrival of thinner, sleeker LED and OLED TVs. Technology marches on at a fast pace, and whilst this is good for progress, it leaves many people over the age of 20 wondering how to keep up, and what the benefits really are. The industry is often confusing and fast-paced, and even the best of us can get it wrong from time to time. However, here are a few simple facts about ALL recent flat-screens which are indisputable:

Because the new screens contain many more pixels (the individual dots of light which make up an image) than the old 'conventional' TV screens, the picture puts less strain on the eyes, making it easier to view for the majority of the population, especially those over 50. Even with a standard definition digital receiver, the image is usually sharper than on a comparable conventional TV. High Definition broadcasts are a spectacle to behold, but you need good eyes or decent glasses to be able to get the full benefit. There has never been a better time to upgrade your old TV, in terms of value for money.

So why buy the even newer LED and OLED? Well, apart from being able to show off to the neighbours, the latest TVs are much thinner than LCDs and plasmas (as little as 3cm!) in profile, have even sharper picture detail, and use around 30% less power. Over the lifetime of the set, that could add up to a substantial power saving! However, LED TVs are still expensive - a 32" set still generally costs over 1,000 euros. Also, bear in mind that the smaller and thinner the set, the more compact the speakers need to be. This can sometimes result in 'tinny' sound, without much body or character. The solution? Plug into your existing hi-fi or stereo using audio cables, or run external speakers and a subwoofer to add clarity and depth to the sounds, matching the improved picture detail.

Some of the absolute latest TVs on the market now come with Wi-Fi built in, allowing them to connect wirelessly to your home broadband connection, and delivering email, Youtube videos and more straight to your living room without the need for a PC. In my opinion they are still an experimental technology, and data input (such as writing an email) is restricted by having to use the remote control in a 'texting' type of way. I would wait for these TVs to be commonplace before splashing out. However, mark my words - this is the distant future of TV for us all!

Expect a lot more news from me around this subject as the lines between computer and TV start to blur more and more. In future articles I hope to cover IPTV (TV via internet), re-broadcast TV systems, portable hard disk media players, hard disk and DVD recorders, PC to TV links, HD formats and setups, cables and senders, and

eventually 3DTV, the cutting edge in 3 dimensional viewing as seen recently on Sky News – watch this space...

In the meantime, if you are the proud owner of a white Sky card, but have not, for whatever reason, got access to a 'big' 2.4m dish, you may find it surprising to learn that it is possible to receive several 'big-dish' channels on a much smaller 1 - 1.2m dish. Channels available include ITV1, Channel 4, More4 and E4. It also means uninterrupted viewing for owners of larger dishes when the usual channels start to break up late at night, or in bad weather. Please consult the ConeXionS website (details at the end of this feature) for further details.

Next month: TDT or Terrestrial Digital Television – what you can do to beat the imminent rush in demand. If you can't wait till then, feel free to contact us to find out more.

Bill Pole runs ConeXionS Digital Satellite Solutions, based in Javea. Established in 1988, we are one of the original satellite TV firms on the Costa Blanca, surviving through our success, customer loyalty and recommendation. Phone us on (+34) 660 638 975 or visit us at www.conexions-javea.com for the latest news and special offers.