



PRESS RELEASE

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New Confidence for UK Digital Terrestrial

By Peter Marshall, Technical Director, Digital TV Group.

This is an expanded version of an article published in IBC Daily News

Industry is quietly showing increased confidence in the future of DTT in the UK, with a new, more robust transmission mode and a new business model. A re-launch in the autumn will see DTT refocused as a free-to-air only platform, offering a total of some 24 services and with consumers buying their own receivers in normal retail outlets.

With prices for a set-top box starting at £99 (€150), take-up is expected to be high. Indeed, Pace has already shown the way with sales of over 100,000 DVAs (Digital Video Adaptors) in just a couple of months over the summer. All the major CE brands are planning to enter the market with their own versions in the next few months and, with co-ordinated marketing support from the broadcasters, expectations are high that as many as 1 million more UK homes may adopt DTT by the end of 2003.

That's in addition to maybe 800,000 ITV Digital boxes still with former subscribers, or sold of cheaply from warehouse stock during the last couple of months and the 250,000 IDTVs already sold. Integrated Digital TVs are also expected to show an increase on the 112,000 sold last year, as pre-Christmas promotion gets under way. Several manufacturers are now offering 2nd generation products, offering superb 'digital' quality widescreen pictures and improved MHEG engines, and with the extra cost of digital coming down steadily.

ITV Digital in particular suffered from poor coverage because signal levels had to be kept as low as 20dB or more below analogue to avoid any risk of interference. The problem is being tackled in three ways. Firstly, an immediate 3dB power increase is being implemented (original planning standards are now regarded as being 3 – 6dB too conservative). Secondly, transmitters are being changed to 16QAM at 18Mb/s, to give the equivalent of another 5 – 6dB in transmitted power.

Further 'fine-tuning' of individual transmitters over the next 12 months is calculated to bring the number of households receiving all six networks up from 68% to over 80%.

The DTG's Role

The DTG is playing a central role in the development of the platform in providing a technical forum for broadcasters and manufacturers to hammer out rules of operation to give a satisfying and consistent user experience. Activities include:

- D-Book Review Group
- Interoperability Group
- Service Information Group
- MHEG Experts Group
- Reception Group.

Looking slightly further ahead the DTG also has groups working on

- IP Services
- home networks
- PVR technology.

In every case, close contact is maintained with corresponding DVB activity, with the DTG lobby supporting and speeding the DVB standards work.

Joining the DTG

The DTG has a range of membership options for companies wishing to contribute to the development of digital television using published standards and open markets. For more information contact one of our representatives at IBC on the DTG Stand 9.549, or contact our office. email: office@dtg.org.uk

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The Digital TV Group

The Digital TV Group (DTG) is a non-profit making company limited by guarantee whose members are its shareholders. Membership of the DTG is open to all companies who are members of the DVB or substantial contributors to DTV development.

The aims and objectives the DTG are:

- to work on behalf of the industry to develop digital television using the DVB family of standards across all platforms.
- to support the development of a horizontal and competitive market in receivers using published standards and in conformance with Directives of the European Commission and appropriate national bodies.

DTG Testing Ltd

DTG Testing Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Digital Television group (DTG). DTG Testing Limited was set up by the Digital Television Group to carry out interoperability testing on behalf of the digital TV receiver industry.

The Objectives of the Test Centre are:

To enable broadcasters to broadcast to a well-characterised set of receivers that meet the D-book requirements and do not inhibit service development. To assist receiver manufacturers develop products against better-qualified specifications To provide receiver developers with the tools that they require to test prototypes To improve interoperability of receivers in an open and horizontal market place and move towards a conformance test set. To assist in identifying areas of specification that are ambiguous or not adequately covered by the specifying documentation To share the risks and costs associated with this work.

The areas within the D-book specification for which the test methodologies are being developed are:

- MHEG API testing
- Common Interface testing
- SI and PSI signaling operations
- Audio and video testing, including AFDs
- Subtitle and audio description stream testing

Future areas of testing activity are expected to include:

- DVB MHP
- Personal Video recording
- Closed signing mechanisms
- Return channel developments

The Company test facilities are located at Kingswood Warren, Tadworth, Surrey, just a few kilometres north of Junction 8 on the M25. The site is shared with the BBC's R&D Department and the company, whilst independent of the BBC, has access to the wide range of skills that exist on the site.

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