**Smart TV**

Technology that combines TV, VCRs, optical disks, and personal computers into a single system may soon revolutionize the electronics industry. Such a system might allow home viewers to add their own twists to a movie’s plot.

If you think television sets and computers dominate our lives already, wait till you see Andy Hertzfeld’s new toy. The impish computer hacker is best known as a key software designer for Apple’s innovative Macintosh personal computer. Now he works for a Silicon Valley start-up company called Frox. He is one of a group of engineers who have built a prototype of what he calls “an information center for your house that also happens to be the world’s greatest TV and stereo.”

Frox’s home-entertainment system is clever enough to read the TV listings and pick out and record programs. Hertzfeld might want to watch later – and it can edit out the commercials to boot. It also catalogs and plays his compact disks (CDs) on command, and shows on the TV screen the cover art and liner notes for each disk. The TV is the focal point of the system, but what makes it all work is a built-in computer as powerful as an engineering workstation.

Soon the machine will simultaneously monitor electronic databases for news or other information of particular interest, answer the telephone, watch for incoming electronic mail, and control additional home appliances even as it runs the TV or stereo. In essence, the Frox machine is an ambitious effort to give the boob tube some real smarts.

Don’t rush out to buy one for Christmas. The Frox system isn’t supposed to make it to market for two years. If and when it does, at first it will probably cost – gasp - $ 10,000. (As with most electronic marvels, the price is sure to head downward if it catches on.) It’s a harbinger of a whole new genre of electronic devices arriving in the net few years that will blend the realistic, compelling, moving imagery of TV with the brains of computers. Already, titans of both the computer and consumer-electronics industries – as well as hungry smaller companies like Frox – are plotting what shapes these new machines will take. The big lure is the prospect that the new hybrid technology will bring powerful computers into the home at long last.

Like Frox, other consumer-electronics companies, most of them Japanese, are working on ways to make TVs more intelligent and versatile so the viewer can take better advantage of the plethora of programming available through the airwaves, over cable, and on tape and laser disk. Both IBM and Apple, the PC kings, are already touting ‘multimedia’ – the combination of text, sound, and graphics – as the wave of the future in personal computers. They are working on the TV-PC match up from the opposite direction by putting full-motion digital video into their already engaging and entertaining. The goal; desktop video computers that users interact with, not merely another box for the couch potatoes to sit and stare at.

These video computers would usher in video encyclopedias and other interactive educational and training tools. They could read and display patterns of stock-price quotes, and would make possible hundreds of new and elaborate computer games. Ultimately, just about anybody will be able to create electronic productions that mix snippets of moving video and sound with conventional text and computer graphics.

For example, you could write your mother a letter including video highlights of your daughter’s birthday party or your trip to Europe, with commentary dubbed in. You would mail it to her on a single computer disk – or, better yet, transmit it to her computer almost instantly over telephone lines. One day, video computers may even act as the futuristic “videophones” that telecommunications companies have promised for decades, but never really delivered.

“It’s time to change the face of information in the home,” declares Nicholas Negroponte, director of the Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The Media Lab, the world leader in research on the technology of mixed media, is organizing an American, European, and Japanese consortium of big-name computer, consumer-electronics, and telecommunications concerns to set standards for the television of tomorrow. “Our ultimate goal is to make personal computers an televisions as one,” Negroponte says.

Plenty of technological and marketing hurdles must be jumped for Negroponte to realize his grand vision, or for IBM, Apple, and the TV makers to carry out their more modest plans. For one thing, the nature of video imagery requires vast amounts of data storage space, computing power, and memory. That means video computers or smart TVs will be frighteningly expensive at first, and hence will probably be aimed initially at business and education rather than home users.

Moreover, many experts aren’t sure that ordinary people can master the exacting techniques necessary to put together a comprehensible video program, even if it’s just an edited home movie. Indeed, some contend that most people would really need or want only a ‘multimedia’ – a TV or computer that allows them more control over prerecorded, professionally produced interactive video programming.

Despite the technical obstacles and marketing debates, manufacturers are pressing ahead. IBM and Apple are already sniping at each other over what form desktop video will take. IBM contends that people want players mostly for preprogrammed material, while Apple believes that computer users will want to ‘roll their own’.

2. Переведите следующие словосочетания на русский язык:

1) the impish computer hacker;

2) to take better advantage;

3) interact with;

4) the plethora of programming;

5) desktop video computers;

6) data storage space;

7) to be the first out of the chute;

8) to offer digital video;

9) available through the airwaves;

10) vast amounts.

3. Найдите в тексте эквиваленты следующих словосочетаний:

1) конечная цель;

2) сделать персональные компьютеры и телевизоры одним целым;

3) несмотря на технические сложности;

4) большой соблазн;

5) технология комбинированных средств информации;

6) быть направленным на сферу бизнеса и образования;

7) справляться с трудностями;

8) изменить лицо информации;

9) обучающие средства;

10) устанавливать стандарты телевидения завтрашнего дня.

4. Найдите в тексте однокоренные слова, определите, к какой части речи они относятся, и переведите их на русский язык:

1) apply;

2) real;

3) add;

4) education;

5) frighten;

6) busy;

7) programmed;

8) use;

9) design;

10) person.

5. Задайте к предложению все типы вопросов ( общий, альтернативный, специальный а). к подлежащему, б). к второстепенному члену предложения, разделительный.)

Despite the technical obstacles and marketing debates, manufacturers are pressing ahead.

6. Выполните анализ данных предложений, обратив внимание на следующие грамматические явления: причастие 1, причастие 2, герундий, конверсия.

1) They are working on the TV-PC match-up by putting full motion digital video into their already brainy machines in order to make them more engaging and entertaining.

2) What makes it work is a built-in computer as powerful as an engineering workstation.

3) Soon the machine will monitor electronic databases for news and watch for incoming electronic mail.

4) They aren’t so sure that ordinary people can master the exacting techniques necessary to put together a comprehensible video program.

5) It’s a harbinger of a whole new genre of electronic devices arriving in the next few years that will blend realistic, compelling, moving imagery of TV with the brains of computers.

7. Ответьте на вопросы к тексту:

1) What is the Frox’s system capable of?

2) How clever is Frox’s home-entertainment system?

3) How much will the Frox system cost at first?

4) What companies are considered the PC kings?

5) What is being done by IBM and Apple to make brainy machines more entertaining?

6) What is meant by “brainy machines”?

7) What is the ultimate goal of the technology of mixed media researchers?