

WHAT'S NEW IN 1999 / Consumers Testing New Instant-Replay TV Gadgets

Sylvia Rubin, Chronicle Staff Writer

Two new set-top gadgets that will allow television viewers to pause, rewind and instantly replay a live program has just begun national testing.

Replay [Network Inc. of Palo Alto](#) and TiVo of Sunnyvale will demonstrate their similar devices, which digitally record whatever's on the screen, Thursday through Sunday at the 1999 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

National testing by both companies began last week. During Sunday's exciting '49ers game, [Dawson Crawford](#) of Los Gatos tested a box from Replay. He paused the action during a timeout, then went back to a crucial play and caught up with the live game after the commercials. "It really is the next step," says Crawford, an attorney. "It's kind of like a computer wrapped inside a VCR." The units, priced from about \$500 to \$1,500 depending on recording time, can be ordered now but won't be shipped until March, according to the companies.

These digital VCRs take channel surfing to another level. Instead of scrolling through the TV Guide to find out when to set the VCR and then programming each show individually, the devices can easily be programmed to search and record whatever viewers want.

Advertisement

Article continues below this ad

The units' recording capacity ranges from seven to 28 hours of programming and are priced accordingly. Both can find shows by genre or title. If you like cooking shows, for example, you can program the box to find all of them on the schedule for the next few days or weeks.

Rich Rifredi, a Silicon Valley software -- executive who sampled the TiVo device last week, said he was skeptical at first. "There are so many things coming down the pike; my cable provider is hitting me up to convert to digital. There's

HDTV, DVD."

Still, he liked the pause feature. "Often when my wife and I are watching the news, we are talking much of the time, then the phone's ringing. This is a nonthinking tool. When the phone rings, we paused the program, then came back and fast-forwarded through commercials and caught up with the live program."

Ex. 2004

Dish Network L.L.C. and Dish Technologies L.L.C. v. Digital Broadcasting Solutions, LLC, IPR2023-00977

Advertisement

Article continues below this ad

Rifredi thought it was easy to record future programs. "You hit a 'thumbs up' button; I didn't have to think about setting the VCR," he says. A hockey fan, Rifredi made good use of the slow-motion feature (which Replay does not offer). "Usually after someone scores, the announcer tells you where the person was born. I would rather go back and see that shot again in super slo- mo, which for me adds value to that sort of program."

Replay has a "Quick Skip" feature which TiVo doesn't; it allowed Crawford to skip through recorded programming at 30-second intervals. You can use it to zip right past all those beer commercials.

Crawford programmed TiVo to find any and all [Boston Celtics](#) games. It rewarded him with a 1986 game on an Ohio sports channel. "That was really cool," he says.

Replay's unit costs \$700 to \$1,500 and can record seven to 28 hours of programming. It can be ordered directly through the company's Web site, www.replaytv.com.

Advertisement

Article continues below this ad

TiVo's product will range from about \$500 for the seven-hour version, more for 20-hour capacity (no top price was available), with a monthly fee of about \$10. It can be ordered from the Web site, at www.tivo.com.

Jan 5, 1999

By Sylvia Rubin, Chronicle Staff Writer