

TECH NEWS

Wireless industry pushes TV for your cell phone

Calling Dick Tracy. The wireless industry is gearing up to convince you to watch TV on your cell phone. MSNBC's Gary Krakow reports from the 3GSM show in Barcelona.



— In addition to being a cell phone, the N92 is truly a portable multimedia center. *Nokia*

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By Gary Krakow

BARCELONA, Spain – Calling Dick Tracy. The day is coming when your TV will not only fit in the palm of your hand but will allow you to watch the programs you want when you want – from

anywhere your cell phone will receive a signal. And a huge number of companies at this year's 3GSM World Congress trade show want that day to come very, very soon.

In fact, they're all but betting the bank on it. They may not agree on exactly when the technology will be embraced (or how, or which one) but they're all sure that watching television on your cell phone will be the next driving force in the wireless industry.

The 3GSM show is all about current and future international cellular phone standards. GSM (for phone calls), GPRS (for data) are considered second generation and 2.5 generation standards. The faster data EDGE is called 2.75G. The new, very fast HSDPA is being termed by some experts a 3.5G standard.

HSDPA, which stands for High-Speed Downlink Packet Access, is just beginning to deploy, but it's already in a fight with other next-generation standards such as CDMA2000, UMTS/W-CDMA and EV-DO, which are based on the favorite U.S. cell phone standard CDMA.

HSDPA is currently being rolled out in Europe and it's on the verge of being deployed in North America. Cingular is promising the new high-speed service to be up and running in their top 100 U.S. markets by the end of 2006. Rogers Wireless of Canada has also announced their plans for HSDPA rollout this year. EV-DO, which stands for Evolution-Data Optimized, has been available in the United States for a little more than a year. Verizon Wireless and Sprint are its main proponents.

The faster the connection the better the multimedia capabilities – and that means better looking wireless video for cell phones. So, it's no surprise that there have been a slew of announcements at 3GSM this year concerning cell phone video. Just a few to ponder:

- Virgin Mobile [announced it was launching a live TV service](#) for cell phones in cooperation with BT Group, the first of its kind in Europe.
- MobiTV and IPWireless announced they're developing solutions for cellular operators to migrate subscribers to TDtv – a system which allows an infinite number of customers to watch the same channel or use the same network space.
- InterVideo showed off its latest handset software running on advanced processors that includes live TV streaming on mobile phones and GPS devices.
- PacketVideo showcased live broadcast TV – including the first public demonstration of Texas Instrument's Hollywood mobile DTV single-chip processors.

- IPWireless also announced that Sprint will be the first operator globally to test the next generation of mobile broadband technology. The testing will be part of the ongoing UMTS TD-CDMA trial in the Washington, D.C area.

Of course, none of this comes easily. At the moment there are a number of different standards being proposed to get mobile video into your hand. That's why handset maker Samsung is hedging its bets.

Here at 3GSM, Samsung has introduced seven new handsets with mobile-TV functionality. The devices are compatible with four different mobile TV broadcasting systems: the Nokia-backed DVB-H standard, Qualcomm's MediaFLO, and both the terrestrial and satellite-delivered variants of DMB (already in use in Korea).

Nokia's impressive TV system

This is the second time I've been able to watch Nokia's mobile TV system via their special new cellular handset. I'm happy to report that once again I've come away from the experience very, very impressed.

The N92 is Nokia's first-ever mobile TV device dedicated to viewing and storing mobile broadcast content, as well as accessing interactive services. In addition to being a cell phone, the N92 is truly a portable multimedia center. Nokia calls the capability "watch and record TV on the go."

It has an impressive 2.8-inch, QVGA (320 by 240 pixels) screen. There are 4-way media keys on the device which handle the built-in FM stereo radio, TV, video and music functions. The handset also sports stereo speakers, MP3/AAC/WMA music file support, 802.11g Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and a 2 megapixel camera.

The N92 is also a cell phone. The device operates on the GSM/EDGE 900/1800/1900 MHz bands as well as the WCDMA 2100 MHz band. The battery allows for up to four hours of talk or watch time before needing recharging.

I particularly love the fact that the Nokia has an electronic programming guide – similar to what you might have on your home cable/satellite system. Can't wait for the day when I program my home TV to record one show while I'm recording/watching something else on my cell phone.



The phones being displayed here at 3GSM are not futuristic, science-fiction-based pipe dreams. These phones are for real. They are what multimedia devices will look like in the near future. The N92 is slated for release later this year. Mobile TV handsets may not take the exact same shape or form factor as current phones (see the photo of the Nokia 7710 for another example of this), but a number of future cell phone designs will be able to do a lot more than make/receive calls.

In original testing in Nokia homeland of Finland, the video service was offered for 5 euros (\$6) per month for all the video you wanted to watch. I hope it's offered at similar prices by the time it gets to the United States. It's fun to test these hot, new cellular features but I'm not sure how much I would pay for the experience. How many users would be willing to pay exorbitant video fees – fees that might rival your monthly cable bill? That's something cellular carriers must consider.

Until these new features are ready for use in the United States, I'll stick with my current cell phone video solution. I've been playing with the soon-to-be-released [Slingbox player software for Windows Mobile 5.0 smart phones](#). I have to tell you, being able to watch local hometown news, weather and sports highlights on your cell phone when you're thousands of miles from home is very, very addictive.

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