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Dear Mr. Fowler,

I want my HD-TV! The enclosed editorial comes very close to my opinion. Specially when it says, "Let's adopt a broadcast, cable and video system truly superior to what we have, whether or not it's fully compatible with NTSC" (Video Magazine, Feb 1988.)

As Chairman of the FCC you can be influential in advocating HD TV. I hope that you will give very serious consideration in requesting engineers, broadcasters, TV makers, etc. to change over to high definition TV.

With the very greatest of respects
Ronald W. Burchett

Ronald W. Burchett
626 13th Street
Ashland, KY

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High definition dilemma

When it comes to high technology, the best is sometimes too good. High definition TV is a painful case in point. As Contributing Editor Bob Angus points out in this month's cover story, "The War Over Video's Future," true HDTV is a videophile's dream: it can deliver an image so fine—via satellite, broadcast or videotape—that it approaches the limits of human perception. The reality: it's practical only for production, not transmission. What's worse, however, is that even the better advanced systems just below HDTV quality may be unavailable to viewers in the United States.

Tied by economic considerations to the archaic NTSC broadcast system that was a compromise when it was created some 40 years ago, we are, in fact, years behind Europe and Japan in our willingness and ability to deliver quality video to consumers. Two advanced satellite systems far superior to NTSC—D2-MAC and MUSE—are already underway in Europe and Japan. Compared to their audiences, we are like children standing out in the cold, looking in on a brightly lit party—which we can't join.

We're still hoping, of course. U.S. engineers are working frantically to develop a TV system that delivers a superior wide-screen picture that's both compatible with the NTSC broadcast standard and cost efficient. What they're delivering so far, however, is a crop of interim systems, each better than NTSC but pale by comparison with MUSE and D2-MAC.

The good news is that the obsession with picture quality brought on by Super VHS and HDTV will spur continuing refinements in picture quality on all fronts. (See also this issue's "Big Screen Breakthroughs" for the latest advances in projection TVs.) The bad news is that the practical obstacles facing most advanced TV systems are immense. (Given the stubborn endurance of nationalistic attitudes, we can also kiss goodbye any likelihood of a worldwide standard for VCRs or terrestrial broadcasts.)

Yet it's clear that some new system is inevitable here. It may be only a couple of years away, but we urge decision-makers not to compromise too much. Let's adopt a broadcast, cable and video system truly superior to what we have, whether or not it's fully compatible with NTSC.

From

Video Magazine Feb. 1988

Judith Sawyer