

ORIGINAL
FILE

SEP 21 1988

Mr. David B. Gorman
801 79th Street, #304
Darien, IL 60559

Dear Mr. Gorman:

I am in receipt of your September 15, 1988, letter which included comments and an attached article concerning the subject of HDTV.

Thank you for your interest in the matter. Your comments have been forwarded to Dockets Branch to be associated with Docket No. 87-268.

Sincerely,

Alex D. Felker
Chief, Mass Media Bureau

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OFFICE OF CHIEF

September 15, 1988
801 79th. St. #304
Darien, IL. 60559

Federal Communications Commission
Mass Media Bureau
2025 M Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Gentlemen:

I am enclosing an article on HDTV that appeared recently in The Chicago Tribune, with the hope that a final decision has not yet been made as to which system will be adopted in the United States.

I, for one, would prefer to have us select the system that produces the absolute best picture quality and detail, no matter by whom or where the system is developed (U.S., Japan, Europe).

This appears to be a once-in-a-lifetime decision, and I would be willing to wait an extra year or two, and pay a few dollars more for the best, rather than to be stuck with a second-rate system for years and years.

Very truly yours,

David B. Gorman

David B. Gorman
Encl.

Audio/video

FCC repeats the past in its ruling on high-definition TV

By Rich Warren

VIDEO/STEREO

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) strikes again! Last week it decreed that our future high-definition television (HDTV) system must be compatible with our existing TV system. In a single stroke the FCC ruled out both the Japanese Muse Hi-Vision system and the European HD-MAC system.

George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." To understand the significance of

this FCC decision, a brief review of history is in order.

At the dawn of television in the U.S. in the late 1940s, engineers feverishly worked on developing a color TV system. The National Television Standards Committee (NTSC) ultimately recommended the RCA system, which was then mandated by the FCC. The FCC chose the RCA system because it was compatible

with black and white, even though at that time TVs numbered only in the thousands. Europe waited and ultimately opted for an incompatible and far superior system. Europe solved the problem of compatibility by simultaneously transmitting both the old black-and-white system and the new color system simultaneously on separate broadcast bands for a number of years.

We also suffer with a second-rate FM-stereo transmission system, although Europe followed us on that one. The FCC decided that monaural radios must

be able to receive stereo broadcasts, so it chose a system that compromised the quality of the stereo sound. That's why if you're receiving a noisy stereo broadcast and you switch the radio to mono, it sounds better.

This time, rather than set aside new frequencies in the broadcast spectrum for HDTV, the FCC said that at the moment, if additional spectrum room is required, it can be found within the present television bands. That works nicely for the FCC, since it decided that HDTV transmission must fit within the

6-megahertz bandwidth of our present TV channels.

The FCC further said that allocating new frequencies outside existing television bands would stall HDTV, and—here's the real reason—that those frequency bands suitable for HDTV are now used for other purposes. In other words, the commission is in no mood to juggle frequency allocations. The people talking on cellular telephones don't want to give them up for an HD version of "thirtysomething."

RCA has already unveiled a compatible HDTV system known as Advanced Compatible TV. However, when I viewed it at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, it appeared no better than Super VHS. While admittedly better than our current system, it's still a far cry from the Japanese Hi-Vision system.

Zenith timed its introduction of an Advanced TV (ATV) system with the FCC announcement.

Neither the FCC, RCA, Zenith nor the many other individuals and companies proposing ATV systems can bend the laws of physics, summed up by the old phrase, "You can't get something for nothing." Improving definition means adding information to the TV picture. That information requires a greater bandwidth. NHK, the national broadcasting company of Japan, which designed the Japanese Hi-Vision system, deemed a minimum of 8 megahertz necessary (compared with our 6 megahertz). I have viewed the Japanese system, and it is stunning. We should not settle for anything less.

The entire issue seems tainted with Japan-bashing. Some pundits feel that if we develop our

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FCC

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own HDTV system, then American companies can get the jump on manufacturing sets for it. Without our market, sets made by the Japanese for the Japanese system will be more expensive for the Japanese, since they won't be able to enjoy the economies of scale that selling to the North American market entails.

Conversely, if the Japanese must make different sets for Japan, North America and Eu-

rope, then our sets might be more expensive, too.

Both European and Japanese companies continue working on adapters that would allow their systems to be viewed on conventional American TVs. Of course, you would not see a high-definition picture on a conventional TV. Since Europe and Japan will begin HDTV broadcasts next year, the U.S. will also be last. After all, we're still arguing about a system. If the FCC takes as long as it did on FM stereo (or makes no decision, as it did with AM stereo), then it might be the next century before we watch broadcast HDTV.

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