

VIDEO: Getting your internet videos onto your audience's TVs

There's no substitute for watching telly on the sofa, which is why the market for products that broadcast internet video to TVs is so exciting.

A few years ago, if you wanted to get the video you'd created into people's homes and onto their TVs, your options were limited. If money was no object, you could set up a TV channel and broadcast directly to their living rooms, but that wasn't an option for most budgets.

The internet and broadband have changed all that and, with a little know-how, you can create an on-demand library of video that viewers can tap into over the internet. It's not quite the TV experience you have in your living room, but at least your audience can easily access your programmes.

YouTube is a bottomless pit of video content and it won't cost you a penny to host your creations there. Every minute,

24 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube and each day visitors to the site watch a total of two billion videos. In addition to YouTube, there are countless other sites out there that will host your content and not charge you anything for it.

The big problem with video sites, however, is that they're websites. That's fine if you're sitting in front of a computer, but mostly invisible if you're relaxing in front of your TV in the lounge. The adventurous out there may have a computer hooked up to their telly, but they're far from the norm.

However, this is all set to change, thanks to a range of devices that effectively connect your regular, technology-limited TV up to the internet so you can tap into all the video content out there. Getting videos you've produced onto viewers' TVs is the final link in the chain that makes it possible for anyone to effectively start their own TV channel, but without the exorbitant cost that was previously required.

The new, super-small Apple TV is Apple's second attempt at the TV market. While it doesn't offer much more than the previous version – and even less in some cases, as it no longer has an internal hard drive – the most significant change is its price: just £101 (£84 ex VAT). That may be a fair bit more than the \$99 (about £64) it sells for in the US, but it's still pretty cheap.

The lack of internal storage means the new Apple TV only streams content rather than downloading it, but when it's connected

to a suitably fast internet pipe, this shouldn't be an issue for on-demand content.

Getting your videos onto the Apple TV is just a case of creating a suitable podcast feed and submitting it to iTunes. Viewers can then browse the available podcasts from their device and stream content up to 720p directly to their TVs. There's also built-in support for YouTube, although navigating through the wealth of content via a simplified TV interface means there's less chance

'Google TV is based on Google's Android mobile phone OS and is designed to run on a set-top box or be integrated into a TV set'

that viewers will actually be able to find your videos compared with the more structured iTunes area.

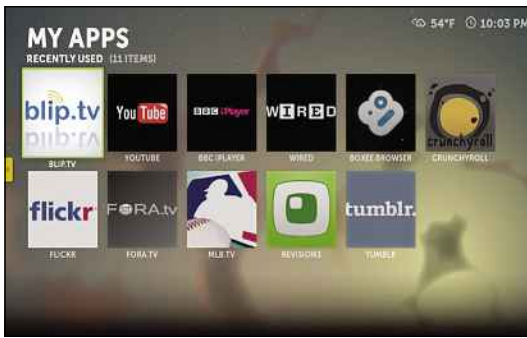
Also looking to earn a place in your living room is the Boxee Box. Boxee is a media player designed to make the process of getting video from the internet onto your TV as painless as possible. Anyone can download the software and install it for free, but that obviously means hooking up a computer to your TV again. The Boxee Box



Will Head is co-founder and director of Fixation Video – an online video production company that specialises in making video content for the web.

▼ **Apple TV is an easy way to access internet content on your TV, provided it's available in iTunes.**





▲ Boxee lets content providers create their own apps, making it easier for viewers to find their shows.



▲ YouView, previously known as Project Canvas, is designed to be the equivalent of the Freeview service for internet video.



▲ Some of Sony's TV models come with Google TV built in, which means you can access web video content straight from the main menu, with no extra hardware required.

made by D-Link, however, is a standalone device that runs Boxee so you can watch internet video on your TV. Its 'sliced cube' design is also pretty eye-catching.

Boxee supports media RSS (MRSS) feeds, so making your video content available isn't massively difficult, but you may need to do some tinkering. Boxee also supports dedicated apps, so if you really want to make your content stand out, you can create your own app to showcase it. This is definitely a more involved process, but if you like a challenge, you can find all the information available at developer.boxee.tv.

If that sounds like a lot of hard work, video host blip.tv supports distribution to Boxee through its own app. Your content will still have to fight it out with the other providers on there, but there's significantly less competition than on YouTube, for example. There's also a YouTube app, which provides another way to get your content onto Boxee. However, like the Apple TV, it's not the best interface for searching.

Google is also hoping to extend its reach from your desktop Mac to your telly with Google TV. Currently only available in the US, Google TV is based on Google's Android mobile phone operating system and is designed to run on a dedicated set-top box or be integrated into a TV set. It was co-developed by Google, Intel, Sony and Logitech.

It's currently available in the form of a standalone box, called the Revue, from Logitech, or integrated into select Sony TVs and Blu-ray players. Since it runs Android, there's also support for third-party apps, although creating a suitable app for your content will require programming skills.

Google TV doesn't support third-party apps at the moment: you'll need to wait until next

year for that to happen. In the meantime, though, you can create a Google TV optimised website that users can load using the built-in browser. This uses regular web standards and you can find in-depth information on making your site look good on Google TV at code.google.com/tv/web.

Google TV is still in its very early stages, but there's lots of potential in the future for providing a very slick consumer experience, although it's likely to be more complicated than just creating a regular RSS feed.

The service that has the most potential for providing a direct path to viewers' homes is YouView, which is set to launch sometime next year. Previously known as Project Canvas, YouView is a set-top-box platform that combines traditional Freeview channels with on-demand content from the likes of the BBC's iPlayer service. Rather than just being a dedicated box for iPlayer, the idea behind it is to create a standard for internet television services in the UK so that anyone can release content on it.

It's effectively a Freeview box with an internet connection, so viewers can either watch live channels or stream shows directly from the net. It's designed to be an open platform, so in addition to content from big broadcasters such as BBC iPlayer and 4OD, independent producers can also create their own channels.

If all goes to plan, then YouView will effectively be

► **The Boxee Box is a distinctive-looking device that runs Boxee's media software and attaches straight to your TV.**

an internet-enabled version of Freeview, so boxes will be readily available from many manufacturers and consumers will be able to pick them up in high-street shops. This creates a huge potential audience.

As the platform is still in development, the process of getting your videos onto YouView has yet to be published. However, you can register for updates and apply to be included in the development and testing at youview.com/engage.

Just as satellite and cable changed the UK's TV landscape from four channels to hundreds, internet video will expand it again to an almost limitless amount of on-demand content. There's already a direct way to get your video in front of viewers' Macs, but in the next year you'll be able to easily make it available to their TVs as well, and it won't cost anywhere near as much as launching your own traditional TV channel.

