

D.I.Y. TV

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Want to be on TV? Ever thought about running your own TV channel? Welcome to the world of bedroom broadcasting using little more than web browsers and half-decent Internet connections. You may have heard about video blogs (uploading diary clips to YouTube) and webcasting (broadcasting audio and video to web audiences), but here is a quick update on how easy it has become. A few years ago you had to be a major geek grrl to get the whole thing working but now that online video is mainstream, there are sites catering to fledgling producers and on-screen talent.

Start by grabbing a laptop with a built-in webcam and microphone. Next, get yourself a broadband connection so you can send audio and video smoothly out to the world. Register a free account on a streaming site (search for 'live broadcasting') and create your own channel. ustream.tv works well and provides an amazing array of tools within one webpage. If the thought of talking or performing live to camera is too scary you can still dip your toe in the water with pre-recorded clips. ustream lets you programme a schedule of YouTube clips, just like a TV producer, and play them through your channel. You just copy and paste the web addresses of videos. Build up to providing your own commentary like an MTV VJ. You can even cross live to a mate's show if they are on-air at the same time!

Expect to see an explosion in grassroots webcasting over the next couple of years. The irony is that few of our local community analogue TV channels, the old-school TV, stream their content yet but neither did the previous government allocate them any channel in the replacement digital TV spectrum. Meanwhile in the US sites like hulu.com let Americans watch community and commercial films and TV for free. So why not give your community a lift and apply a little DIY know-how. Surely you have some ideas for a show... We live in the age of No More Excuses. Online streaming is a great way of bypassing television's traditional gatekeepers. Over time expect to see more specialist streaming outfits catering to the particular broadcast needs of different communities. rapspace.tv is a Toronto-based service that not only provides live video streaming but provides simple music instruments so you can create your own backing tracks.

Make sure your peeps know when you are broadcasting. Use free mailing lists (e.g. Google Groups) to plug your upcoming schedule. Use microblogging tools like Twitter so contacts know when you are on-air. If you are lazy, like me, use tools like ping.fm to update your blog, myspace, facebook, twitter, what have you, all simultaneously - "I'm on-air at the moment. <http://snurl.com/3n87o>". Snurl by the way is one of several tools for converting long web addresses into short text-able ones.

In 2006, in appreciation of 'user-generated content', Time Magazine's 'Person of the Year' award went to 'You'. So when is your show on?