

IPTV's Next Stop-Full-HD via STB

By Steve Sechrist

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While TV service providers muse over the unprecedented competitive and technology challenges ushered in by digital delivery and the advent of the Internet, a Video on Demand (VOD) company, MatrixStream (San Mateo; www.matrixstream.com) has announced it began shipping an HDTV set-top-box that promises delivery of Full-HD (1080p) content streamed over broadband to the home. The IMX 1020HD IP set-top box promises next generation IPTV that supports HD (720p) and even full-HD images from an ADSL connection.

To get to Full-HD streaming content, users will have to have 10Mbps broadband streamed into the home. While this is possible via higher-cost fiber optics or ADSL 2+ service, most home broadband connections today are via cable modem at around 6mpbs, which are plenty fast enough to support 720p feeds using H.264 compression and the company's secret sauce, according to Aaron Keogh, director of business development at Matrix Stream.

The company said its set-top box can deliver video on demand and streaming television channels instantly in up to 1920 x 1080 resolution over any "best effort" broadband connection with no quality of service required using their proprietary XMS technology, according to a company press release.

The set-top box is available for distribution as part of the company's end-to-end IPTV platform being offered to TV service providers. From there, existing programming or new content can be uploaded to the company server with DRM added for security and streamed via the internet to the IMX box in the customer's living room. "These sets are not going to be sold directly to the consumer, but rather - provided as part of a TV service package," Keogh continued.

The company specializes in VOD back-end services including offering streaming server technology and advanced middleware (called PUSHVOD) to get compressed video content over IP packets into their STB - fast. The IMX box was shown at CES using an IPTV over powerline solution, and the company has begun shipping units to service providers who are in field tests now, according to Keogh.

Pricing to service providers will be in the hundreds of dollars but end-users should expect to see the unit as part of a subscription package. The company puts the MSRP value at around \$300.

The IMX 1020HD box is yet another example of the push to use the internet as a TV and film content delivery medium direct to consumers' homes. MatrixStream has adopted the model of cooperating with TV service providers to enable not just standard TV viewing - but also to cross the line into HD and even full-HD content delivery over the fledging internet backbone. This adds fuel to the already hot debate of net neutrality and telco gate keepers, a critical topic we will re-visit soon.

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