

PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

Convergence hardware from ADS Tech

I recently attended the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. One of the themes that was prevalent at the show was the blurring distinction between our personal computer and our home entertainment equipment. Many of the computers on display feature the Media Center version of Windows XP, and the new Windows Vista, the replacement for XP due out later this year, which combines the functions of a PC with a home entertainment center. The apparent trend is for the continuing merging of computing and entertainment functions, which in industry parlance is referred to as "convergence."

Many manufacturers are contributing to this convergence, and one of the industry leaders is ADS Tech (www.adstech.com), of Cerritos, California. I have been fortunate to try several of its products recently, and came away favorably impressed.

The first product I tried was the ADS Tech Instant DVD+MP3 device with the model number USBV-711-EF. This slick looking device can be used for a variety of functions such as converting

VHS tapes to DVD or capturing data from a camcorder and recording it directly to DVD. For those of us with large collections of vinyl LP records (remember those?), and cassette tapes, this device can be used to record from the older media to the newer MP3 or WAV formats, using the included software (Nero SoundTrax and Wave Editor) to edit the audio, and removing noise and other defects in the audio, while burning to CD or DVD, or saving to an MP3 device. With this DVD+MP3 hardware it is relatively easy to recover music and other audio content from the obsolescent media, and save it digitally in an improved format, thus lengthening the life of the audio, while allowing it to be played on many of the modern players.

When used to capture video from almost any source of input, the output can be in the newer 16:9 widescreen format commonly used on widescreen TVs or the older 4:3 format used on older TVs. The chipset built into the DVD+MP3 device will encode the sound into 2-channel Dolby AC-3 audio, providing a quality stereo experience. Input to the DVD+MP3 from almost any older analog or newer digital device is almost universal, with color-coded jacks for the common RCA composite type of input, or the S-Video connector can



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This week's Web sites
<http://www.adstech.com>



be used. Output to the computer is via a fast USB 2.0 connection, which is downward compatible with the older USB 1.1 found on many older computers. An "Audio-Lock" technology enables perfect lip synchronization between the captured video and the audio, which was a problem on some older equipment that I had used in the past.

I have a lot of old VHS tapes taken when my kids were young, and these tapes are deteriorating. The hardware temporal and spatial video pre-processing filters remove much of the electronic noise often present in older VHS tapes. Once the video and audio is copied onto CD

or DVD, the images are clear, sometimes better than the original VHS tape! The video can be saved in a variety of formats to satisfy the user, including MPEG-1 and MPEG-2, playable on most video CD and DVD players. The video software included with the DVD+MP3, Ulead's Video Studio 9 SE DVD, can

be used to control the brightness, contrast, color saturation, and hue before burning to the media, or the "Direct-to-Disc" feature can be used to capture the image and video and burn it to CD or DVD in a single step. If desired, captured video can also be exported back to a VHS device for storage on tape.

ADS Tech's Instant DVD+MP3 device will run on most computers with a 1ghz Pentium or AMD CPU chip, with Windows 98SE, ME, 2000, or XP. It is available from most major electronics stores and online in the \$170-200 range.

Almost all of the thousands of TVs on display at CES

were capable of displaying the new HDTV standard, which our local TV stations are in the process of implementing. According to published statistics, 95 percent of all households in the U.S. can receive HDTV signals from at least one network broadcaster, and 85 percent can receive HDTV signals from three or more TV broadcasters. HDTV can often be received over the air for free, even if unavailable on cable. Many of us still do not have HDTV compatible TV sets, which typically offer resolution six times that of standard TVs, and the integral Dolby 5.1 audio on HDTV offers superior stereo sound. Many users are aware that our computer monitors are much higher resolution than conventional TV, but many are not aware that with an appropriate tuner and hardware, our computer monitors can receive HDTV, effectively turning our computers into a home theater system.

ADS Tech is now offering an internal PCI card, the "Instant HDTV PCI," compatible with most modern PCs with a 2.4ghz or faster CPU chip, and Windows XP (with Service Pack 2 installed), or Windows Media Center 2005 operating systems. A large hard drive (1 hour of HDTV requires 10 gigs of hard drive space), a good sound card (AC97 compatible), and an advanced video card are also

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WRITING LESSON BY RANDOLPH ROSS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

ACROSS

- 1 Constitution
- 8 "___ 70's Show"
- 12 Operating
- 17 "How dare they?!"
- 18 Darn it
- 19 Uranium-exporting country
- 20 Infinitives ... it's ___
- 23 Word we share
- 24 Daily Planet worker
- 25 Reach
- 26 Beverage served with le dessert
- 27 More, in music
- 29 Big fish, to a fisherman
- 31 Paleontologist's discovery
- 32 Frat party detritus
- 34 The passive voice ___
- 38 Agcy. once involved with fallout shelters
- 40 Carrier with HQ in Tokyo
- 41 Gift on "The Bachelor"
- 42 N.F.L. linemen: Abbr.
- 43 Ambiguity ___
- 49 Trip planning org.
- 51 Pub order, maybe
- 52 Rhetorical questions ... ___
- 57 Fantastic

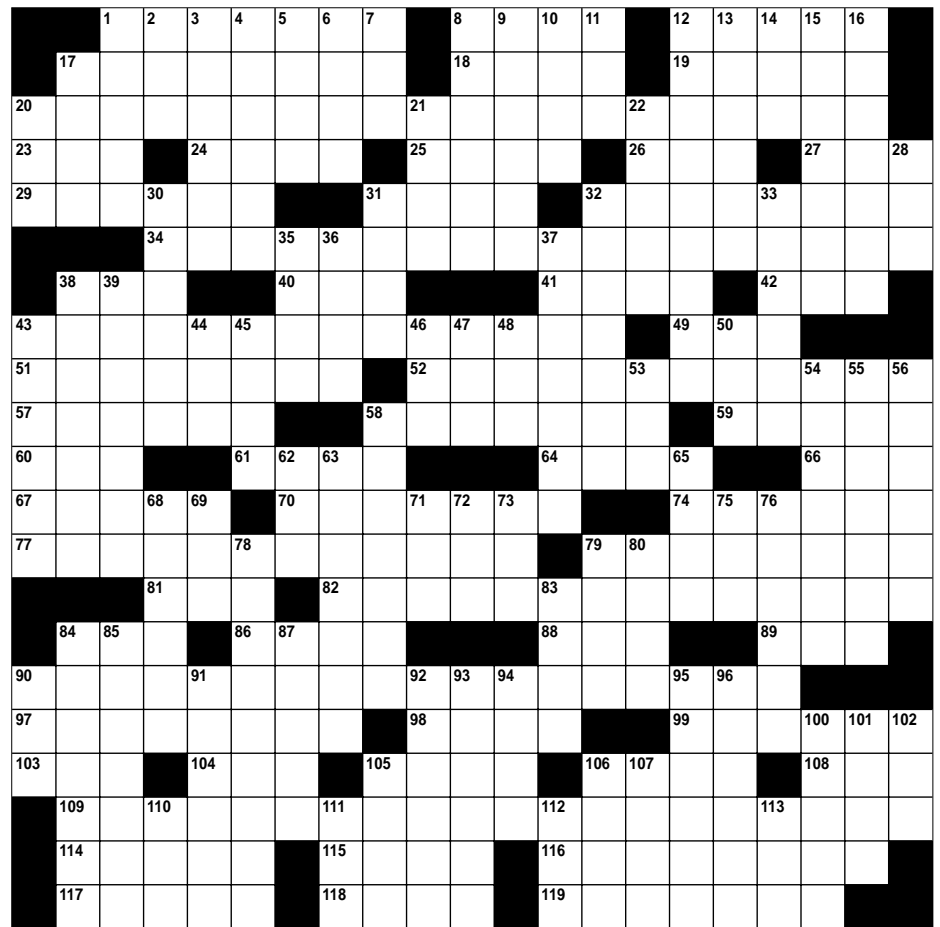
- 58 Author's desire
- 59 Pope after John X
- 60 Org. that rates members of Cong.
- 61 C-worthy
- 64 Cold capital
- 66 Latin foot
- 67 Meshlike
- 70 ___ Life ("Porgy and Bess" character)
- 74 1997 title role for Demi Moore
- 77 Subject-verb agreement ___
- 79 One in the fast lane?
- 81 Deface
- 82 Contractions ___
- 84 Show whose theme song is "Who Are You"
- 86 Shortstop Chacon of the 1962 Mets
- 88 Malodorous room?
- 89 84-Across ainer
- 90 Prepositions are not good ___
- 97 Sad poets
- 98 Creator of "All in the Family"
- 99 Mule alternative
- 103 Outworn
- 104 Scratch (out)
- 105 Not much
- 106 Daydreaming, say
- 108 Word said with a salute

- 109 Exaggeration is among the ___
- 114 Put back at zero
- 115 Ticked
- 116 Toughened
- 117 Macho types
- 118 Proceed slowly
- 119 Reporter's purchase

DOWN

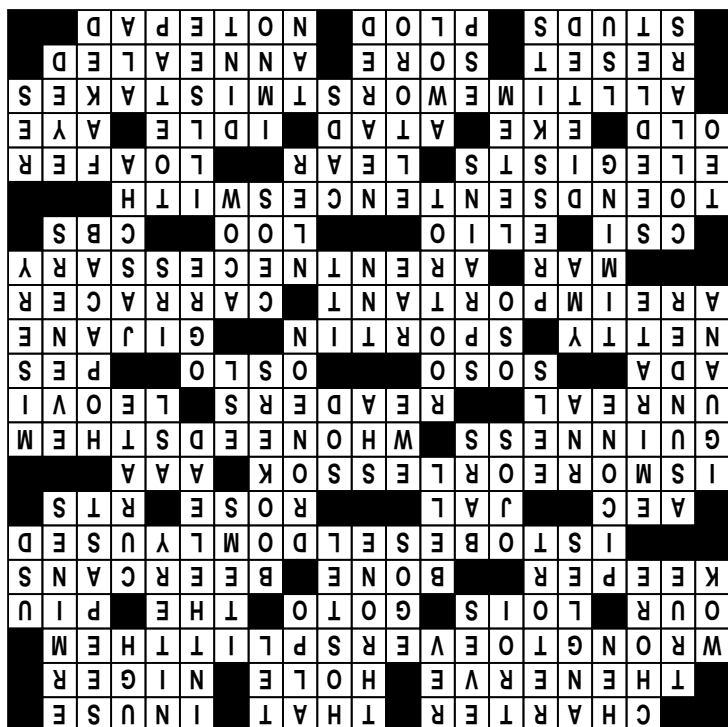
- 1 Vacuuming, e.g.
- 2 Setter
- 3 Perspectives
- 4 Comeback
- 5 Adviser of Capt. Picard on "Star Trek: T.N.G."
- 6 When to call, in some ads
- 7 M.L.K. Jr., e.g.
- 8 Seat of power
- 9 Inexpensive place to stay
- 10 Brand in a can
- 11 Bus. card info
- 12 Ahead
- 13 Bistro, informally
- 14 "I don't like it"
- 15 Overlook, as someone's weaknesses
- 16 Fine furs
- 17 Steadfast
- 20 Bowl-shaped pan
- 21 They may be stroked
- 22 Receipt listings

- 28 Mt. Rushmore State sch.
- 30 Apparel company Evan-___
- 31 Round end?
- 32 Part of a talk show staff
- 33 Work for a museum
- 35 Spanish eyes
- 36 Restaurant waiting areas
- 37 Lecture badly
- 38 In pieces
- 39 Abu Dhabi, e.g.
- 43 Creature in a Tennessee Williams title
- 44 Cellular stuff
- 45 Elusive swimmers
- 46 Member of the flock
- 47 Doo-wop syllable
- 48 Piece of property
- 50 Communication for the deaf: Abbr.
- 53 Night school subj.
- 54 Not hoof it, perhaps
- 55 Planes
- 56 Lowest state?
- 58 Tree trauma
- 62 Jardin zoológico attraction
- 63 Trainers treat them
- 65 Meanie
- 68 Comic's asset
- 69 Singer Sumac



- 71 "The Facts of Life" actress
- 72 Spike TV, formerly
- 73 Cousin ___ of "The Addams Family"
- 75 Collection agcy.
- 76 Heifetz heard at Carnegie Hall
- 78 Media handouts
- 79 Big suits
- 80 "Don't have ___!"
- 83 Pgh. Pirate, e.g.
- 84 Nabs
- 85 Tiny start
- 87 Wings hit "___ In"
- 90 Formula One driver Fabi
- 91 Lost on purpose
- 92 What a picador pokes
- 93 Got warm
- 94 Bad boyfriends
- 95 "Perhaps"
- 96 Do some fancy footwork
- 100 Counterfeited
- 101 Spotted
- 102 Hi-___
- 105 What a soldier shouldn't be
- 106 "___ Angel" (Mae West movie)
- 107 Force
- 110 Baton Rouge sch.
- 111 Medium ability?
- 112 Whip
- 113 ___ king

Crossword Solution



WILSKER

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necessary in order to maximize the HDTV viewing pleasure. The device I tested had the model number PTV-380-EF.

Installation is simple. Open the computer case (use caution, as some computer warranties may be voided if the case is opened), install the card into an available slot, and connect the card to an HDTV antenna, analog TV antenna or cable input, and then install the software. Another jack on the back of the card is for an included IR (infrared) receiver for use with the remote control, which is also included in the package. If standard analog cable is available, this PCI

card can also be used to receive standard cable TV and show it on the computer screen, with the sound played through the computer's sound system. Live TV can be time-shifted, paused, rewind, and fast-forwarded, as it is optionally written in real-time to the hard drive.

The software included with the Instant HDTV PCI includes SnapStream's "Beyond TV Express" program guide that displays a directory of programs, which is updated daily. This software can also be used to schedule programs for recording. The bundle also includes "NeroVision Express," a full featured DVD

recording and editing utility capable of compressing the HDTV recorded on the hard drive to fit on a DVD. The NeroVision Express supports the 16:9 widescreen video format and Dolby Digital Audio. The NeroVision Express can also be used to schedule recordings.

ADS Tech Instant HDTV PCI is available locally in the large electronics stores and online in the low \$100 price range, and epitomizes the current trend toward convergence.

With products like these from ADS Tech, it is obvious that our computers may become the center of our home entertainment.