



HD ready, Full HD, TrueHD, HD Master, 3DHD. Confused yet? Don't feel alone. With the proliferation of so many marketing terms trying to court customers, it's become clear that most people haven't the foggiest idea of what to make of this plethora of marketing indoctrination.

The pursuit of ever increasing levels of detail stems from our quest for making our entertainment so lifelike that we cease to be spectators and become participants. More than 100 years ago we invented moving pictures. Soon thereafter we added audio to these pictures. Then followed colour. For a long time it seemed that we were at the final frontier, but we also noted that our TV pictures were not exactly like what we see in real life. This brought about the search for ways and means to improve the accuracy of our TV pictures and ushered in the development of higher definitions.

Let's look at the facts. Normal SDTV (Standard Definition) has a resolution, or definition, of roughly 500,000 pixels, or bits of detail that make up the image. HD ready was the first attempt at significantly increasing the amount of detail that we see in our pictures. This specification took the level of detail to just over 1000,000 pixels per image. Roughly twice as much detail as before. Soon thereafter followed the so called "full HD" specification which again doubled the level of detail in a picture to 2000,000 pixels per image.

With the help of many willing satellite suppliers and movie studios, we have all been subjected to multiple advertisements informing us of HD movie pictures. A lesser known fact is that audio has followed a very similar route. For 30 years we have had CD or similar new digital recording media. The marketing media machine very successfully convinced us of how brilliant these formats were and that we had at our disposal "perfect sound forever", as the CD launch tagline famously announced. Little did we know it was much more a case of "reasonable sound with a longer life than an LP"! Subsequently we have seen many advances in the storage of audio. They are considered advances because they increase our access to music, make our lives easier and makes it easier to share and distribute music. Unfortunately, virtually none of the new technological developments actually increased sound quality! Quite contrary. Luckily the progressive march of digital technology is relentless.

This finally brought us to a position where we have the means to record, store, distribute and replay audio in much higher resolution than ever before. As a means of comparison, CD as a means of consumer audio format, holds just enough audio bandwidth to cater for human hearing. It can also realistically record the dynamic range (differences between softest and loudest part of a recording)

of a symphony orchestra. While this was sufficient 30 years ago, it is sorely lacking in modern terms. And don't be fooled, DVD is actually significantly worse!

Enter BluRay disc. This format was conceived purely because increased levels of detail and definition requires more storage space and conventional DVD just wasn't up to the task. CD holds a maximum of 700 Megabytes of data. DVD holds approximately 15 times as much with just over 9 Gigabytes of data. BluRay currently holds ten times more than DVD with about 100 Gigabytes of data. That literally translates into the ability to store movies with four times more detail in the picture and even more than that in terms of audio.

So with screens that have the ability to display these high quality, highly detailed images and a carrier format that can hold all the necessary data, full HD (High Definition) entertainment became a reality to the consumer. This leads neatly to the next, and possibly most important, question. Should you care? Will it actually make a difference in a normal TV watchers' life? The answer is actually very simple. Absolutely, without-a-question, most definitely yes!

Differences compared with "normal" or standard Definition TV is startling to say the least. The increased quality is immediately apparent and self evident. Even with HD audio where people often argued that CD quality is fine and that they can't hear the differences anyway, it is immediately blaringly obvious, just how much better HD audio is over what we have become used to.

Availability has frequently been the Achilles Heel of any (and almost all) new formats, but not so for HD. We already have a number of HD channels broadcast in South Africa, with more added every month and yet more to follow. BluRay discs are distributed widely and have the support of massive back catalogues from industry power houses such as Sony Pictures.

So is this it? Is this the final frontier of digital home entertainment? Far from it. This month see the launch of 3D HDTV. Yes, you read correctly. TV not only in full high definition, but also in 3 dimensions! TV with actual depth in the picture! Following the recent success of movies like Avatar and Alice in Wonderland, the full 3D experience is soon to hit the consumer market! Test broadcasts of football matches have already taken place and have been extremely favourably received. Also, soon there will be dedicated 3D BluRay movies.

At the moment the public will be only able to see 3D TV at specialist retailers like Audiovision. Choosing the right retailer is absolutely essential, even if the purchase seems inexpensive. This is not only because of improved service levels, but mainly because of the trained staff who can give accurate and essential advice. Most consumers are bullied into a purchase by marketing making them believe something to be true or desirable. This often turns out to be completely wrong and causes consumers to loose, or misspend, many thousands of Rands.

A retailer like Audiovision only sells goods obtained from the registered South African agents who can back up their products with prompt and efficient after sales service.

Another massively important aspect of buying from specialists retailers like Audiovision is that their staff receives a complete training course at the Audiovision Academy before any sales person is allowed to serve customers on the sales floor. Further to that, all sales personnel receive frequent training seminars from their suppliers to keep them abreast with cutting edge technology.

