**The Story So Far**

The idea of a machine able to broadcast both sound and vision goes back to 1875. But it wasn't until 1926 that a Scottish engineer turned the idea into a practical reality. Now, his in­vention dominates the modem media. This is its story.

John Logie Baird produced the first television pictures just eight years after the First World War. They were in black and white and were not very clear, but he had proved that the prin­ciple worked. Early sets made in the years of Baird’s break­through cost as much as a small car and not many were sold. Soon, though, his original system was improved and in 1936 Britain's first regular TV programme went on the air. "Here's Looking At You" was broadcast by the BBC from north Lon­don's Alexandra Palace studios twice a day for a weekly bud­get of one thousand pounds. But Great Britain wasn't the only country producing programmes. Other European nations, in­cluding Germany, were also involved in the early days of television. As, of course, was America — and it's there that the real TV revolution began after World War Two.

US television boomed in the late '40s. Commercial stations began to open in almost every city, and national networks made programmes which were seen from coast to coast. One of the American networks — CBS — even developed a colour service as early as 1951. Two years later, TV took another important step when it covered its first major international event — the coronation of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. It was the first time that a worldwide audience of millions had seen history take place in their own homes.

By the end of the decade, TV culture was rapidly becoming a fact of life on both sides of the Atlantic. Even so, it was still a very young medium — lots of people didn't have sets — and many experts thought it wouldn't last. That all changed in the '60s and '70s, though, as television started to satisfy the pub­lic's desire, not just for entertainment, but also for rapid, accu­rate information. As more and more sets were sold, the impor­tance of TV news quickly grew. After all — what other medium could show you live — asTV did in 1969 — Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon?

Since 1980 there have been five more major developments. ***The******first*** was video, which gave viewers the power to control what they watched and when they watched it. ***The second*** was satellite TV. Thanks to DBS (direct broadcast satellites), dozens of new channels are now available to anyone who buys a receiving "dish". Many of these new, channels spe­cialize in one kind of programme — *e. g.* news, sport, cartoons, music, movies. ***The third*** development is cable — a system of hi-tech wires, which provides even more channels... at a price. ***Fourthly,*** there's HDTV (high definition television), which now offers a much clearer and more realistic picture than was possible years ago.

So ... more channels, more choice, more clarity. And ***finally*** there is two-way communication. Modem technology of the twen­ty-first century which is called "hyper-media". Televisions are linked to computer data­banks. This way, viewers are able to choose what to watch, they can also ask questions (via re­mote control) about what they're watching and the answers appear on their screens. So, as we've just seen, TV has come a very long way in a very short time.