
Subject: Goodbye TechTV and Sony Clie
Posted by [spreegem](#) on Thu, 03 Jun 2004 21:14:42 GMT
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I got an E-Mail today and this is what the contents were. Please forward this to all of the people you know who used to watch TechTV

A Lamentation for TechTV

It's a fact of high-tech life: things move fast. Don't fall too much in love with anything, because it might not be here this time next year.

Like Sony's innovative Clié palmtops, which Sony announced this week that it will no longer sell in the U.S.

Or like TechTV, a cable station dedicated to technology lovers. For years, I've regularly TiVo'ed several of its shows < especially "The Screen Savers," "Call for Help" and "TechLive" < and then, by fast-forwarding, cherry-picked the best tips, tricks, news, trends and Web links. I learned something new every time.

Last Friday, TechTV as we know it disappeared. It was swallowed up by Comcast, the cable-TV giant, who has merged TechTV with its own G4 channel (all video games, all the time).

The new, combined channel, called G4TechTV, will include some of TechTV's shows in a new form. But several shows have been canceled, including "Call for Help" and "Tech Live," and the hosts of the remaining shows may be replaced.

The timing couldn't be worse. After struggling for years to get into the channel lineups of the nation's cable and satellite providers, TechTV was finally making some headway and building a following. (The Times wrote about "Call for Help" as recently as December, in a story about its live, 24-hour "Help-a-Thon.")

But for whatever reason, Microsoft co-founder and billionaire Paul Allen, whose Vulcan Programming company owned TechTV, put the channel up for sale. (Insert joke about Paul Allen needing the cash here.)

Comcast is trying to put a bright spin on things, proclaiming "G4techTV will be the one and only network that is plugged into every dimension of games, gear, gadgets & gigabytes."

But behind the press release, you'll find a lot of very unhappy people. For starters, there are the 285 TechTV staffers whose jobs are being eliminated.

Then there are "The Screen Savers" (TSS) fans, who already miss original host Leo Laporte since his departure a couple of months ago, and may soon see the departure of his co-host, Patrick Norton. (A G4TechTV spokesman says only that the new channel is "in negotiations with several TechTV hosts.")

One laid-off employee told me that in pursuit of the young male demographic, Comcast has an incentive to replace these veteran computer-industry personalities with 20-somethings.

If that's true, I worry that we won't be seeing any more of TSS's trademark interviews with brilliant-but over-30-industry pioneers like Jef Raskin, Robert Moog, Don Norman and Douglas Engelbart.

In fact, you have to wonder what interviews and cutting-edge demos they'll offer at all, since Comcast is moving what's left of TechTV from San Francisco (high-tech country) to L.A. (video-game country).

Then there's the new Web site, G4TechTV.com, which is a blinking, pulsing organizational disaster. Its chaos doesn't say much for the show's new guardians, although the G4TechTV spokesman reminded me that the two channels merged only last Friday, on a holiday weekend. He assured me that the Web site will constantly improve.

The real tragedy is that a merged gamer-PC channel might not be any more likely to succeed than two separate channels did; in fact, you might argue that the combined channel will disappoint both constituencies equally. As one disappointed fan wrote on G4's feedback board: "They think they can attract a larger, younger demographic by just putting on younger faces. These people, however, will not feel the pinch until the ratings plummet down the road. It happened where I worked before.

"These fools would let an aging Robin Williams go to bring in Carrot Top. We can only hope that these short-sighted morons realize the errors of their ways and bring back Leo Laporte before the ratings take a nose-dive to the point where they decide to cancel G4/TechTV altogether."

In fact, G4TechTV is indeed in negotiations with Mr. Laporte about an increased role at the new network. Meanwhile, G4TechTV exhorts viewers to give the new channel a try, send feedback at its Web site, and be patient; the merged network will "constantly improve" over the next 12 months.

That may be so-but in the short term, at least, I'll miss my old on-screen friends at TechTV.
