



**THE FUTURE OF IPTV?** Many IPTV detractors say the average consumer will not want to interact with a computer in order to watch TV. But there are alternatives. MatrixStream says its IMX 1000 can provide IPTV with functionality and programming one expects from a cable box. Maximum output resolution is 1080-line progressive (1080p) high-definition, with Dolby Digital surround sound. (Of course, the picture quality you receive will depend on the quality of your broadband Internet connection.) Unlike a cable box, though, the IMX 1000 does not tether the user to a local service provider; the IPTV provider can be located anywhere in the world.

Beyond those features, Brady mentions more Web-oriented IPTV concepts, including affordable videoconferencing, so that home-based businesses can have the same capabilities as large corporations. Another likely feature is the ability to record and view shows remotely, via laptops and even cell phones. However, a version of that capability already exists thanks to the Slingbox, which debuted in late 2005. Slingbox is a set-top box that works with almost any existing satellite receiver or cable box. With Slingbox, you can access whatever is stored on your home DVR from your laptop in a broadband-equipped hotel room or coffeehouse—or on your cell phone.

Of course, a big part of IPTV's potential is its ability to bundle together a variety of services, some already existing, into one easy-to-use (we hope) set-top box.

**VIDEO ON DEMAND: IPTV'S KILLER APP?** Unfortunately, more than half of AT&T's customers will not have access to the fiber-based network that powers AT&T's U-verse. Which is why the telephone company is launching its own competing service, dubbed Homezone, to which

80 percent of its customers should be able to connect. Unlike U-verse, which streams a couple hundred channels of traditional broadcast-style television across fiber, Homezone relies on EchoStar's existing DiSH satellite network for its broadcasting, adding IPTV-based video-on-demand to the service via AT&T's existing DSL networks.

For the satellite companies, services such as Homezone are a great complement. The technology behind DBS essentially prohibits video-on-demand, which is why DBS companies such as DiSH and DirecTV have pushed DVR technology, such as TiVo. Using Web-based elements to add video-on-demand gives DBS systems the ability to compete with cable.

Homezone's video-on-demand is powered by technology developed by Akimbo Systems. A start-up with approximately three and a half years experience, Akimbo has grown to offer over 11,000 shows in its current library, from sources including the BBC, CNN, National Geographic, the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, and iFilm. "Even the Tennis Channel and Major League Baseball, which is one of our biggest new partners,"