

CalgaryAV Quarterly

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This Quarter



Welcome to the 1st Edition of CalgaryAV Quarterly designed to educate and inform you about the latest in audio, visual, automation & lighting. This month we re-iterate a few of the reasons we encourage people to stay away from Smart TVs, and instead opt for other, more versatile products.

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Featured Product



Apple... some – let's be honest – MILLIONS of people love it; others hate it. At CalgaryAV, we like many of Apple's innovations – WHY? Because they work. Under the microscope this issue is the Apple Airport Express. This nifty wireless router comes in at about \$100, is easy (continued...)

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CalgaryAV Tech Tips



We know companies can be persuasive – and with multi-million dollar marketing budgets, you can bet they do their part to convince you that you need what they've got. Here are our own tips to help you decide what's best.

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HDTV For Free

CTV, Global, CityTV, CBC: How to cut the cord in Calgary & Airdrie

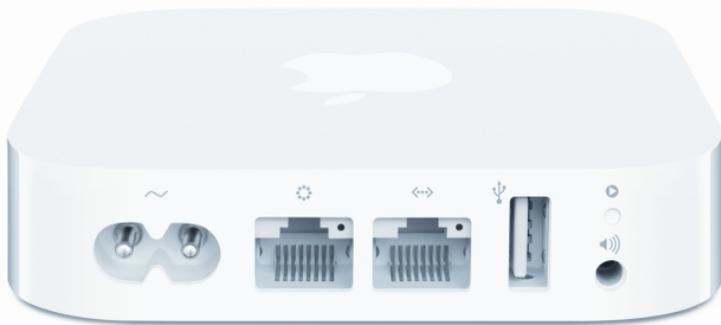
Do you find yourself watching more programming via on-line services such as Netflix versus live TV from Shaw or Telus? Did you know that you can get local HD channels for free?

We recently "cut the cord" and haven't looked back.

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Apple Airport Express

to setup, and provides good wireless functionality. Whether you're creating a new network, adding to, or just boosting your wireless signal, this device will likely do the trick for most.



The Airport Express boasts dual-band 802.11n Wi-Fi, integrated AirPlay (which is really cool because it allows you to stream audio wirelessly over your existing Wi-Fi network to connected speakers throughout your home from other wireless devices), and 2 Ethernet ports (1xWAN; 1xLAN) that can be used to hardwire this handy unit into your existing home network or to connect other devices such as network printers. Put your printer just about anywhere in the house instead of where your computer and network jack locations dictate. Apple has also built-in the option to create a guest network – so next time people come to visit, you can give them your guest network password without worrying about compromising your secure data and private network.

Small and sleek in its design, it fits nicely into any modern room and can usually be entirely hidden from sight if desired.

What the Airport Express is not? Its wireless range and overall performance is mediocre compared to some other products, however, for its price point it performs well. It also lacks a Gigabit Ethernet connection which has largely become a standard for the industry; and it does not support external USB storage devices.

Overall this product performs well, is simple, intuitive and should satisfy most.

(Continued)

Cutting the cord refers to getting rid of subscription based cable or satellite services. Since many people do not watch much live TV anymore, is there really a need to pay for a whole lotta channels that are probably not going to be watched?

Since cancelling our cable TV service, we're saving \$60 per month. You'll still need your high speed internet, however.

How do you get FREE HD? An antenna... simple... and they're available at just about any electronics store.

Right now, Calgary has 6 Over-the-Air Channels that you can watch. They are: Global (Channel 2), CTV (Channel 4), CityTV (Channel 5), CBC (Channel 9), CTS (Channel 32) and OMNI (Channel 38).

What's more?... the QUALITY is often BETTER than it is through your existing cable/satellite box because it doesn't get compressed and sent through an overburdened network. This means that you'll get full HD picture quality and Dolby Digital sound.

Multiple TVs? Also not an issue because the signal can be sent through standard coaxial cable splitters just like a normal cable signal.

Every house is different so the best area to place your antenna will vary from home to home. It will also depend on your whereabouts and if there is a clear signal in your area. We get excellent reception using a cheap antenna in an unused bedroom upstairs. There are many different types of antennas including flat ones that can go behind the TV and larger ones that can go in attics or be mounted outside.

There's also a couple different ways to get the audio through your home theatre system. For example, you can use the TV's tuner and send the audio out from the TV into the audio system via an optical cable; or via HDMI (with ARC (Audio Return Channel) if your hardware supports it). You can also get an external tuner capable of replacing your cable box.

One potential drawback of "cutting the cord" is that you may or may not have access to the channels program guide, depending on your hardware setup – some TVs have a built-in feature while others don't. Also, if you're a big sports fan, this may not be the best option for you. In general, live sports are not broadcast Over-the-Air. Unless the programs normally air on these channels you won't have access to them. You can, however, subscribe to several online channels (monthly fees apply) to get your sports fix if necessary.

Two online services that we use are: Netflix (~\$8/mth) (online content delayed significantly from its original release date); and Hulu Plus (~\$8US/mth) which is interesting in that it allows you to watch a number of shows the day after airing live on TV. While there are some hoops to get this service in Canada it may be worth the effort. Streaming online content on your TV can be done using a Smart TV (which we don't think is your BEST option but if you already have one...); an Apple TV (\$100) or ROKU (under \$100) for those "anti-Apple," and some Blu-Ray players that provide built-in apps. What you will need is a strong internet signal. Wired is best; wireless is OK. If you need assistance, we can help!



Why You Shouldn't Buy a Smart TV!

"Smart TV" is a term that we dislike. It doesn't really mean anything. All it really hints at is that the television connects to the internet and pulls in content from an online service such as Netflix or YouTube. If the Smart TV features just happen to be included with the TV and you aren't paying extra just for them, then sure, go for it! But don't specifically look for a Smart TV... and here's why:

- You can use an external device such as an AppleTV, Roku, game console or even Blu-Ray player to get the same kind of functionality. Most of these devices cost around \$100 and some even less. These devices also usually have better, easier to use interfaces, and work much more efficiently and probably have more features (AirPlay, iTunes interoperability, disc playback, etc.)
- If new services or formats get introduced in the future (and they always do) that your TV doesn't support... you're out of luck! You'll have to buy an external device anyway!
- Using a web browser on a TV (with a remote) is a nightmare! The best way to display web content on a TV is to send it from a tablet or computer to the TV wirelessly. This can be done with external devices such as the Apple TV.
- The Wi-Fi in the TV is probably pretty lame. Too much happening in a small, metal chassis.
- Ads! Many Smart TVs have ads or unwanted content all over the screen.
- Price! You're probably paying more than the \$100 these external devices cost for Smart TV features... so if you have the option to get the same display for less money without these so-called "Smart" features... then that's what we'd recommend.



CalgaryAV TechTips

- *A common mistake we see people make when shopping for cabinets to store their A/V gear, is that they only factor in the depth of the equipment itself. When all the cables are connected, however, it adds an additional 3-4" of space required. Make sure you factor this in when shopping for appropriate storage.*
- *When installing in-wall and/or in-ceiling speakers make sure that you take note of the location of nearby studs or joists. If you mark out the centre of the speaker too close to your framing you'll likely have to re-position it, which may leave unwanted holes in your drywall.*
- *For the "Do-It-Yourselfers" just a quick note about network wiring alongside power lines. Power lines interfere with your network signals in close proximity. Where you do need to cross them, try to run them perpendicular to each other to reduce interference.*

Did you know?

Just because you have an Android device, it doesn't mean you can't experience the benefits of Apple's AirPlay. There are several apps available for Android that make it easy to stream your music and other content from your Android device to your Apple TV or other AirPlay-enabled hardware.

<http://www.calgaryav.com/>

About CalgaryAV

At CalgaryAV we believe that Home Automation, Audio & Video should be as easy as

Touching, Hearing, Seeing & Feeling.

Serving the Consumer Electronics Industry, CalgaryAV has been helping people just like you make better choices.

- TV wall mounting
- Setup and Installation of Projectors and Screens
- Full-Home Audio Systems
- Home Theatre Design, Setup, and Installation
- Wiring
- Remote Controls, Automation and Control Systems
- Internet/Networking services



Above: A custom iRule control interface. iRule is an app that runs on iOS and Android devices and controls audio/video, lights, shades, and more. Drag-and-drop cloud-based setup and configuration means no “programming”, and no expensive or proprietary hardware is necessary.

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