

Preface

My years on the sales floor at an electronics retailer taught me that many people fear electronics. Just because you live in the world today and know what a DVD player is, doesn't mean you know how it works, how to set it up, how to use it. Mostly we all just fake a level of understanding; we don't ask questions because we think everyone else already knows it and we're the one left behind. You don't have to fake anything here. I know that people just turn on their TVs and hope for the best.

You may be getting by with your home entertainment. You call your son-in-law and ask questions when you need to learn something new, or you might call him again and again to remind you how you get rid of the green "3" constantly displayed on the TV screen. There's a benefit. When you buy new equipment, it does give you an opportunity to have them over for dinner and see your daughter. Or maybe you are a single woman (or even married) and you learned the damsel-in-distress-act works to get out of learning to do it yourself (and it makes your man feel important); but how do you feel when he's not around?

At some point, you and your TV will be left alone. You have equipment in your home that can give you news or entertainment. If you own the equipment it is certain that you will want to watch some show at some time. When that time comes, it will be you, the TV and the remote control (the stuff horror movies are made of).

It wasn't that long ago when watching TV meant hooking up rabbit ears or a rooftop antenna, pulling a button, and watching one of the 3 local TV stations. It has been barely 20 years since the introduction of Cable TV, and now they expect you to hook up 3 or more components, set up a home theater, and understand how to record without VHS tapes!

How can you expect to be anything BUT confused? When staring at 5 remote controls, buttons, menus, connections and cables, it is only natural to feel overwhelmed. I notice when I go into a store, or get a new remote control, that I have that same, 50-buttons-in-your-face panic. It's *because* I still allow myself to experience that feeling of overwhelm, that I can translate complex technology.

When I started writing this book, I planned to include it all. What I found was that, in this illustrated simple format, the book would have been 600 pages! Other guides to home theater come in at the same page count as this book, but they have *few pictures*. And the drawings they include are either for entertainment, schematics or technical charts. Therefore, I have split the book into volumes. This first volume covers general understanding, buying and hooking up your equipment. Other volumes in the series will be dedicated to setting up your equipment when you get it home and how to use all those features and remote controls, and to buying equipment.

Home entertainment is toys for adults. We have lost the fun in the complexity and frustration. My aim is to bring it back. My approach is to give short explanations accompanied by friendly and fun real life illustrations that you can relate to. We remember more when there's play involved. Although you can get an overall understanding by skimming through the book, you will probably want to clarify some of the information by reading the text. In the book, you will get the answer to many mysteries by telling you not only about the technology but about the history, politics, and economics that are behind why some products are designed as they are, and why HDTV is happening at all!

I've done my best to be simple and still a particular subject may just not make sense to you. If you find any part of this book confusing, feel free to e-mail us at info@home-electronics-survival.com. We'll be glad to help you out...