



Media Centres - What are they and what do they do?

Media centre PCs are quite the hot topic at the moment – at least amongst tech enthusiasts. But what on earth are they, why will they transform your lounge room forever and should you get one?



A tiny history of the media centre

The concept of a media centre began years ago with the advent of the 'home cinema', and the ongoing battle to keep up with the Joneses. In those days it usually involved a projector and a huge screen. The nerve centre of the operation was a large, cable-filled glass cabinet bursting with expensive and shiny equipment.

The problem was that only the teenage children knew how to turn the TV on and the budgets ran well into the tens of thousands and more – not ideal for most of us.

But how times have changed. Today prices have plummeted and technology has improved. So much so that the glass cabinet has been reduced to a size and a cost comparable to that of a standard desktop computer.

So what is a media centre?

A media centre is basically a computer that can be controlled from your armchair and performs the functions of your high definition television, DVD player, home stereo and video recorder. It can also play your MP3 music files or display your digital photographs. Put simply, it brings together all your media into a centrally-managed system.

A media centre uses a specialised operating system such as Microsoft Windows Media Centre 2005 that allows it to be controlled using a remote control or wireless keyboard. It is much simpler than a regular desktop computer and is designed specifically to display well on a TV or projector.

What's so good about a media centre?

Today, many people own a suite of digital devices such as iPods, laptops, digital cameras, mobile phones and more. As a result they store a vast number of photos, videos and songs on their computers. However, the only way to access it all is crouched over their computer screens or plugged into headphones.

The primary advantage of a media centre is that it allows you to access and share all this content from the comfort of your couch. You can get the crew together to watch videos or check out the holiday snaps on

a large screen or projector, and play your music on a home stereo rather than through your tinny computer speakers.

Another great feature of media centres is their recording capabilities. Instead of using VHS tapes or blank DVDs, a media centre can record television shows directly onto your hard drive. Recording TV show is as easy as selecting the show you want and clicking. Once shows are recorded you can browse through your recordings and select which ones you want to keep. Recording onto your hard disk makes it really easy to skip ads and watch programs when it suits you.

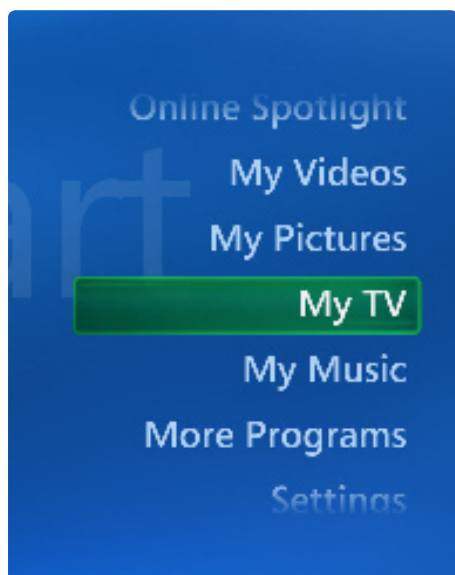
Where can I get a media centre PC?

A wide range of media centre PCs are available at most good technology retailers. If you need help selecting the right unit to suit your requirements, give us a call and we can run you through some of the key things to look out for.

If you decide that a media centre is definitely something you'd like to invest in, but want some expert help getting it up and running, Gizmo's Entertain Me! package is probably for you. It's designed to set up the media centre PC and teach you how to use it.

Check out our Entertain Me! package at www.gizmo.com.au/services/entertainme.html.

As always, if you have any questions, give us a call on 1300 275 449. We'd love to hear from you.



This article applies to:



Windows Vista

