



HANDS ON:

**TECHNICOLOR
MEDIATUNE**

HD SWITCHED MATRIX SYSTEM FOR DIRECTV

Everyone has heard of Technicolor.



Even if you haven't read our other articles about their COM1000 system, you've probably heard of the old cinema days of "Glorious Technicolor." They are a company that's been creating high-tech entertainment for almost 100 years, and they are also one of the largest manufacturers of DIRECTV equipment.

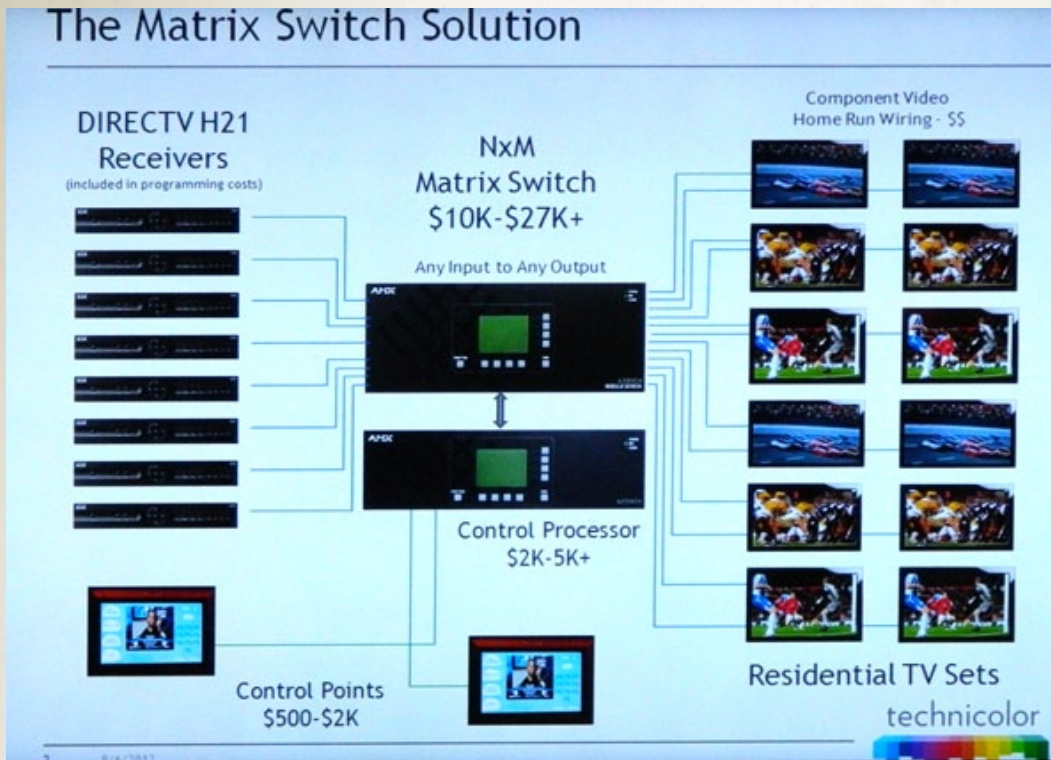
Until now, their COM1000 system has been used mainly in hotels and similar installations where there is a need for a single wire solution for multiple rooms. COM1000 offers the convenience of up to 24 tuners in a scalable system that takes up a small space in an equipment rack. It creates a "mini-headend" system where every TV can be tuned to its own channel without interfering with other TVs.

Now, Technicolor is prepared to move into bars and restaurants, bigtime. Their new MediaTune package creates an integrated web server, PC client and iPad app experience that changes the way people look at COM1000 and solves the biggest problem in bars and restaurants; changing the channel.

It's fair to say that Technicolor didn't just change the channel, they changed the game. Let's see what that means.



THIS IS A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM.



Sports bars have very specific problems. Generally, you have a lot of TVs in a very small space. This creates a nightmare for channel changing. The easy way out is to put a receiver behind every TV. This takes a lot of wire, and then you need a remote for every 4 TVs (DIRECTV's remotes control up to 4 components.) That means a big bag of remotes, sometimes

getting lost or stolen, and some very unprofessional time while someone finds the right remote, brings up a menu or guide, and changes the channel. It can be embarrassing, and honestly the employees are the ones who look bad.

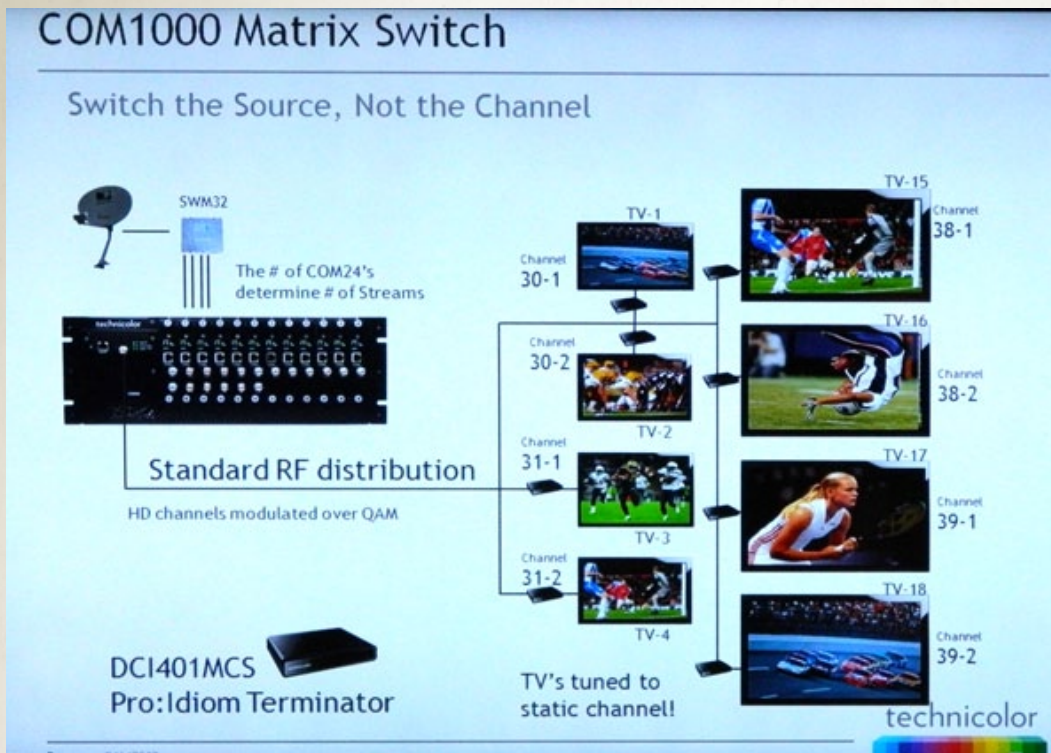
Another option is the use of a matrix switcher. A matrix switcher is a big, expensive box that does one thing: allows you to connect any receiver to any TV. The matrix switcher is great because from one central point, you can do anything. Your customers don't need to see you bring up the guide, just change the TV temporarily to look at another receiver and do what you want. Unfortunately as you see from the above graphic (courtesy of Technicolor) a matrix switcher is **EXPENSIVE**. It's too expensive for a lot of installation, and it takes extra cost to program, too.

Plus, of course, the matrix switcher and receivers are generally in a rack in a locked room, which means that there's a delay while someone in the bar gets the manager to open the door. Regular employees usually aren't trained on the matrix switcher, because of the chance of breaking something so expensive.

My friends at Technicolor have a better way.

MEDIATUNE:

THE MATRIX SWITCHER YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU



Starting with their COM1000 system, Technicolor engineers have turned the problem upside down. They start with a basic COM1000 system, which is pretty cool in itself. Then, they create a “virtual channel” for every TV. That TV stays tuned to that channel all the time, it never changes. The trick is, they let you change what’s on that channel.

Whaaaaaaat?

The COM1000 system is designed to put the programming from any input onto any TV channel. This is used in hotels so that DIRECTV channel 202 (for example) can go onto channel 11 on the hotel TV. The trick here is, here in a bar setup, each channel is on only one TV and you change what goes on each channel. It’s like having a receiver at every TV, but even better because you can control it all with a desktop computer, laptop computer, or even an iPad.

After the system is set up, launch a web browser or open the iPad app. You’ll see a list of what’s on now -- that’s right, the guide’s right on your screen -- and a map on the left side showing what’s on every TV. Changing what’s on any TV is as easy as dragging from the guide. Drag a program from the right to the left and drop it onto a TV, and that TV shows that program. There’s no fumbling for the right remote, no embarrassment as you search the guide, it’s cool and professional.

Look at these screenshots of Mediatune running on a PC and iPad on the next page.



MediaTune running on a PC in a browser window.



MediaTune running on an iPad.

THEY'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING.

I asked a few questions about MediaTune, and I got exactly the answers I was hoping.

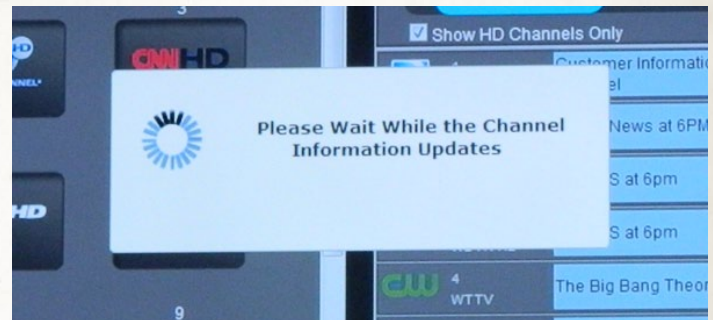
I know that the COM1000 system can have up to 24 tuners but what if I only want 4 or 8, and can I put the same program on multiple TVs?

If you have more TVs than tuners, you can easily share programming to multiple TVs by dragging the same program to different TVs. If you try to change the channel and you have all the tuners in use, you will get a conflict screen like the one at right. It will let you replace the programming on all the TVs that are tuned to one channel. You can also change just one TV in a group to show programming that is being shown on other TVs.



Are the program listings accurate?

The what's on now/what's on next listing updates every few minutes, during which time you'll see the popup window at right.



Can I search for programming?

If you don't know the exact name of the program you can search by typing as much as you know into the search box, as shown at right. The list will keep narrowing until you see the program you want.



MORE QUESTIONS?

What happens if more than one person wants to control the system?

Unlike a matrix switcher, you can have as many PCs or iPads as you need. Keep an iPad under the bar, a PC in the office, or put a laptop at the cash register. Each device is constantly updated with changes made by other devices, so it's easy to stay in sync. If you think about it, no matrix switcher or bag of remotes can do that trick.

What if I want to control my bar TVs from another location, or see what my patrons are watching when I'm not there?

It's... *not impossible*. The system is designed to work within the bar, so an IT person would have to set up a VPN to allow a computer from the outside to act like it was inside the bar. This isn't really a scenario that was shown in the demo.

WRAPPING IT ALL UP...

The folks at Technicolor deserve high praise for this system. It's still not cheap, but it costs less than a matrix switcher and has a lot more power. It makes your staff seem more professional and gives you the kind of control you used to dream of.

When you think about it, COM1000 is perfect for a bar. Even the most lavish sports bar installations rarely exceed 24 receivers, and remember with the COM1000 system it's totally scalable. Adding more tuners doesn't even take up any more space in the rack. Remember that every tuner in the COM1000 can tune to **any channel in your DIRECTV package** and show that channel on as many TVs as you want.

Remember also, a COM1000 installation is simpler than any other installation. Whether it's receivers behind the TV or a matrix switcher, you still need "home run" wiring -- a separate wire from the rack (or switch) for every TV. That can be expensive, especially for matrix switchers that use HDMI outputs.

Only headend systems like COM1000 can use a single wire with taps where they're needed. It's like wiring Christmas Tree lights, except each light is a television. The system we saw was set up by a few people in a single afternoon. You use less cable, fewer components, and you get a system that's more versatile. There's no downside!

Thanks to the staff at Technicolor who demonstrated this system, and to the folks at Average Joe's Sports Bar who hosted the demonstration.

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