



Technology is changing our views on television

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"GOOD evening and welcome to television."

Since those words were used to launch TV in Australia in 1956, we've had an enduring love affair with the box.

But the way we are watching television is undergoing radical change.

Rather than settle for what's scheduled, we're streaming or downloading our favourite shows or

movies from the internet and watching them at a time of our choosing, or hiring entire series from our local video stores and working our way through them at our leisure. We're also using our TV screen for gaming and social interaction on sites like Facebook.

"Originally we had very little viewing choice," said Professor David Rowe, director of the Institute of Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney.

"We had one, cathode ray TV and we sat down together to watch a

limited number of free-to-air channels. Now we have multiple LCD or plasma TVs in our homes, numerous channels, digital broadcasting, subscription programming and more," he said.

"The actual piece of hardware doesn't matter so much anymore. Content is the key."

At the same time, as overall viewing time by a wide spectrum of viewers continues to increase, TV is no longer

The days of asking 'what's on the box' are a thing of the past

the poor cousin to the cinema screen but a mecca for big-name talent.

An increasing number of film stars – Jeremy Irons, Steve Buscemi, Kathy Bates, Clare Danes, Sally Field and Laurence Fishburne to name a few – are transitioning to the small screen.

It's all good news for viewers and not such bad news for the networks, which are now choosing to advertise on social media or, increasingly, through product placement, said Prof Rowe.

Top TV shows of 2011

IT was a year of highs and lows on the small screen. From critically-acclaimed Australian drama to big-budget duds and everything in between, there has been plenty on TV to keep pundits and punters' tongues wagging.

Gruen Planet – ABC

The Gruen Transfer team can do no wrong. Gruen Planet, the show's second spin-off after 2010's Gruen Nation, covered all of those engrossing topics like the Qantas

grounding that were outside of Transfer's advertising theme. It's smart, funny, timely viewing that doesn't dumb-down its content. And where does Todd Sampson buy his T-shirts?

Downton Abbey – Seven

It looked like a show that should have aired on the ABC, and indeed it could have, but Downton Abbey would have been an underappreciated gem if not for Seven's platform and marketing. Who doesn't love spying on rich people and their problems? I can't wait to see what happens between Mary and Matthew in series two.

The Slap – ABC

Australian drama at its best, The Slap showcased the best in local talent from the novel's author to scriptwriters, actors, directors and crew. Who thought such an uncomfortable topic could make such an enticing read and such absorbing viewing.

Sons of Anarchy – Showcase

After its Irish sojourn in series three, which aired at the beginning of the year, this American bikie drama is returning to many of the big questions from the first two series in the fourth, currently airing on pay TV. The tension is building and you get the feeling things are soon going to explode.



... we'll also see internet protocol television that we will plug into a network cable instead of plugging into an antenna, physically streaming all our content to its screen.





Top-rating TV series on DVD

WHY wait a week for the next episode of your favourite show?

DVD stores say these boxsets are all hot rentals with fans:

- Downton Abbey
- Mad Men
- The Sopranos
- True Blood
- Underbelly
- Six Feet Under
- The Wire
- Deadwood





TUNING IN: Australians are watching more TV than ever, but the manner in which we consume it is changing.

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