

# channel highlights

by Michael Antonoff

## MOVIES

Now that high-definition channels are carrying lots of movies, the picture in your home theater can look even more theaterlike than it does with DVDs. The two most widely available premium movie channels are HBO HDTV and Showtime HDTV, which show many of their movies with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

HBO was scheduled to debut *Identity*, *Basic*, and *Head of State* in April and *The Matrix Reloaded*, *28 Days Later*, and *Down with Love* in May, among other titles. HBO Films offers *Strip Search* (April) and *Something the Lord Made* (May). Meanwhile, Showtime is set to premiere *The Italian Job* (shown below) and *A Guy Thing* in April; *The Wild Thornberrys — The Movie* and *The Four Feathers* in May; and *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* and *Abandon* in June. New Showtime Original Movies include *Coast to Coast* in April and *Stealing Sinatra* (photo at top right) in May.



Though relying heavily on older films, HDNet Movies is a reliable source for finding a high-def flick any time of the day, with surround sound if the movie has it. Among its spring and summer fare are *Mad Dog and Glory*, *Run Ronnie Run!*, *Three Days of the Condor*, *The Falcon and the Snowman*, and *Havana*. If older films are your thing, Voom offers ten at a time throughout the day on its exclusive Cinema10 channels, again with 5.1-channel audio if the movie has it (see "Satellite Services," facing page).

Recent movies show up more regularly on the high-def simulcasts of Cinemax, The Movie Channel, and Starz, but they're not as widely available as high-def HBO and Showtime. To get any of these high-def channels, you first need to sign up for the regular service, which typically brings you a group of, say, HBO channels.



That's why the least expensive way to watch high-def movies on TV is also the oldest way — by tuning in one of the commercial networks off the air. NBC sometimes schedules its movies on Saturdays, and so does ABC, often under the *Wonderful World of Disney* rubric, but also on Mondays when football is out of season. Several weeks ago, for example, Saturday night at the movies slotted the ingratiating *Shrek* on NBC against the bearded *Cast Away* on ABC. Both looked marvelously detailed and provided plenty of opportunities to get a snack.

CBS shuttles movies to the last two hours of its Sunday-night schedule, and they're often TV originals. *Helter Skelter* is scheduled for May 16 and *Reversible Errors* for May 23.

NBC has a miniseries set for May called *10.5*, starring Fred Ward, Kim Delany, and Dave Cubitt, about a major seismic disturbance hitting California. Sorry to say, NBC isn't known for using surround sound, and bass lovers are already rumbling that a TV earthquake without living-room shocks, let alone after-shocks, is another missed opportunity.

## SERIES

Beyond the regularly scheduled dramas and comedies on the commercial networks (see "A Week at a Glance," pages 64–65), cable and satellite channels are offering some compelling series in high-definition. Making a choice on Sundays at 9 p.m. is especially daunting as *Alias* (ABC) and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (NBC) go up against the season's closing episodes of HBO's top series, *The Sopranos*, followed on June 6 by new episodes of the critically acclaimed *Six Feet Under*. Also running Sundays on HBO through early June is the 12-episode Western *Deadwood* (shown above), but at 10 p.m.



The home of canceled HDTV series is HDNet. Thursday is *Danger* and *Drama Night*, and you can tune in *Robbery: Homicide Division* through May 6, *The Agency* premiering May 13, and *Queens Supreme* starting July 15. Mondays is *Comedy Night*, and it offers *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* (left), the funniest series ever about office life (to be seen in high-def for the first time), *In-Laws*, *Baby Bob*, and *Greetings from Tucson*. You can also watch *Hogan's Heroes*, a CBS series so old that color was still new during its first run, converted to high-def video from 35mm film.



Feeling nostalgic yet?

## SPORTS

Often cited as the top reason guys want their HDTV, sports programming in high-definition is rapidly expanding. *Showtime Championship Boxing*, seen on the first Saturday of the month at 9 p.m., began carrying all domestic fights in high-def and surround sound in February with a live telecast from Atlantic City. *Sunday Night Baseball* was scheduled to begin weekly at 8 p.m. on ESPN HD April 11 as the San Francisco Giants and home-run king Barry Bonds face the Padres in San Diego. ESPN's nightly *SportsCenter* will also be produced in high-def when the network's main studios move into its Digital Center this spring.



Major League Soccer fans can view live games on Saturdays beginning April 3 through the end of the season on HDNet. Basketball fans who get the TNT HD channel from Turner Broadcasting when it launches in May will want to tune in the NBA Western Conference Finals. The regional sports channels Fox Sports NY, MSG, and Comcast Sports Net are available in high-def on some cable systems.



NBC, which broadcast NASCAR's Daytona 500 in HDTV in February and is expected to show the Triple Crown horse races May 1 and 15 and June 5 in high-def, will also broadcast the Summer Olympics from Athens for 17 days beginning August 13.

## MUSIC

Music, the most personal kind of HDTV programming, may not be in as great supply as crime dramas or sporting events, but it's available if you know where to look. While the CBS broadcast of the Grammy Awards (Prince and Beyoncé at the telecast shown below) is an annual event available to nearly everybody, the one full-time HDTV music channel, Rave, is exclusive to the Voom satellite service.

Sunday evenings on HDNet offers *True Music*, a half-hour series of high-def concert footage, usually from the Hard Rock Café in Dallas, and band interviews by host Katie Daryl followed by the HDNet *Concert Series*. The latter has featured performances by Sting, The Cult, and Counting Crows.

An unlikely but reliable source of music, even if it features *only* hits from the 1960s, is interwoven on NBC's Sunday-night dramatic series *American Dreams*. Part of the show is set around Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, and the gimmick is that contemporary artists stand in for their fore-runners. So there was Chris Isaak decked out as Roy Orbison singing "Pretty Woman" and Jennifer Love Hewitt (shown at top) walking all over Nancy Sinatra's "Boots."

You can also find concerts and performances on iNHD and Bravo HD+.



## iNHD1 AND iNHD2

A joint venture of Comcast, Cox, and Time Warner Cable, iN Demand's two

iNHD channels offer an assortment of widescreen movies, concerts, and sporting events ranging from three live Major League Baseball games a week to the 100th U.S. Polo Championship, April 13 to 18 in Florida. The channels are

also carrying historical Olympics events. Don't be confused by iN Demand's name, which suggests video-on-demand. The channels broadcast programs according to

their schedule, not yours.



[inhd.com](http://inhd.com)

## BRAVO HD+

Broadcast separately from Bravo, Bravo HD+ provides a similar mix of arts and entertainment. You

won't be able to examine the fabrics and wallpaper glimpsed on Bravo's *Queer Eye* in fabulous detail since it's not shown here, but you can watch *The West Wing* (photo) up to three times a day, four days a week.

There's also *Music in High Places*, with artists such as Ryan Adams and the Goo Goo Dolls.



[bravotv.com](http://bravotv.com)



## DISCOVERY HD THEATER

Few high-def channels are as consistently pleasing to the eye as Discovery HD Theater. With much of its programming borrowed from sibling networks like Travel Channel, The Learning Channel, and Animal Planet, it has the benefit of presenting shows in widescreen high-definition and 5.1-channel surround sound. But some of the programming is unique, like the total solar eclipse broadcast live from Antarctica last November (to re-air in edited form this year).



*Eye of the Beholder*, a global journey about the meaning of beauty (left), will premiere in April and run through May. *The Blue Realm* (May and June) profiles creatures of the sea and their social behavior. High-def

cameras take you up close to sharks, octopi, squid, manta rays, and cuttlefish. And you thought you had a wild side.

[discovery.com](http://discovery.com)

## SATELLITE SERVICES

With the exception of CBS in some cities, the DirecTV and Dish Network local-station packages aren't available in HDTV. So if you want satellite channels and ABC and NBC in high-def, too, you'll need both a satellite dish and a conventional antenna (see "Antenna Basics," page 70).

The DirecTV HD Package (\$11 a month) includes ESPN HD, Discovery HD Theater, HDNet, and HDNet Movies. To get it, you also have to buy the Total Choice program-



ming package for \$40 a month, which includes a local-channel package and CBS

[directv.com](http://directv.com)

in high-def. HBO HDTV and Showtime HDTV are available in premium packages. And there's a high-def pay-per-view (PPV) channel with hit movies available for \$5 each. DirecTV's least expensive HD-compatible receiver is \$499.

EchoStar's Dish Network offers a basic \$25-a-month package of 50 channels. The HD Pak (\$10 a month or \$110 a year) includes ESPN HD, Discovery HD Theater, HDNet, and HDNet Movies. HBO HDTV and Showtime HDTV are available in premium packages. Dish On Demand PPV offers high-def movies at \$6 each. The CBS high-def station from New York City or Los Angeles is



[www.dishnetwork.com](http://www.dishnetwork.com)

available in a \$6 local-channel package, or \$1.50 in rural areas. EchoStar's least expensive HD-compatible receiver is \$399. There's also a rental option.

Voom provides the most high-def channels available anywhere (see "Va-Va-Voom!," April), but its receiver will set you back \$750 with installation of a dish and local antenna. You can also rent the receiver for \$9.50 a month. The least expensive package is \$40 a month, which includes 21 HDTV channels exclusive to Voom and either a Hybrid Pack (Discovery HD Theater, Bravo HD+, ESPN HD, TNT HD, and, in season, NFL or NBA) or a high-def Premium Pack



[voom.com](http://voom.com)

(Encore plus HBO, Showtime, The Movie Channel, Cinemax, or Starz). Additional Premium Packs are \$15 for the first, \$12 for the second, and \$9 for each additional pack. Playboy HD is available for \$15 a month.