

TRENDS STAFF

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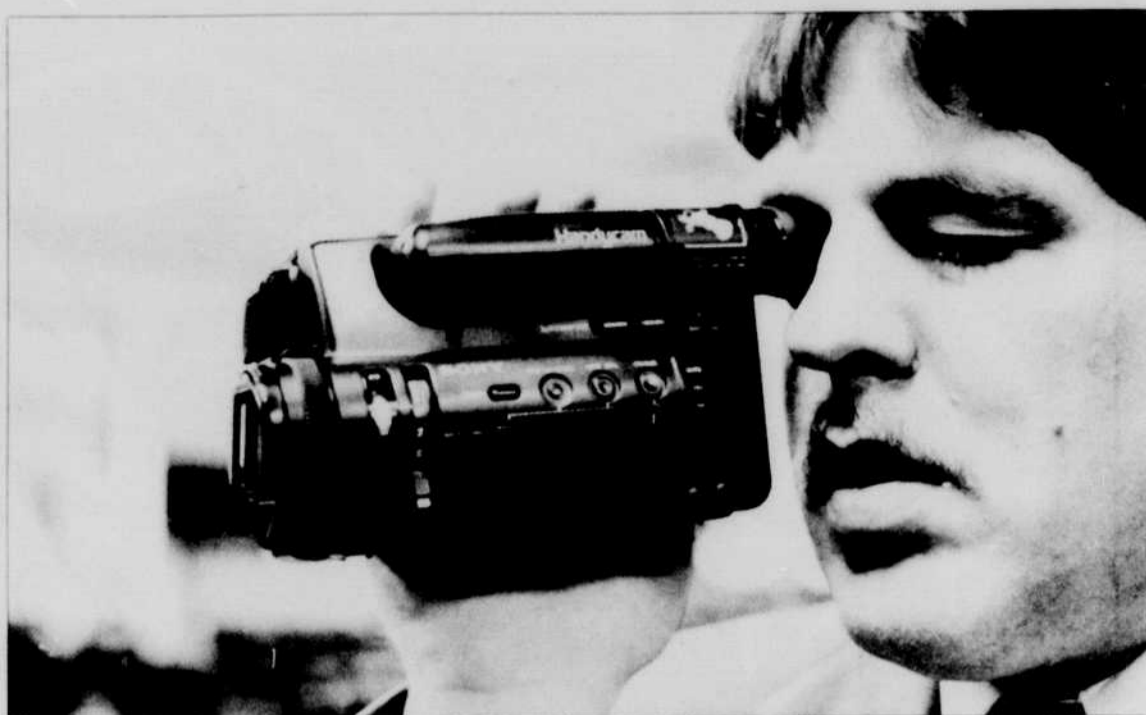


Photo by Steve Card

Hand-held video camcorders, which are said to work as well as standard models, are now on the market.

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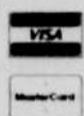
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**Decade brings snazzy audio, video gear**

By Daralyn Trappe  
 Emerald Contributor

Both the sights and sounds of 1990s will be greatly refined due to significant developments in audio and video technology.

Two of the most dramatic breakthroughs are coming in the form of Digital Audio Tape Recorders and High Definition Television, said Tim Smigley, Co-owner of Bradford's Hi-Fidelity at 150 W. Broadway St.

Digital Audio Tapes "are about two-thirds the size of regular cassette tapes and they utilize digital technology (to give the) performance benefits of compact discs," Smigley said.

DAT's are already available in Japan, but their introduction into the U.S. market has been delayed by legal problems within the recording industry and among record manufacturers. Those involved in the dispute appear to be close to coming to terms, Smigley said, and DAT's could be available as early as mid-1990.

The success of DAT's in the U.S. is not assured, however. Although no exact figures are available, they will be quite costly. There is a question as to whether or not consumers will be willing to replace their cassette decks and CD players with DAT's, especially as CD's become more refined and their sound quality continues to improve.

"I don't expect (DAT's) to fly immediately," said Dave Dolby, sales manager of Video-Audio Systems, at 2911 W. 11th Ave.

Along with the new developments in sound technology, consumers can expect refinements

and improvements in already existing products. Advances are being made in CD quality, and there have been "vast improvements in the quality of in-wall speakers," according to Smigley.

"There has been a lot of activity in that area," he added. "A lot of major speaker companies have gotten into it in the last few years. In-wall speakers have been around for years, but there's more emphasis on quality now. They are ideal as extension speakers in various rooms."

Although High Definition Television may not be made available for many years, it is already considered by many to be the video breakthrough of the 1990s.

HDTV will bring dramatic improvements in both picture and sound quality, but as with DAT's, their predicted expensive price tag will probably limit the number of people who can afford them.

Another new development in the field of video technology is the laser video disc, which is already available. The discs give better sound and picture quality than do video cassette tapes.

Video cameras are also becoming more refined. Camcorders "about the size of a fist" are now available, with quality comparable to the larger ones, Dolby said.

These new improvements in video and audio technology are exciting, but expensive. That is to be expected, Dolby said, due to the research and manufacturing involved in putting the futuristic technology to work.



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