NHK shows off a TV that watches you

June 1 2011, by Katie Gatto

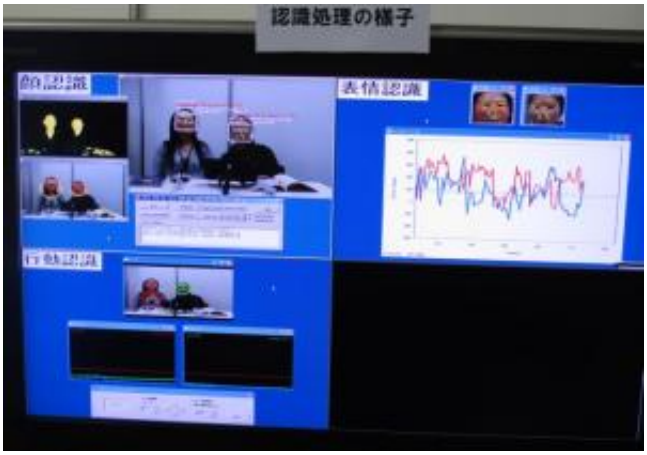
Image: Techon

Most people are comfortable enough with the idea of watching TV, but how comfortable will they be with the idea of the TV watching them back?

The folks who attended Open House 2011, which ran between May 26th to the 29th, were able to see NHK Science & Technology Research Laboratories demonstrate its new UTAN TV viewing interface. For those of you who are curious, UTAN stands for User Technology Assisted Navigation, and while you may at first think that description could easily be applied to a simple remote control, it is so much more.

The system begins with a camera mounted on your TV. That camera

takes pictures of you while you are watching and with the help of some clever software gauges your level of interest. It does this by assessing your level of attention paid to the screen, based on your facial expression and motions.



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The system can then send this data out. Currently, the only place it is going is to a tablet PC that shows the interest level data. Since the system is capable of reading multiple viewers at the same time, the person with the pad would be able to see how interested everyone in the room is in the show.

There is only one problem, how the system makes the measurements, which is by a lack of change in expression. So, if the viewer has an emotional response to what is on the screen it will be seen as a lack of concentration on the show, which could be an incorrect assessment. Currently, the system is also incapable of judging the type of response it is getting, so a laugh and angry screams are all the same to this system. Though, the makers of the device say this level of monitoring is possible

in the future.

More information:
via Techon