

NHK Starts 8K TV Broadcasts

Written by Marco Attard
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NHK, the Japanese public broadcaster, starts the first regular TV satellite broadcasts in 8K resolution-- with a "Super Hi Vision" test channel showing a mixture of 4K and 8K content.



The format pushes content at 7680 x 4320 resolution and allows for 22.2-channel audio. The channel is set up in preparation for the launch of full-scale 8K transmissions in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and shows a mixture of arts, sports, music and documentary programming reminiscent of test HDTV transmissions.

On the current schedule are highlights from the Rio Carnival, the 2012 London Olympics opening, a concert by J-Pop star Kyary Pamyu Pamyu and footage of the Aomori Nebuta festival. Of course, no consumer currently has the home hardware capable of receiving the channel, so NHK is installing viewing stations around Japan to hold public Rio Olympics viewings.

But why is NHK testing 8K broadcasting, when 4K broadcasts are still to start? The answer lies the Japanese broadcaster being something of a TV pioneer-- it actually started HD broadcasts in analog form as early as 1989, and already dabbled in 8K broadcasting in 2002, back when the transition to HDTV was still to properly kick off.

As such, the NHK tests are vital for other broadcasters wanting to learn about the challenges involved with 8K. After all, the format requires studio gear able to handle uncompressed 8K resolution feeds in real time, at data rates reaching 100Gbps, not to mention efficient compression equipment, satellites able to transmit the signals and consumer receivers and TVs for final decoding.

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