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Hi guys, here's the TV Eye article for June 5. I'm sending some pix of the Mediatext guys with this e-mail, and forwarding some pix they sent me from Media text. Talk soon, hope yr all ok, big P

Caption: Through the looking glass: the secret otherworld of Teletext

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Middle age has certain advantages for single, male television journalists. In late May, when the Playboy Playmate 2009 contest took place at the Ieras Odos theater, one strategically placed phone call got me a pretty good seat to the show. Under the guise of doing "research for a future article," I got to ogle some of the most beautiful young women in Athens while they pranced around in 2-gram bikinis and smiled uncontrollably. A better night of free entertainment I can't imagine.

Also seated at my table were several members of the TV group Mediatext. They're one of the companies that create the teletext features for various channels. Teletext is that little button on your TV's remote control unit that looks like a micro-sized screen with horizontal lines on it. I, like most people my age, have only diddled with the feature. I decided it was time to investigate the underlying, sub-canopy world of teletext. Push that little button and see what happens. Another world awaits you.

Stathis Michael, the general manager, and his staff were practically falling over themselves to give me the information about their services. I tend to be a rather low-tech guy, and still write my articles with paper and pencil every week. Ergo, a lot of their flashy information turned out to be pearls before swine. But I did manage to get a few nuggets from the patient crew.

The first feature which strikes any viewer of teletext is the way-retro, early-80s style graphics. All icons and images look like something from antique arcade games like *Pac-man*, *Centipede* and *Missile Command*. This is because Greece broadcasts its teletext signal with analog technology, which does not allow for the slick, digital graphics packages to be used in transmission. Perhaps in 2010 or shortly after, should the European Union Communications Commission dictate that all teletext broadcasts use digital format, then we will see a profound difference in the quality of images projected on our screens.

For right now, content is king in the world of teletext. So, although the bulk of the show is text-only, and available only in eight colors, there are piles of options to play with, some quite esoteric. Mediatext, whose clients include Mega, Star, Extra 3 and Sports TV channels sculpt their teletext transmissions to suit the personality of the individual broadcast company. Mega's text is more newsy and include more features on finance, sports and politics. Star's features more information of lifestyle and celebrity news.

For a mere one Euro you can place an ad via your mobile phone that last for twenty days on your selected channel. You can buy and sell practically any legitimate goods or services and the personal ads for dating,

I'm told, get good results. Still, at this point in its development, teletext is something of an underground youth tool. Here's how the numbers break down for Greece: There are roughly three million users each month, 59% are male, 41% female, all ages inclusive. 29% of all users are age 15-24, with the second age group, age 25-34 coming in at 28%. The third largest group, age 44-54, at 16%. The age group of 55-65 pulls up the rear at 8%. They don't count people after age 65. I guess you don't matter any more after that age. Don't worry guys, Mick Jagger just turned 65. Jane Fonda is 70. There's hope for all of us. Presently, Teletext is a quasi-tech, *Matrix*-like, sub-ecosystem for youngish technos and dedicated TV addicts. In the near future, as technology advances and when the remainder of the viewing population become less technophobic of their remote controls, it has the potential to become a daily part of everyone's viewing habits.