

## Comcast Cameras to Start Watching You?

If you have some tinfoil handy, now might be a good time to fashion a hat. At the [Digital Living Room](#) conference today, Gerard Kunkel, [Comcast](#)'s senior VP of user experience, told me the cable company is experimenting with different camera technologies built into devices so it can know who's in your living room.

The idea being that if you turn on your cable box, it recognizes you and pulls up shows already in your profile or makes recommendations. If parents are watching TV with their children, for example, parental controls could appear to block certain content from appearing on the screen. Kunkel also said this type of monitoring is the "holy grail" because it could help serve up specifically tailored ads. Yikes.

Kunkel said the system wouldn't be based on facial recognition, so there wouldn't be a picture of you on file (we hope). Instead, it would distinguish between different members of your household by recognizing body forms. He stressed that the system is still in the experimental phase, that there hasn't been consumer testing, and that any rollout "must add value" to the viewing experience beyond serving ads.

Perhaps I've seen *Enemy of the State*

too many times, or perhaps I'm just naive about the depths to which Comcast currently tracks my every move. I can't trust Comcast with [BitTorrent](#), so why should I trust them with my must-be-kept-secret, DVR-clogging addiction to *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*?

Kunkel also spoke on camera with me about fixing bad Comcast user experiences, the ongoing BitTorrent battle and VOD. But he mostly towed the corporate line on these issues (the monitoring your living room came up after my camera was put away).



**Update:** [Comcast responded](#).

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1. That is officially the most absurd thing I've ever heard in my life. Talk about invasion of privacy! So that would put an end to me putting my hands down my pants to scratch my bag while eating popcorn? I can just see how some disgruntled worker at Comcast could use this and have a field day on youtube. Yikes is right. Double Yikes.

**Matt Brown-Reugg** on March 18th, 2008 at 11:56 am - [Permalink](#)

2. Not the first time this has been tried.

**Tim Street** on March 18th, 2008 at 12:06 pm - [Permalink](#)

3. Orwell thought that cameras in the living room would imposed on us by a fascist government. Fascism these days is dominated by corporate power guised under a mantle of legitimacy. These systems of control have been primarily put in place by willful consumption of consumer goods. Cameras with phones are the same as the boxes that Comcast is proposing.

The interesting aspect of this is that many people will be up in arms over this, but we barely complain about all of the technology that is around already that track our actions. Online ad networks linked to medical databases and banking records and gps enabled phones that connect to LinkedIn and Facebook...

**charles** on March 18th, 2008 at 1:35 pm - [Permalink](#)

4. And it won't be the last time this is tried. If this happens I'm putting the box in a box and piping in the IR or maybe adapting a radio remote. Or Better yet giving up the cable/satellite all together.

**Scott Beckstead** on March 18th, 2008 at 1:52 pm - [Permalink](#)