

1984 Is Here: Samsung Admits its TVs Might Spy on You, Warns Against Carrying Out Sensitive Conversations

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In the prescient *1984* tome, author George Orwell wrote about a supposedly “fictitious” future in which the civilized world lived in what can only be called a *surveillance society*, in which “the government” would be able to keep watch on the citizenry 24-7, and through a variety of technological means.

It turns out that Orwell’s premonitions were a lot more realistic than even he likely imagined.

Today, surveillance cameras are everywhere, at least in the modern world. Police have a range of listening devices and surveillance technology, some of which can see through your walls and [into your home](#). And federal spy agencies like the NSA routinely intercept and track Internet and wireless communications.

Now, it seems, even your household goods can spy on you. As reported by Britain’s *Daily Mail*, you might want to keep a lid on what you say this evening when you sit down in front of your television.

Samsung has issued a warning to owners of its Internet-connected “smart TV” — anything they say while sitting in the vicinity of the device could be overheard.

As the *Mail* reported further:

The popular televisions are voice activated, so users can switch channels or ask for suggestions of what to watch simply by giving a verbal command.

However, the technology which allows this to happen has a worrying side effect: it records everything else that goes on near the television.

Privacy? What privacy?

According to a clause in Samsung’s privacy policy, buyers should beware:

“Please be aware that if your spoken words include personal or other sensitive information, that information will be among the data captured and transmitted to a third party.”

For instance, that means that the TVs might be able to record a family argument that took place in the living room; executives discussing strategy in corporate boardrooms equipped with such [smart TVs](#) are at risk of sharing confidential information.

Privacy advocates are understandably upset and concerned, noting that the technology is ripe for abuse by government agencies and “Big Brother” in general (coincidentally, the name of the authoritarian state in Orwell’s novel).

“This thing is going to be in your house, listening in on you,” Renate Samson, of [Big Brother Watch](#), a campaign group named after this very notion, said, as quoted by the *Mail*. “Samsung say they are providing you with a service, but really the only service you need from a television is to watch programmes.”

More than half of all smart TVs sold in Britain are made by [Samsung](#), the *Mail* noted.

The problem is in the technology, which was sold as a convenience. The TVs “listen” for simple commands, such as those to switch channels or turn up the volume. But it can process more complicated commands as well, after recording users’ speech and sending it on to a third-party company called Nuance, which is located in the U.S.

Nuance then sends the voice data to a computer server, which then translates the spoken word into text and spits out a response.

As further reported by the *Daily Mail*:

To give these complex commands, viewers must press a button on the remote control as they speak, and during that time, anything within ‘earshot’ will be collected.

The data is encrypted, but can be listened to by authorised Nuance staff.

The technology giant remained tight-lipped about whether it then keeps users’ data, only saying that it does not sell information on, and that it operates within privacy laws, which vary by country.

Professor Peter Sommer, a digital forensics expert who has lectured at the London School of Economics, said there was ‘no reason’ Samsung would not be storing up data.

“The fear is they could be building up a pattern of your preferences, or learning your voice,” he told the *Mail*.

Even when interactivity is turned off, the TV can collect data

Users do have the option of stopping the recording of their conversations by Samsung; they can turn the voice recognition feature off. But even then, the South Korean-based technology giant can still collect some information.

“While Samsung will not collect your spoken word, Samsung may still collect associated texts and other usage data so that we can evaluate the performance of the feature and improve it,” says the company’s privacy statement.

The Samsung smart [TVs](#) are not the only video and television technology capable of monitoring your activity. As *Natural News* editor Mike Adams, the Health Ranger, reported last year, Amazon Fire TV (and similar services) has the capability to act as a spying device.

Read his full report [here](#).

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