

www.humaxdigital.co.uk ■ 020 8744 5510 ■ £299



Humax HDCI-2000

Features

Receiver: Humax HDCI-2000
Price: £299
No LNB inputs: 1
LNB loopthrough: Yes
DiSeqC: 1.0, 1.2, USALS
No. channels: 4,000
No. satellites: 50
CAM: None
Common interface: 2
Selectable FEC: Yes
Symbol rate range: 2000-45000
Teletext: Decoded
EPG support: DVB 7-day
Timer: 20-events, unlimited time
UHF modulator tuning: N/A
Software upgrade: RS232/USB download, OTA
HD output modes: 720p, 1080i
DVB support: DVB-S, DVB-S2
MPEG support: MPEG-2, MPEG-4 H.264
AV outputs: HDMI, component (YpbPr), TV Scart (composite/S-video/RGB), VCR Scart (composite/S-video), stereo audio, optical digital audio, composite video
Supplier: Humax, Unit 7, Kings Mill Business Park, Chapel Mill Road, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 3AP. (Test unit supplied by Pulsat: 0870 765 2935, www.pulsat.com)

The first multi-sat DVB-S2 and MPEG-4 sat receiver is here – just in time for the BBC's high-definition TV trial

Although a Sky HD Digibox is required for most of the Sky HD channels, the BBC's trial service is broadcast free to air, and so can be picked up with any suitable hi-def receiver.

Such receivers are thin on the ground. The first is the Humax HDCI-2000, a general purpose HD and SD receiver that can handle DVB-S2/MPEG-4 signals for HD (currently from 28°E, 19.2°E and 13°E) as well as the established SD transmissions, and has two common interface slots to add CAMs for SD or HD pay-TV channels.

The HDCI-2000 is unassuming to look at – even plain, with little to suggest its hi-def capabilities, but it is very well made and, indeed, looks smart enough. The whole panel hinges down to reveal the two common interface (CI) slots and the front panel controls. The display on the front is a 'full Monty' dot matrix type that displays the channel name as well as just the number – very nice.

The remote control handset is also reasonably attractive,

with 39 (rather small) buttons well laid out. It's not as stylish as Sky's but it can hold its own on the coffee table.

The back panel has a good array of connections, but the HDCI-2000 should really be connected to a TV with the HDMI socket or the YpbPr component video connectors to get the benefit of HD pictures. There's no UHF connection – not that it could carry hi-def, anyway.

To update the software the HDCI-2000 has both RS232 and USB serial connections – and you'll need to make sure it's got the latest software to see the BBC's HD trial.

Setup & searching

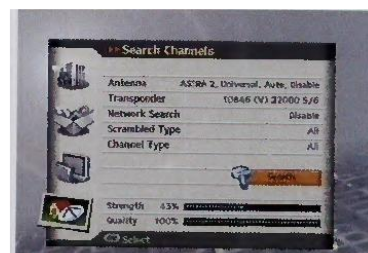
Although the HDCI-2000 gives access to a whole new world of satellite channels, it is as easy to set up as any other digital receiver. The HDCI-2000 can connect to a single LNB, multiple LNBs with a DiSeqC1.0 switch, or a DiSeqC 1.2 or USALS motorised dish. There's no DiSeqC 1.1 switching support for more than



There are excellent navigation options via the onscreen channel lists and EPG, though HD channels aren't instantly highlighted



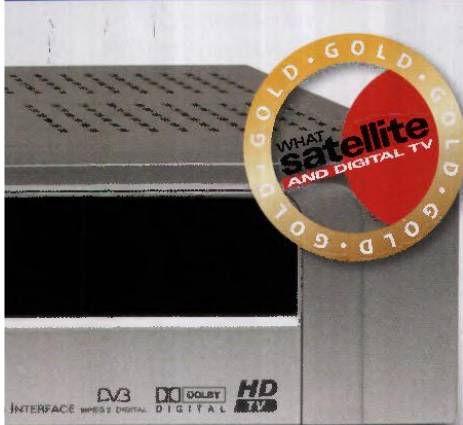
Hi-def channels are marked in the onscreen banner – you'll need the latest software to pick up the BBC's hi-def trials



Setting up multisat reception is as easy as any other receiver, although the exhaustive DVB-S and DVB-S2 search is slower than we've used to



test REPORT



'The EPG is fantastic. It's a sort of EPG suite with four parts'

The info banner also gives the channel name and number, the programme title and brief description, programme times and a progress bar and icons for encryption, subtitles, teletext, Dolby Digital sound, parental control level, and event timers.

The EPG is fantastic. It's a sort of EPG suite with four parts; as well as the usual table of programmes on seven channels there is a main selection page for the current channel, from which you can go to any of the next seven days and see the schedule, the (manual) event timer programming page (very easy), and a search page to hunt through the EPG data for a programme containing any words or text.

The event timer can be also set directly from the programme lists, but the one drawback is that the full programme synopsis cannot be displayed from the EPG.

four LNBs, which is a slight disappointment.

The DiSEqC port, LNB local oscillator frequency and 22kHz setting can all be programmed for each satellite to be received. Then it's a matter of scanning the satellites for active channels – both SD and HD. This is slow; scanning Astra 1 took about five minutes. However, the HDCI-2000 does find everything – including all sorts of video and data streams that many other (SD) receivers would miss. It won't, however, pick up MPEG-2 4:2:2 transmissions often used for newsfeeds.

If the scan is initiated from the main menu rather than the setup wizard, you can also scan for only encrypted or unencrypted channels, scan just one transponder and edit the transponder list. This is somewhat different from other digital receivers as you set not only the frequency, polarity, symbol rate and so on, but the transmission format (DVB-S or DVB-S2) and modulation (QPSK or 8PSK) too.

Navigation

The HDCI-2000 lists SD and HD channels together. You can choose to show the channel number and encryption icons, for the list to be sorted by channel name, and a one or (slightly confusing) two-column display. There are also lists by satellite, recently visited channels (very useful), and by encryption (split into each major encryption system).

The channel lists can be edited – channels moved, renamed or deleted – and channels locked from casual viewing. The five favourite channel lists cannot be renamed for your own categories or needs.

The channel list doesn't indicate which channels are hi-def, but the information banner gives the video format of the channel, and an extra 'HD' icon.

Performance

Performance is crucial for this receiver; fortunately, it's excellent. Hi-def images are superb – detailed, sharp, and with vibrant colours. Through the HDMI connection SD channels also look excellent, with no video noise to be seen, although they are a bit 'soft'.

The Scart images are good too (slightly better for SD channels), with HD channels downscaled well and even the receiver's detailed onscreen graphics showing clearly. Sound from all sources is clear and bright and the Dolby Digital soundtrack is effectively noise-free.

Features

The HDCI-2000 has a 'Last' button to return to the previous channel chosen (always useful) and the handset can also be used to change the output aspect ratio (wide, 4:3 or letterbox) and the video format (576i, 720p or 1080i) to suit your TV's preferences if necessary.

Teletext is only available decoded by the receiver (not inserted on the PAL signal for teletext TVs) although this is no great loss, as the HDCI-2000 is best-connected by HDMI.

Verdict

The HDCI-2000 isn't just a utilitarian HD receiver rushed out to catch the first signals; it also has some of the bells and whistles we expect these days (especially the front display) and is designed to cope with a variety of reception requirements and antenna systems.

Best of all, it produces stunning HD pictures and sound from the HD channels now coming on line ■ **Geoff Bains**

The Opposition

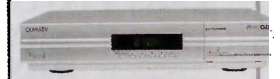
Pace DS810XE

Should be an improvement on the DS810KP Premiere receiver – a flexible multi-sat receiver with MPEG-4 HD support, but relatively expensive and no access to Sky



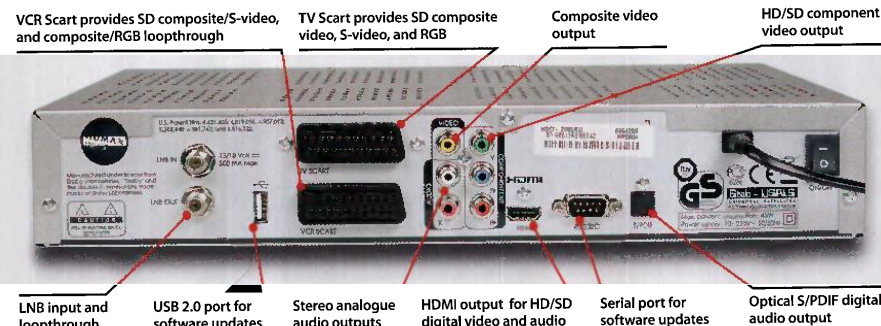
QualityTV QS1080IRC1

HD receiver for Euro 1080, with Irdeto CAM, but no DVB-S2/MPEG4 capability (no BBC HD or Sky HD), difficult to use and much more expensive



Sky HD Digibox

Receives BBC HD and all Sky HD but no convenient capability for other satellites. PVR for same price but monthly subscription required



Rating

PLUS

- Seamless integration of HD and SD reception
- DVB-S2/ MPEG-4 tuner
- Great navigation

MINUS

- Same price as Sky+ HD
- No DiSEqC 1.1
- No MPEG 4:2:2

BUILD	★★★★★★
SETUP	★★★★★★
SEARCHING	★★★★★★
NAVIGATION	★★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★★

WHAT satellite AND DIGITAL TV Verdict **85%**

July 2006 What Satellite & Digital TV 53