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## Humax PVR-9200T v2 Freeview player Review

Can the new update offer a real challenge to Sky?  
by Steve Dye

What is it? Humax PVR-9200T Personal video recorder with Freeview Playback group 2 included

Price £200 (Compare prices)

The good Series link gives Sky+ functionality without the monthly subscription. Dual tuners allow recording of one channel while you watch a 2nd. Easy to use menus. Excellent picture quality

The bad The quality of the series functionality is only as good as the information transmitted by the broadcasters, so you sometimes miss the end of programs. Slow EPG programming still persists

We say A great leap forward in Freeview box technology, allowing Sky+ type recordings to be programmed easily without the need for a monthly subscription. Broadcasters need to ensure accuracy of transmitted timing signals to ensure correct functionality

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**At a glance**

**Full review**

12 December 2007 - When we reviewed the original Humax PVR-9200T back in October 2006, we loved the functionality that it offered, giving an experience that was almost the same as having Sky+, but without the series link functionality.

Now, with either a newly purchased device, or for previous owners of the device via a software update from the web (or via an over the air update to be broadcast in Jan 2008), this functionality is now also available.

Humax claim that this is the first Freeview Playback box offering level 2 functionality, but what does that mean exactly? Well in reality, this offers the ability to series link programs. When selecting programs to record from the EPG, those that are part of a series now show up in a darker blue to those that are one offs. If you select one of these to record, you are now offered the choice of recording just one program or the whole series.

In use, we found the new series link to be very easy to program. The menus are clear and easy to understand and follow. You select the program from the EPG that you want to record and press the OK button, and then select either once or series, and that's it. If you try and record more than 2 programs at once, if it can, the Humax offers alternative times that programs are transmitted (for example on ITV +1) to resolve any conflicts something that Series Link on Sky doesn't offer.

So what's the catch? Well its not as simple or as straightforward as it sounds when put into practice.

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In reality, we had a number of issues with using series link, which to be fair to Humax, are out of their control and are down to the broadcasters.

Previously, we used to use the auto padding facility to start recording 3 minutes before the scheduled start time and to extend 5 minutes after, to allow for any slippage in programs. The series link functionality does not allow this as it uses an accurate recording signal that is transmitted by the broadcasters.

However, if this is not correct (and it isn't in some cases), the device can miss the beginning or end of the recording.

As more level 2 Freeview boxes become available, we hope that the accuracy of this transmitted information is improved.

Also, not all broadcasters (Channel 5 being the major one not to) are not transmitting this information, and so the series link functionality doesn't work on these channels.

Another minor gripe with the device are that the EPG information isn't stored on the hard disk when the device is put into standby mode, so you can wait up to 9 minutes for this to be fully programmed.

As for the boxes performance the 9200T, like all other PVRs, comes with a built-in hard drive that automatically records the channel you're watching, allowing you to pause, rewind and if you're behind time, fast forward at your leisure.

You can also record while watching something else and in the Humax's case the dual-tuner allows you to record two separate programs while watching another, making it a versatile beast indeed.

In addition it sports a 160GB hard drive offering room for around 90 hours of recorded TV, more than enough to prevent even the most avid of tube-heads missing their favourite shows.

The process of time shifting, as well as scheduling recordings and managing your programmes, is handled excellently, with a browsable programme list making it easy to see what's currently on and set up recordings with a single touch.

You'll find plenty of other options and shortcuts that help you take full advantage of the time shifting functions such as advert break 30-second skips, repeat mode, and PIP (picture in picture) display. There's also support for 5.1 audio, should Freeview adopt this audio standard in the future, but on the video side you're restricted to Scart and composite, no component interface for that extra level of quality.

In addition to Freeview TV, the Humax allows you to play back MP3s or view digital photos that you've uploaded onto the built-in hard drive via the USB2.0 or network port.

If the Humax falls down anywhere it'll be from the all too common "unnecessarily bulky" syndrome. The 9200T isn't a bad looking player, but it wouldn't win any design awards and we really feel Humax could have slimmed the thing down a little. The remote control isn't much better, and the looks don't complement the fact that this is, in the world of PVRs, a pretty powerful, high-end device.

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#### VERDICT

Overall, Humax have done a great job adding this functionality, not only to new purchasers of the PVR-9200T, but also to existing users of what is an almost two year old device.

We'd love to see this level of support from all other manufacturers of high tech kit in a fast moving environment.

A great leap forward in Freeview box technology, allowing Sky+ type series recordings to be programmed easily without the need for a monthly subscription.

However, broadcasters need to ensure accuracy of transmitted timing signals to ensure correct functionality.

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