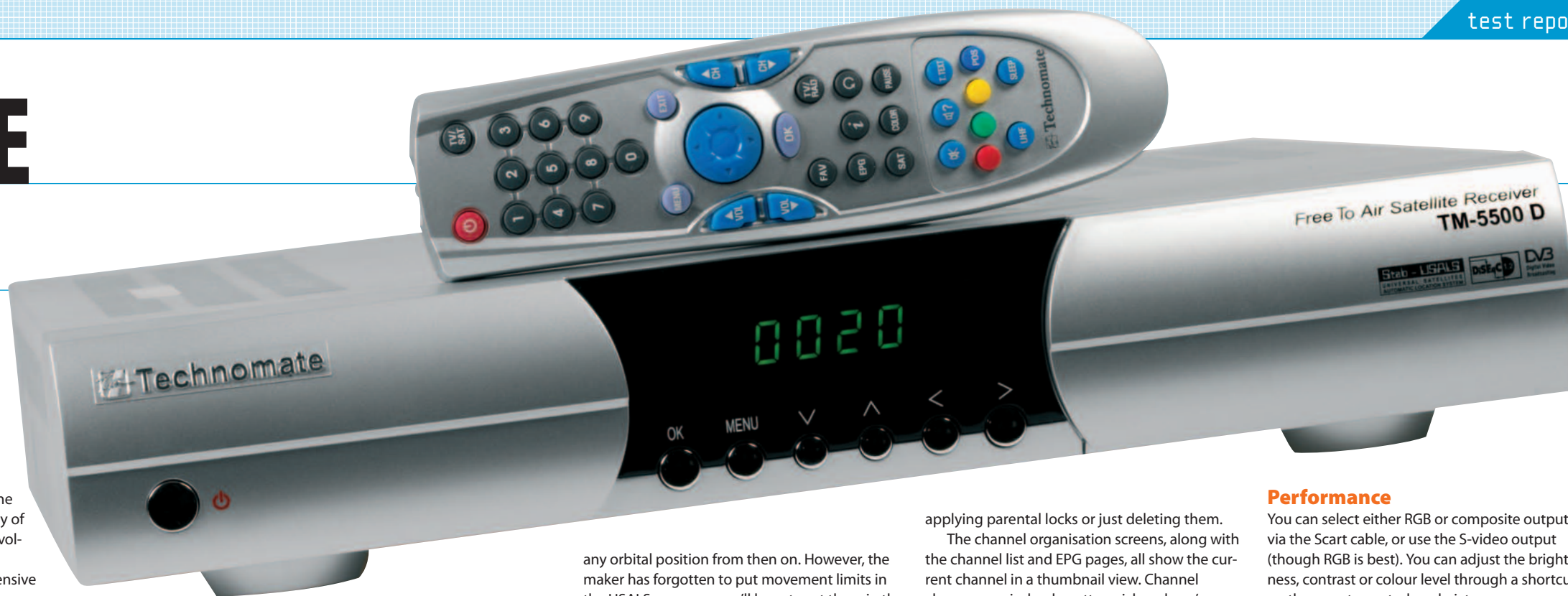


# TECHNOMATE TM-5500D

THE BUDGET SATELLITE CHAMPION IS BACK WITH AN UPGRADE TO ITS FREE-TO-AIR DIGITAL RECEIVER – BUT IT'S STILL JUST £99. **ALEX LANE** MEETS A NEW DIGITAL FRIEND



Technomate was a new arrival on the digital satellite scene last year. We've waited some time for the new 5500 range of receivers. The TM-5500D is the basic free-to-air model at the bottom of the range.

Improvements over previous models include being faster to search for channels and to scan for channels, with extra flash memory for channel storage, plus a low-threshold tuner and more shortcut buttons on the remote.

### Build

The TM-5500 models all share the same case design, so the TM-5500D is probably larger than

### DETAILS

- Receiver:** Technomate TM-5500D
- Price:** £99
- No LNB inputs:** 1
- LNB loopthrough:** yes
- DiSEqC:** 1.2 USALS
- No channels:** 5,000
- No transponders:** 1,050
- No satellites:** 130
- CAM:** none
- Common interface:** none
- Selectable FEC:** yes
- Symbol rate range:** 1000-45000
- Teletext:** VBI re-inserted
- EPG support:** DVB
- Timer:** none
- UHF modulator tuning:** channels 21-69
- Expansion bus:** serial
- Software upgrade:** PC
- Modem:** none
- AV outputs:** 2 Scarts, S-video, composite video, stereo audio, optical digital audio

**Supplier:** Technomate, 328 Hoe Street, London E17 9PX.  
**Tel:** 020 8509 2440  
**Website:** www.technomate.com

simple to use, with an easy mixture of icons and text, and not many complicated submenus. The user can choose the transparency of any screen overlays, such as the volume and info-banners.

The user manual is comprehensive and has some useful illustrations. Technomate assures us it is being improved and expanded.

### Setup

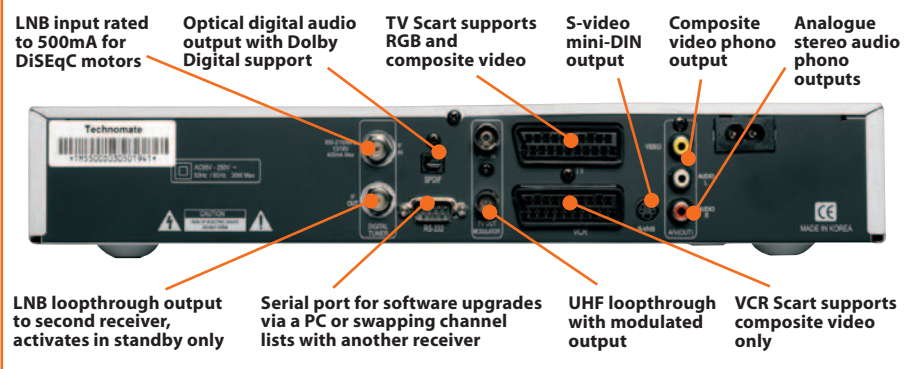
The TM-5500 range all come pre-tuned with more than 3,500 channels on 130 satellites, so once you've picked your satellites, you don't even have to do a search straight away to start watching (although the database will inevitably be out of date).

There are just three basic installation menus: Satellite Setup, Auto Search and Advance Search. Satellite Setup allows you to pick from the list of 63 satellites (you can add up to 12 more), and set the LNB and DiSEqC switching options. You can rename a satellite, change its position (for USALS

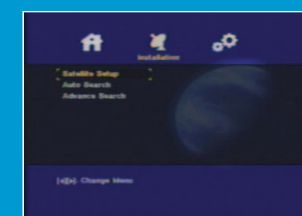
alignment), add customised Ku-band or C-band LNB settings, and have up to four fixed LNB selected with DiSEqC 1.0, or just two with mini-DiSEqC. A new function is Link Search, which allows you to search several satellites consecutively with a switched or motorised dish.

Motor control comes in the Auto Search menu – you can select a dumb DiSEqC 1.2 motor or a smarter USALS motor. The former can be driven in user-defined steps or continuously, with movement limits, goto zero, reset and recalculate functions all present. With a USALS-compatible motor, you first need to align the motor on Hot Bird manually, then input your longitude and latitude, and the receiver will automatically find

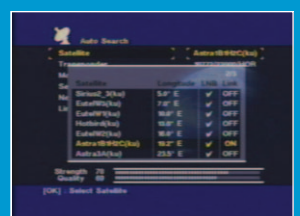
### BACK TO BACK



- LNB input rated to 500mA for DiSEqC motors**
- Optical digital audio output with Dolby Digital support**
- TV Scart supports RGB and composite video**
- S-video mini-DIN output**
- Composite video phono output**
- Analogue stereo audio phono outputs**
- LNB loopthrough output to second receiver, activates in standby only**
- Serial port for software upgrades via a PC or swapping channel lists with another receiver**
- UHF loopthrough with modulated output**
- VCR Scart supports composite video only**



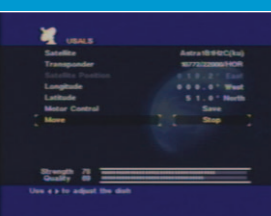
Simple, iconic user menus



There's an extensive satellite list



You can operate a standard dumb DiSEqC motor...



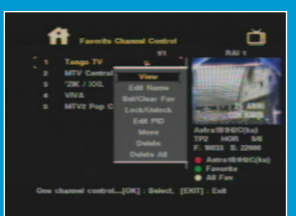
... or a smarter USALS mount



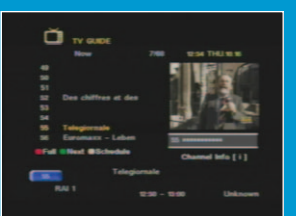
Choose from letterbox or widescreen with RGB and composite video



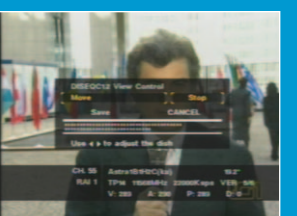
There's just a single wake-up and sleep timer



Edit and sort eight favourites lists



Full DVB EPG support with thumbnail views



Adjust your meter alignment while you watch

any orbital position from then on. However, the maker has forgotten to put movement limits in the USALS menu, so you'll have to set them in the DiSEqC menu, then go to USALS. There's also an onscreen DiSEqC menu which you can call up to fine-tune positions at any time.

The Auto Search menu also enables you to select a search for free-to-air, scrambled or both kinds of channels, to use the satellite's Network Information

Table to find new transponders, and to use the Link Search function. There's also a signal strength and quality meter on all the search and motor menus.

The auto search itself is quick and thorough, briefly flashing up each channel it finds on each transponder. You can add individual transponders or channels through the advanced search, and enthusiasts will be pleased that you can save the same frequencies with different symbol rate, polarisation and FEC values. The symbol rate range of 1000-45000 should be sufficient for tuning everything, and you can choose manual or automatic FEC control.

### Navigation

There's enough memory for 5,000 channels. These can be organised into any of eight favourites lists, and any list can be organised by satellite, by free and scrambled channels, or alphabetically.

You can move channels around the list, edit the PIDs and rename the channel, as well as

applying parental locks or just deleting them.

The channel organisation screens, along with the channel list and EPG pages, all show the current channel in a thumbnail view. Channel changes are, indeed, pretty quick and you're always shown a small info-bar with the channel's name, number, time, audio options, signal strength and quality.

**FULLY FEATURED USALS RECEIVER, COMPETITIVE PRICE**

**USER MANUAL NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**

EPG data is only available as a full screen display, showing either now-and-next for eight channels, or a full day for the selected channel.

The receiver is capable of storing up to seven days of data from those channels which broadcast it, and details of the selected programme are given in the bottom-right corner – if they're available.

Strangely, there are no event timers – just a sleep and wake-up timer. This seems an odd omission of a popular feature. The TM-5500D also has parental locks for individual channels, menus, and the special function buttons on the remote control.



### Performance

You can select either RGB or composite output via the Scart cable, or use the S-video output (though RGB is best). You can adjust the brightness, contrast or colour level through a shortcut on the remote control, and pictures are as good as MPEG2 digital allows. The TM-5500D certainly shows up the variation between channels, which is often quite appalling.

Audio output is also very satisfying, but held hostage to the quality of the channels themselves. The digital audio output is slightly superior to analogue, and Dolby Digital is supported if you can track it down.

Although it's not dramatically different from the TM-5000D, the TM-5500D shows off many small but effective improvements, and it's still very competitive. The only let-down is the poorly-written manual, and even that's well-intentioned ■

### THE OPPOSITION



**Echostar DSB-707 FTA**  
Now upgraded to support USALS, with support for 4,000 channels on 100 satellites, but high price and complex Echonav menu may put users off

**Humax F1-Fox**  
Slick and simple to use compact receiver, with 2,000-channel memory, DiSEqC 1.2 with USALS support, and sub-£100 price tag

**ID Digital F-28E**  
Great performance and low price tag, compact receiver with simple DiSEqC 1.2 support and 4,000-channel memory