

Technomate TM-1000D SUPER



Features

Receiver: Technomate TM-1000D
Price: £80
No LNB inputs: 1
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LNB Loopthrough: Yes
DiSEqC: 1.0/1.2/USALS
No. channels: 5000 radio/TV
No. satellites: 70
Selectable FEC: No
Symbol rate: 1000-45000
CAM: None
Common interface: None (but upgradable)
Teletext: Internal and VBI re-inserted
EPG support: DVB 'now-and-next', 7-day
Timer: 8-event
UHF modulator tuning: Channels 21-69
Software upgrade: Serial
Modem: None
AV outputs: 2x Scart (TV: RGB/composite-video, stereo audio; VCR: composite, stereo audio), composite and stereo audio phono, coaxial digital audio

Rating

Build	★★★★★★★
Setup	★★★★★★★
Searching	★★★★★★★
Navigation	★★★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★★★
Features	★★★★★★★
Value	★★★★★★★

WHAT satellite AND DIGITAL TV Verdict **86%**

➤ This is a midi-sized free-to-air receiver that can, unusually, be updated for pay-TV at a later date with a DIY CI module or card reader. The front panel has a hinged flap for these additions. In other respects the front panel is a bit bare, with only basic controls. As a result, the remote is essential. Rear-panel connectors are basics-only too. AV terminals cater for TV (RGB/composite) and VCR (composite only), plus analogue stereo audio, composite-video and coaxial digital audio outs. The usual UHF modulated loopthrough, LNB input and IF output are present.

A serial port enables firmware upgrades – in contrast, the Manhattan unit also gives you a 12V switch facility and an S-video output. A look inside the unit reveals the space where the conditional access module would fit. It connects to a nicely made main circuit board featuring an ARM-powered Conexant Brazios 'jungle chip' that's responsible for most of the receiver's functionality. This is aided by a Sharp tuner, Hyunshin modulator and Wolfson audio DAC. As with most receivers, the switch-mode power supply is built on to a separate circuit board.

Setup

Setting up the TM-1000D is easy – its excellent user interface is split into five main sections (the manual is also better than most) and uses the coloured buttons to drop into context-sensitive submenus. From here, it's possible to configure the PAL/NTSC AV output, tune the UHF modulator, specify what satellites you can receive (and whether you're using DiSEqC/USALS), conduct searches of various types, transfer data and even choose from six games. Other unusual features impress; a press of the 'pos' button activates the DiSEqC positioning functions, so you can peak the dish with the aid of level and quality bars.

A nifty 'recalculate' feature will update DiSEqC satellite positions if the dish has been blown off-course; simply find one satellite and the receiver does the rest. We're pleased to note that both fine and coarse dish movement increments are possible, enabling dishes to be accurately peaked. Then there's the picture 'freeze' – with zoom – and a 'multi-picture' window that grabs frames from several adjacent channels, displaying them as thumbnails. Video colour adjustment is particularly useful if you're using RGB. Other features include an eight-event VCR timer that's programmed via the EPG, teletext, the ability to modify a channel's PIDs and eight re-nameable favourites groups.

The standard channel list features a fool-proof alphabet listing feature for quickly finding a channel; channels can also be listed according to transponder or encryption status. Switching between list types is quick.

Searches

But it's the search facilities that make the TM-1000D really impressive. A standard search can be invoked from the satellite setup and motorisation menus. This caters for all channels (handy if you've fitted the conditional access module or bought the version with the hardware already fitted) or FTA-only – there's also a network search. Then there's Advanced Search, to search a specific transponder (your own can be added here). Related to this is PID Search, which gives you the opportunity to specify PID values. The crowning glory is, of course, blind search (aka Power Scan). Here, you can search a specific range of frequencies, and enter a symbol rate and polarity for the receiver to work on. There's a mode that will find everything, but this will take the longest to complete. We're also impressed with the 'auto-navigation' blind search that, after searching the first satellite, moves to the next to continue the process two hours or more to complete. As soon as it finds a transponder that's not in its database it scans it for new channels (which are shown on screen). Once this has been done it continues its transponder search and the process continues until the whole satellite has been completed.

Performance

Switching between channels is fast, and searches are speedy too. A standard FTA search of Eutelsat W2's 29 pre-programmed transponders took two minutes and found 95 channels. An FTA blind search found an additional 21 transponders and 19 TV services in nine minutes. For audio-visual performance, the TM-1000D can't be faulted. The quality-conscious German channels at 19.2°E rewarded us with splendid-looking video, though as is usual some of the lower-bitrate channels were ropery. As far as sensitivity goes, it seems the TM-1000D is a tad better than the Manhattan unit – which was proved by moving the dish off-beam by a preset amount and comparing the two.

Verdict

The TM-100D Super combines superior usability and speed of operation, especially as far as searching is concerned. In our opinion, it's the winner of this test ■