Topfield TF6000PVR
The Future is Wireless

At first glance you can only tell by looking at the front panel that we are dealing with the TF6000PVR since this new box is almost identical in appearance to the popular TF5000 Masterpiece that we introduced two issues ago. Topfield decided to stick with the elegant design of their original Masterpiece; a design that allows this box to easily blend in with any TV entertainment system.

The front panel sports a set of five buttons for control of the receiver without a remote control. A large, easy-to-read VFD display is in the center while a pair of CI slots that can accept a variety of conditional access modules can be found hidden behind a flap on the right side.

All of the typical encryption modes - Irdeto, Seca Mediaguard, Viaccess, Nagravision, Conax, Cryptoworks, etc. - are thereby supported.

In contrast, it is the rear panel of this box that has been changed. In addition to the expected connections such as the IF input and looped-through outputs for both tuners, the three RCA jacks for video and stereo audio outputs, the S-Video output, the USB 2.0 connection, the RS-232 interface and the digital audio output, you will also find another set of three RCA jacks for YUV outputs as well as a connection for a WLAN antenna. And this takes us right to this receiver's newest feature: Topfield is one of the first manufacturers to recognize that although the USB interface is perfect for transferring recordings back and forth between the receiver and PC, how many of you really have your PC sitting next to your TV in the living room? Topfield understood this and opted to include WLAN in the TF6000PVR. To make room for this feature, Topfield eliminated the RF modulator.

The workmanship of this receiver is - as expected from Topfield - very good. Even the included remote control is logically designed and sits comfortably in your hand. The included user manual comes with detailed descriptions of the receiver's functions. Even the more-complicated WLAN setup should be no problem for beginners.

Everyday Use
Contrary to many other receiver manufacturers, Topfield did not include an Installation Assistant in their software. This takes the user directly to the main menu the first time the receiver is turned on. Thanks to the logically designed OSD, the user should have no trouble getting used to the menu structure. Basic receiver settings are handled in the System Settings menu. In addition to CVBS and RGB, S-video and YUV are also available. This should make owners of flat screen TV's and projection systems especially happy. The automatic switching between PAL and NTSC signals - just like with all the other Topfield models - is also handled by the TF6000PVR without any problems. The receiver comes from the factory loaded with numerous European and Asian satellites although the list is unfortunately not all that up to date and there are some satellites that are missing entirely.

The Topfield supports a multitude of DiSEqC protocols such as DiSEqC 1.0, 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 (USALS). Multiple parameters can be set individually for both tuners and for each satellite. In our tests, for example, we were able to set up a multifeed antenna on tuner #1 while a DiSEqC motor was operated on tuner #2. Once the receiver has been properly set up for the existing antenna system, the next logical step would be the automatic channel scan. Our test scan of an 80-transponder satellite was completed in just over five minutes.

A Network scan yielded an additional 23 channels but also required an extra 90 seconds to be completed. As with all of the previous models, there was only enough room provided to store 5000 TV and radio channels. Considering all of the features and capabilities of this box, we feel that this is not quite enough. The channel switching speed is, as expected from Topfield, excellent. Less than one second was needed for the audio and video of the new channel to be properly presented. Up to two programs can...
be recorded at the same time via the two tuners while a third program can be viewed live or played back from the hard drive. Our test unit was delivered to us with an extremely quiet 160 GB hard drive; larger hard drives are of course available as an option.

The OSD and the general operation of the receiver are a direct 1:1 copy of the Topfield Masterpiece – a smart decision in our opinion since this concept had already proven itself in previous tests.

Recording functions and Timer settings are easy to follow. Up to 64 entries can be made into the receiver and should more than two recordings be inadvertently set up for the same time, the receiver will warn you of this oversight. If you don’t want to miss any of your daily soaps or other favorite TV series, you should take great pleasure in the daily and weekly timer functions.

To round out this perfect picture, the receiver also comes with an integrated teletext decoder as well as a truly well-thought-out and easy to follow menu structure.

As with any receiver that we test, the TF6000PVR also had to prove its reception capabilities. Our SCPC test transponders on Pas12 at 45° east with a symbolrate of 1.325 Ms/sec. and on NSS7 at 22° west with 1.020 Ms/sec. were recognized, processed and displayed without any problems. The receiver also had no difficulties mastering weaker signals. Tests on BBC from Astra 2D in Munich and also from Arabsat 2D in Vienna were successful. Unfortunately, the signal strength and signal quality displays appeared to occasionally show inaccurate values.

WLAN

Thanks to the detailed user manual, it should take no time to set up this receiver with a WLAN router or with Access Point. Various standards such as ETSI, FCC or MKK are supported as are transmission rates from 1 to 54 Mbps. If necessary, the WEP protocol can be used for reliable encryption.

With all the settings taken care of, the user can access the receiver via a Web interface as well as through FTP. The so-called “Hermes” web interface makes it possible to control the more important functions of the TF6000PVR via your favorite web browser from practically anywhere in the world (whether it’s your own work room or an Internet café while on vacation). In addition to critical status information such as remaining hard drive space, it is possible to program and activate recordings directly via Hermes. Even the upload or download of recordings or MP3 files is possible.

Alone the transferring of data back and forth suggests the use of the integrated FTP program. It allows you to easily copy data to and from the TF6000PVR although the transfer rate at 350 to 500 kb/sec isn’t all that fast. Hopefully Topfield will consider some improvement here. Since a download runs for the most part unnoticed in the background, the longer transfer times are really not all that bothersome in that the receiver can continue to be used without any restrictions.