

TechnoTrend Connect S2-3600

HDTV receiver the size of a cigarette pack

After the PC card which was introduced in the previous issue of TELE-satellite, TechnoTrend now offers an HDTV receiver with miniature dimensions and the name Connect S2-3600. The small receiver gets its power from an external power unit and that's why there are no addi-

The installation CD includes a very useful PDF manual as well as all required drivers and applications. There is also a leaflet with a quick installation guide.

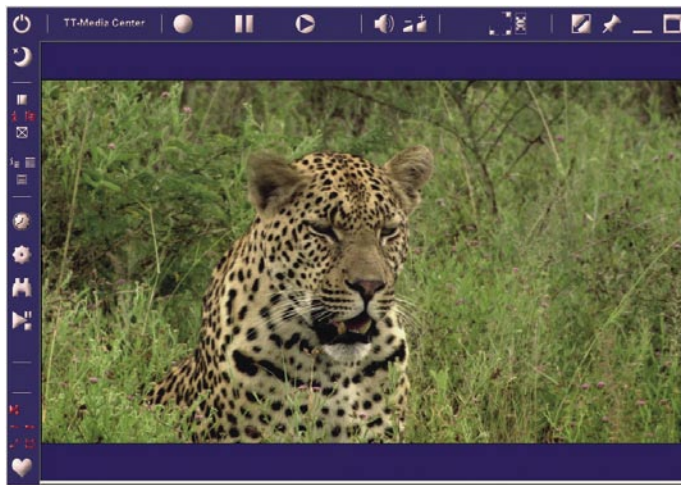
Everyday use

Installation of the Connect S2-3600 and associated software is based on the Plug & Play principle, which means that the Windows operating software detects new hardware right away and installs all necessary drivers automatically. There is not even a need to restart the PC after installation procedure and the box can be used immediately. Regarding the hardware requirements TechnoTrend recommends an Intel Pentium 3 processor with 1 GHz for normal DVB-S. If you want to use HDTV in DVB-S or DVB-S2, however, you need to go for a Pentium 4 with 3.4 GHz or AMD 3500/Dual Core in combination with a potent graphics card (AGP or PCI Express with a minimum of 64 MB RAM), as well as Windows XP. Unfortunately you cannot use any CI modules with the Connect S2-3600 which means it's not possible to receive pay TV with it.

The included software is divided into two areas: the TechnoTrend Media Center for TV reception on the one hand and tools for the

tional sockets apart from the IF input and the USB interface. The front panel features an IR receiver which picks up the signals from the included remote control, which unfortunately is a little on the small side.

reception of data services like Internet-via-satellite on the other hand. The Media Center comes pre-programmed with an almost complete channel list for the popular European position of ASTRA 19.2° East. The channel list is conveniently organised according to providers, which makes it rather easy to find all desired channels quickly.



Animals always make for good viewing: seen on the ASTRA HDTV promo channel

If you want to receive other satellites apart from ASTRA you can easily add these via the channel search menu. Altogether 141(!) European, Asian and American satellites are pre-programmed. Not all of these come with a fully

up-to-date transponder list, but given the sheer number of available positions this is a flaw we can easily forgive. The transponder data of each satellite can easily be extended and edited, and every imaginable local oscillator frequency can be selected.

Apart from the manual transponder search the included software allows searching a complete orbital position automatically and with an 80-transponder satellite this took a little over nine minutes. DiSEqC 1.0 is available to control up to four LNBS. DiSEqC 1.1 for multifeed antennas with up to 16 LNBS is not yet supported, unfortunately.

Thanks to the pre-programmed channel list it is possible to start watching right after installation and the first channel appears on screen already after two seconds. Switching time is good, and if two



Hardly bigger than a pack of cigarettes: the TechnoTrend Connect S2-3600 for HDTV reception

channels are transmitted on same transponder it takes only one second. Between two different transponders the time is slightly less than two seconds. If program provider transmits EPG data these are displayed for current and next event in a window on bottom of screen. Size of this window can be freely selected.

The EPG of many conventional settop boxes pales by comparison, because the S2-3600 has received all data only a few seconds after switching to a channel and can display all of them with the touch of a button, including extended EPG information (if provided for selected channel). The EPG also lists all stored data for other channels, so the whole lot can be displayed very conveniently.

The tuner used by TechnoTrend is very sensitive and can also handle SCPC signals with a low bandwidth. Our test transponder with a symbol rate of 1.6 Ms/s was processed flawlessly.

After having looked at the basic functions we of course proceeded to test HDTV reception. We quickly found the free-to-air channels on ASTRA 19.2° East and after two more seconds we were able to watch the first signal with perfect picture quality. You really need to compare HDTV and



SDTV side by side to appreciate the enormous improvement that HDTV brings via-à-vis standard television. While SDTV reception did not bother the CPU of our P4 3.7 GHz much, situation changed for HDTV reception and the processor rattled away in full speed. So long as no additional software was running during HDTV reception there was an absolutely synchronous presentation of audio and video, but as soon as the CPU had to provide some power for additional applications or for data transfer via the USB port, HDTV video got out of sync.

By the way, if you are lucky enough to own AC3 or Dolby Digital compatible speakers with your PC system you can enjoy perfect surround sound together with the brilliant video. Contrary to some DVB-S2 settop boxes the TechnoTrend Media Center is also able to receive transponders of British pay TV provider Sky Digital and of BBC on ASTRA 28.2° East without any problems. So if you can receive signals from ASTRA 2D there's nothing in the way of watching first-rate documentaries in top HDTV quality.

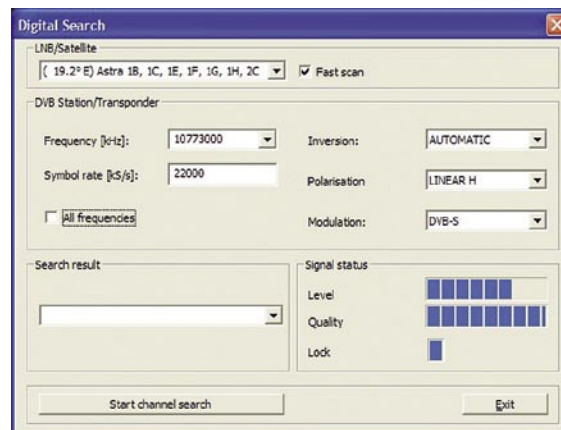
In addition to TV reception the included 'Media Center' software allows showing all kinds of videos on the PC and thanks to the picture-in-picture mode the current TV picture can be shown in a small window during commercial breaks, for example.

A dedicated item on the menu can be used to assign freely selectable functions to all buttons on the remote control, which is why the remote control has to be configured and all buttons have to be assigned with their desired functions before it becomes operational for the first time. Once this task is achieved it's great to use the remote, as it works just the way you want it to.

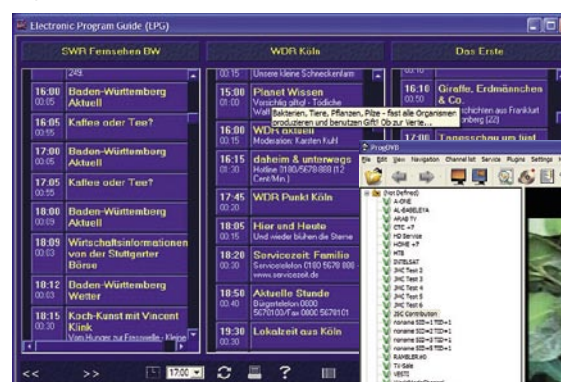
Apart from the software provided by TechnoTrend there are a

number of additional applications that work with this box and all the freaks who cannot live without ProgDVB, for reasons we don't want to dig into, can rest assured because the box and this software are a perfect match, even though an error message pops up every time you start up the application. You only have to confirm, however, and it disappears and does no harm. Even HDTV channels in DVB-S2 can be displayed using ProgDVB, even though the software itself does not originally support DVB-S2. The TechnoTrend data application running in the background as a tuning aid makes it possible.

DXers and satellite freaks take note: the TechnoTrend S2-3600 can display MPEG 4.2.2, just like all other DVB-S2 PC solutions, provided you have installed an appropriate codec.



Digital search



Program magazine



Distributor	DVB-Shop, Germany
Tel	+49-34954-31960
Fax	+49-34954-49233
Internet	www.dvbshop.net
Model	TT-Connect S2-3600
Function	USB box for reception of DVB and DVB-S2 in SDTV/HDTV
Channel memory	Unlimited
Satellites	141
Symbol rates	4-45 Ms/sec.
SCPC compatible	yes (up 1.6 Ms/s in our test)
USALS	no
DiSEqC	1.0
EPG	yes
C/Ku band compatible	yes



EPG



The "Media Center" software supplied by TechnoTrend can be used for many purposes

Expert conclusion

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The TechnoTrend Connect S2-3600 is a genuine alternative to conventional HDTV settop boxes. For little money you get a lot of features. The included software works glitch-free and HDTV reception is flawless provided your PC's processor is powerful enough.



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None.

With an appropriate codec and the ProgDVB software the Connect S2-3600 can also display MPEG 4:2:2 transmissions, just like this Al-Jazeera feed on NILESAT.