

AMIKO



Amiko Alien 2

- for TV reception via DVB-S2, DVB-T, DVB-C as well as Internet
- two simultaneous recordings while watching a third channel live
- automatic DiSEqC detection
- integrated WebTV and IPTV
- Internet access via WiFi, cable, mobile phone network or modem

ALOEN²

Triple Tuner PVR for DVB-S2 and DVB-T/C Reception



Whenever a new receiver arrives at one of our test centers the first element of surprise comes when we unpack the device. This time we were met with a total of three tuner inputs on the rear panel, which at first sight seemed to be slightly over the top.

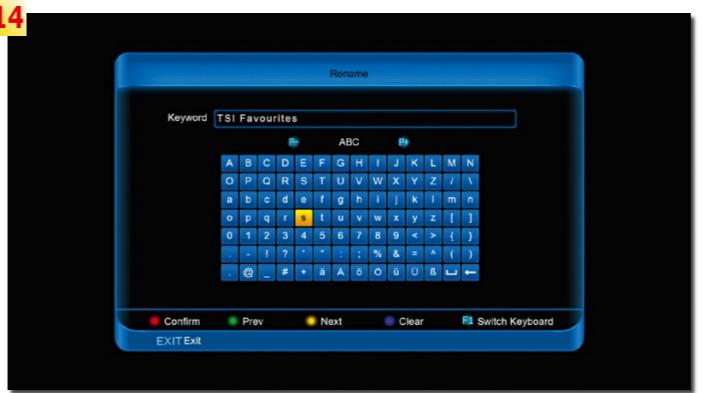
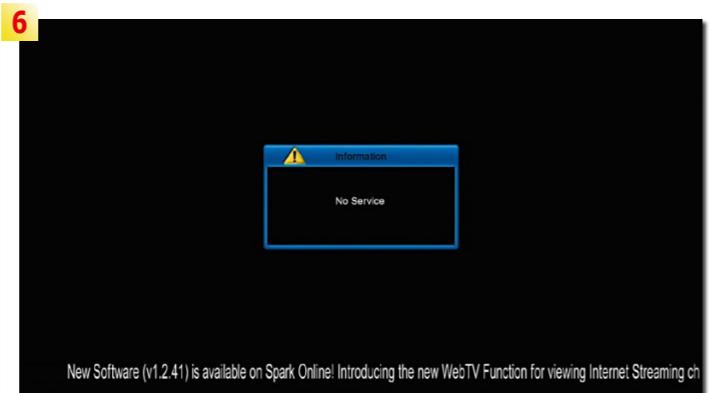
On second though, however, it makes perfect sense and only goes to show the amount of insight and attention to detail Amiko puts

into its products. By closely observing market trends the manufacturer rightly realised that satellite television offers unparalleled variety and a DVB-S2 tuner can whizz up thousands of channels to the living room TV. But what about the many smaller and local channels closer to home, which cannot afford distribution via satellite and consequently rely on DVB-T, local cable networks or

Internet TV? It is precisely these non-satellite channels that Amiko targets with its new Alien 2, which is based on the popular Alien (see test report in TELE-satellite 04-05/2011) but comes with an additional DVB-T/C tuner. Fulan was again selected as the provider for the web TV software which means the Alien 2 is perfectly suited for IPTV as well.

But we digress, let's take one step at a time and be-





gin with the outward appearance of the new Amiko Alien2.

The front panel consists of seven buttons which allow operating the receiver without a remote control, as well as two Conax card readers and a USB 2.0 connection, hidden behind a slap door.

The more features are packed into a receiver, the more important a perfect user/machine interface becomes, and to make sure Alien 2 users are never left in the dark Amiko has opted for a perfectly readable VFD display, next to a small LED which lights up red when the unit is in standby mode.

Turning around the receiver to have a look at the rear panel it becomes evident yet again that we are dealing with a top-notch device here that is a far cry from your average satellite set-top box.

On the left there are a total of three tuner inputs together with corresponding loop-through outputs. Right next to those is the Ethernet socket and the USB 2.0 connection which can also be used for USB hubs, thereby multiplying the number of USB devices that can be hooked up to the Amiko Alien 2. This is followed by an HDMI output for digital video and audio and a scart euroconnector as well as three RCA jacks for analog stereo and video – even though it's

hard to imagine somebody using an outdated analog TV set in combination with this high-end digital miracle box.

Your HiFi system can be fed with digital audio via an optical and a coax output, depending on your hardware or preference.

Moving further to the right there is an RS232 interface. All this is complemented by a mechanical power switch which can be used to fully disconnect the receiver from the mains.

If you are in awe of this comprehensive list of connection options, then you may get an impression of how we felt when our eyes began to wander across the rear panel. If we had to find a missing feature it would be a 0/12V supply output, but don't get us wrong: We don't want to sound like we're complaining to high heaven.

The remote control is just as impressive. It sits in your hand brilliantly, sports a remarkably clear layout and comes with easy-to-understand labelling.

Yet, looks are not everything and thankfully the remote scores highly with its touch-and-feel factor as well. Its buttons – while easy to press – offer just the right amount of feedback and after a short while this remote stands a good chance of becoming your best friend.

The overall level of work-

1. The Amiko Alien 2 installation wizard first wants to know your preferred OSD language
2. Setting the time
3. Network configuration
4. Resolution of the video output – 1080p is also available
5. Various customisation options of the Spark software
6. Whenever new software is available a message is shown in a text ticker on the bottom of the screen
7. Main menu of the Amiko Alien 2
8. Pre-stored satellite list
9. Each satellite can be configured individually for each tuner
10. DiSEqC protocols 1.2 and 1.3 for motorised antennas are supported as well
11. Transponder editor
12. Automatic channel search on ASTRA 19,2° East
13. DVB-T frequency list
14. Individual names can be given to favourites lists
15. Adding channels to favourites lists

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manship and build quality of the new Amiko Alien 2 is outstanding. If we had to define the perfect receiver, this one could be it!

Enough said about looks and specs now. Let's proceed with connecting our TV panel, Dolby Digital home theatre system and of course all available antennas to the receiver and finally press the magic ON button.

After a short moment the Spark software installation wizard says hello and starts to guide us through the initial setup routine. This consists of six steps, starting with OSD audio offering a vast range of languages for virtually all corners of the globe.

Next, the receiver needs to find out the correct local time. You may select for the box to use the time signal transmitted with the DVB data stream, or you may also set the internal clock manually.

If you use the automatic option you need to define your local time zone, i.e. the time difference between your location and GMT. An extra field is available for standard/daylight saving time.

This is followed by video resolution. In order to make sure your TV panel is provided with the best possible video quality you need to enter the maximum resolution supported by your panel. The following options are available: 480i, 576i, 720p, 1080i and 1080p. Thanks to 1080p output the Amiko Alien 2 is a perfect match for maximum resolution TV panels as well as for future 1080p transmissions.

The aspect ratio can be set in a number of ways, and while several different options are offered for the

presentation of 4:3 events on 16:9 screens this feature loses importance all the time since most channels broadcast in 16:9 anyway.

At this stage we would have expected to continue with a channel search, but the Amiko Alien 2 instead wanted to find out some specifics of our local network. It goes without saying that the receiver supports DHCP for automated communication between client and router, even though you may elect to enter all IP details manually as well, if need be.

In case you want to do away with all cables for Internet access you simply need to attach a USB WiFi stick such as the TP-Link TL-WN321G and can then use your wireless network at home.

To wrap up the initial configuration you're asked whether you want to create an individual four-digit PIN and you can deal with same basic settings of the Spark software, such as automatic message reception, new software alert and the like.

Now that all the basics are taken care of the installation wizard says goodbye and leaves us with an empty channel list. So what next?

Well, you can either start a channel search or use one of the pre-defined channel lists that can easily be downloaded from the Internet in the main menu.

As far as DVB-S2 reception is concerned the Amiko Alien 2 comes with 64 pre-stored European and Asian satellite positions, all of which boast up-to-date transponder details.

No matter whether it's a single LNB antenna you have, a multi-feed dish with two or more LNBs or even a motorised antenna, the

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16. Basic settings

17. It is possible to set a specific timeslot during which children may use the receiver

18. Network and Internet settings

19. The Amiko Alien 2 also supports Internet access via an external UMTS modem

20. Recordings can be saved onto network drives thanks to the NFS protocol

Amiko Alien 2 will be happy to work with any of these setups and make the most of all received signals.

But don't just take our word for it - here's a look at the specifications: It supports DiSEqC 1.0 for up to four LNBs, 1.1 for a total of 16 LNBs, as well as 1.2 and 1.3 for motorised antennas. A number of frequently used oscillatory frequencies are already pre-stored, yet if you need a more out-of-the-ordinary setting you can always enter it manually as well.

DXers and owners of older reception systems will appreciate the fact that this receiver can either give out 13V/18V for switching between polarisations, or provide 13V or 18V permanently, if required. Both voltages can be increased by 0.5V, which is particularly helpful for high-length cabling.

The Amiko Alien is a receiver with two fully-fledged DVB-S2 tuners, which means that all settings can be adjusted individually for each tuner. In case you want or have to use this box with only a single line it is possible to hand over the signal from tuner 1 to tuner 2 - this is neatly implemented in the operating software.

What's more, the performance of the various search modes left us just as impressed. The standard search on HOTBIRD 13° East only took four minutes and resulted in 1490 TV channels and 410 radio stations, while a blind scan on the same position yielded 1745 TV channels and 477 radio station after six minutes.

If you need to add additional transponders and edit or delete existing entries you'll appreciate the built-in transponder editor, while

21. Spark online portal

22. Weather forecast

23. Go to 'Networking' for access to YouTube, Shoutcast, Picasa or RSS feeds, among others

24. YouTube access with the Amiko Alien 2

25. A number of interesting applications for the Amiko Alien 2 are available from the Spark App Store

26. Recording settings

27. The receiver's database can be saved onto an external storage medium

28. Channel list

29. Sorting the channel list according to satellites

30. This menu can be used to activate teletext, different soundtracks and subtitles

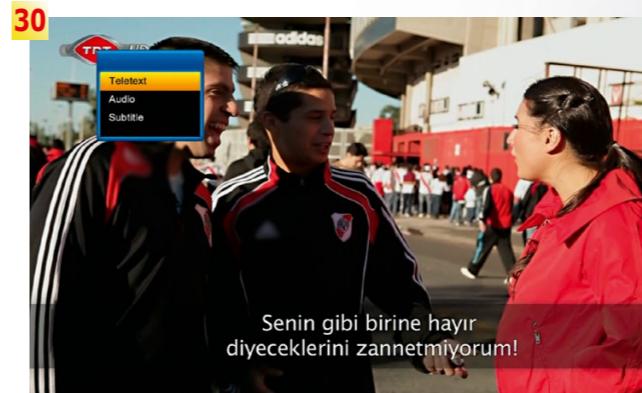
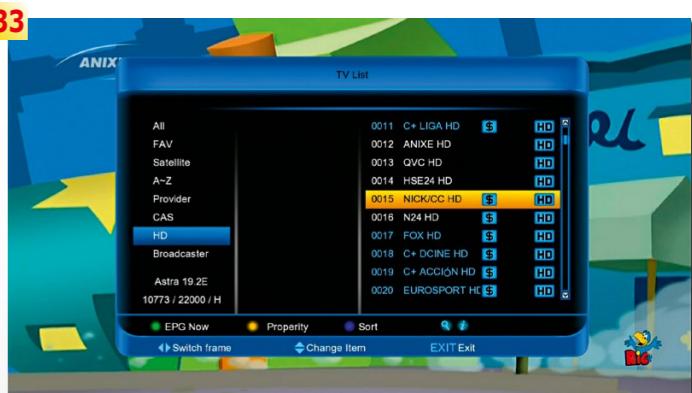
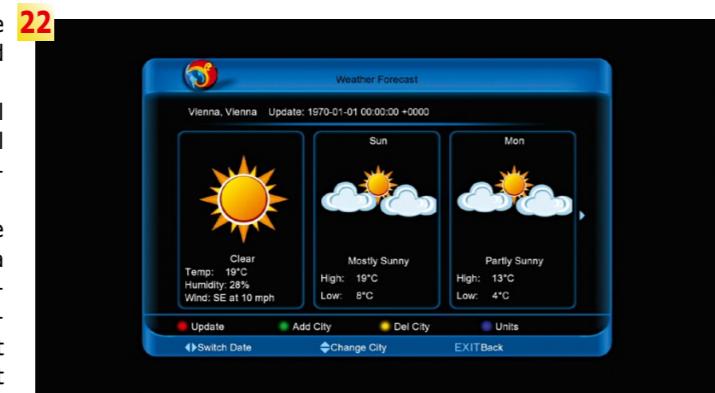
31. Integrated teletext decoder

32. A maximum of two simultaneous recordings (SD or HD) are possible

33. Channel list with all HD channels

34. Info bar with titles of current and next events

35. EPG overview covering several channels



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one of the many smart features of the receiver is that you can press the INFO button on the remote to call up a listing of the entire transponder content without adding the channels to the channel list.

If you opt for the manual mode you can define the frequency that is to be scanned based on a pre-stored list for the VHF and UHF ranges.

While most of our readers are deeply interested in the technical aspects of receivers we review, the average user out there simply wants to watch TV without any fuss. It is precisely for them that Amiko has implemented Auto DiSEqC detection, which means the receiver finds out all by itself which DiSEqC port has to be used for the currently selected satellite.

We truly love how this manufacturer achieves a balancing act between offering special treats to pros and DXers and pleasing your average Joe.

Talking about user-friendliness, we'd like to go back to blind scan once again: First, all active transponders on both polarisations (or on one only, if requested) are looked for.

While at work searching the receiver displays an oscillator diagram – even though this turned out to be eye-candy without much actual use.

The second step involves analysing all found active transponders and reading all channels and feeds on those transponders. On the one hand this reduces the duration for the blind scan to an absolute minimum, while on the other hand it makes sure all available transponders are found reliably.

Let's turn to DVB-T/C now, which also creates an excellent first impression. It, too, features either an automatic or manual channel search and in automatic mode our test receiver required four

minutes for a search across the entire frequency band.

Unfortunately, the Amiko Alien 2 does not allow storing DVB-T and DVB-C channels in a single channel list. As soon as the reception mode is changed in the basic settings the existing channel list is deleted and the receiver shuts down and re-starts again.

We tested both DVB-T and DVB-C reception and are happy to report that both worked absolutely flawlessly with the Alien 2.

Now that DVB-S and DVB-T/C channel searches have filled our channel list with hundreds of offerings we can finally move from theory to practice.

But wait a minute – we'd better bring some order into our channel list first, which vastly enhances our viewing pleasure later.

The Amiko sports a dedicated menu item for channel list management which allows deleting, moving, renaming or PIN-locking one or several channels at a time. In addition, a total of 32 favourites lists can be set up and filled.

Once again, this menu item creates a very pleasant user experience which takes a lot of pain out of channel list editing. A tidy house, a tidy mind – we couldn't agree more!

One last thought before we finally start with the practical section of our review: In the old days we had a handful of channels and we almost knew their daily offering by heart. These days, it is impossible to know what comes on TV and if you have children you

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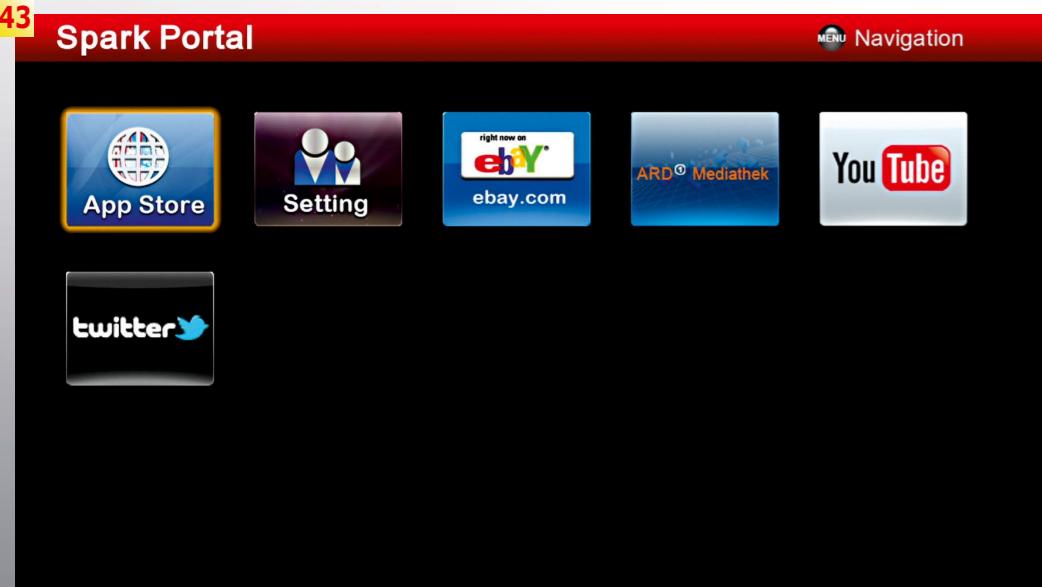
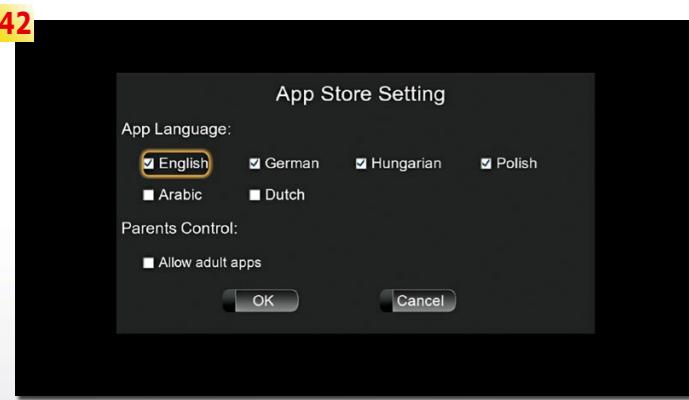
39



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- 36. Timer entries can be created right from the EPG
- 37. Various repeat recording options can be used in order not to miss an interesting broadcast
- 38. MP3 playback
- 39. Playing back a previously stored recording
- 40. Image viewer



41 receiver to a certain timeslot such as 5 pm to 7 pm, for example. Watching TV after 7 pm in those cases requires the correct PIN in order to unlock the set-top box.

Well then, we've looked long and hard at all basic settings and options of the Amiko Alien 2, and now it's finally time to find out all about its TV and radio reception capabilities.

As always, we give the OK button on the remote a go to call up the channel list, which consists of three elements. In the left column you can find the selectors for All, Favourite, Satellite, A-Z, Provider, CAS, HD and Broadcaster which can be used to restrict the channel list and to help you find the channel you're looking for faster.

The second column lists the options for the selection you have made and in the third column you can see all channels that meet your criteria.

By the way, the Broadcaster menu item should be selected to change between the DVB-T/C tuner and the DVB-S2 tuners.

The manufacturer has put the colour-coded function keys on the remote control to very practical use for the channel list. The yellow button, for example, activates a range of editing options (delete, move, rename, add to favourites) on the fly, while the blue button calls up sorting functions (channel number, A-Z, Free+CAS, transponder). Finally, the green button displays extended EPG information on the current event of the selected channel.

If you're looking for technical parameters such as frequency, polarisation or PID you only need to press the INFO button.

There is even a search button on the remote which in combination with the OSD keyboard lets you search by name for a certain channel. Every time a new channel appears on screen or the

should spare a moment to think about protecting them from inappropriate content.

The Amiko Alien 2 provides valuable assistance even in that area. It matches the rating transmitted by content providers with the limit set by you and can automatically PIN-lock events out of that range. In addition, you may restrict the operating time of the



INFO button is pressed the receiver displays a nicely laid out info bar that is also pleasing to the eye.

Apart from the title of the current and next events it shows a range of icons indicating the availability of alternative soundtracks, subtitles, EPG, teletext, encryption or HDTV. In addition two bars keep you informed about the strength and quality of the incoming signal.

We know we've been praising the Amiko Alien 2 to the skies so far – but not without reason, and here's one more: The electronic program guide (EPG) of this box is simply exemplary. It offers two different views showing either nine channels at a time or a complete listing covering up to seven days for a single channel.

For the sake of consistency, the same selectors as for the channel list (All, Favourites, Satellite, A-Z, Provider, CAS, HD and Broadcaster) are available here as well and speed up navigation within the EPG.

The Amiko Alien 2 comes with full PVR functionality and so it is only logical that you can create timer entries right from an EPG listing. In case your favourite show is broadcast daily, weekly, on weekdays or on weekends only, all corresponding timer options are available at the touch of a button. Use this smart feature and you'll never miss a sporting event

or your favourite sitcom again.

As you know we never treat products we review with too much respect but rather try to push them to their limits. What can we say, this time the Amiko Alien 2 always got the upper hand – or in other words, it performed flawlessly.

Its user interface sports a well thought-out design and makes for a very pleasant user experience, even though it offers all functions we expect from a state-of-the-art receiver, such as changing between various soundtracks, DVB subtitles and teletext. In addition, it is fully HbbTV compatible and will provide all additional features offered by content providers. Short for 'hybrid broadcast broadband TV', this technology can offer everything from a web TV portal and current news to additional content information or a multimedia program guide.

We'll deal with the vast range of PVR and network features this receiver has in store in a moment, but first comes our verdict on the hardware components used by the manufacturer.

In our test all built-in tuners delivered excellent results and were happy to process weak signals as well. We gave the Alien 2 a genuinely hard time with a signal from TURKSAT 42° East whose symbol rate never exceeds 3 Ms/s, but

Spark portal (more about that later in the network/Internet section of this review), safely removing a USB storage medium and changing the video resolution on the fly.

The Amiko Alien 2 can easily be turned into a fully-featured PVR receiver simply by attaching an external USB hard disk, memory card or USB stick.

Thanks to its three built-in tuners it is possible to record two different events at the same time while watching a third channel live. The receiver will automatically switch between the two satellite receivers and on the channel list all those channels that cannot be watched live while two other channels are recorded are shown with grey background.

It doesn't make a difference whether you make one DVB-T/C and one DVB-S2 recording or two DVB-S2 recordings, the selection is entirely up to you.

If you manually request a recording the receiver asks you if it should shut down after completion of the recording (with the start and end times obtained from the EPG). While this may sound like a minor feature, it is further proof of the Spark software's attention to detail and focus on ease-of-use.

Speaking of availability, you should give the receiver some 30 seconds from standby until all systems are running, but if you're the impatient kind you may also select the Fake Standby mode in the main menu which will make sure the receiver is up and running almost instantly at the touch of a button.

Of course this doesn't come without a drawback of its own, which in this case is much higher energy consumption than in deep standby (see energy diagram).

As far as the remote control is concerned we should mention the fact that it comes with dedicated buttons for accessing the

or 64 fold speed, so that you don't have to search long for your favourite scene.

We did like that it is possible to save the entire configuration of the receiver onto an external storage medium so that you always have a working channel list plus all individual settings available if worse comes to worst.

Obviously, you can also choose to update the receiver's software with the help of a USB storage medium, even though most will probably prefer a direct download thanks to the network connection of the Amiko Alien 2.

The PVR features of the receiver are complemented

of course to the Internet as well. The manufacturer placed great emphasis on this aspect, which is reflected in the enormous range of functions and options for network integration. You may either use any existing cabling for hooking up the receiver to your LAN, or you can go wireless and access the Internet without any Ethernet cable at all.

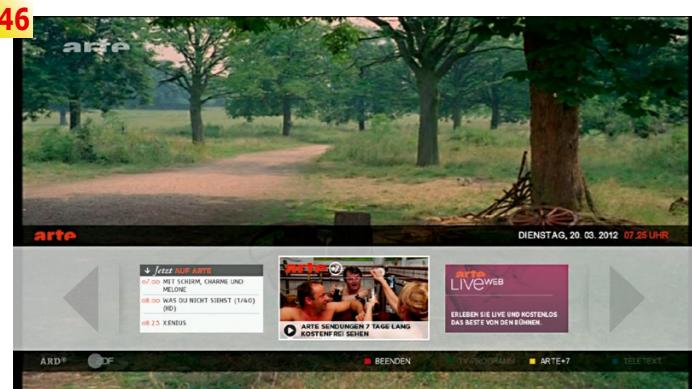
Even if you don't have Internet at your place the Amiko Alien 2 offers a smart solution: Simply get the Huawei K3526, E1550, E1750 or any other compatible USB modem to use Internet via a 3G mobile phone network. And if that is not offered where you

saging system to provide information on new products or important news.

By default, the 'Networking' item of the main menu has a number of applications in store for access to the YouTube video portal, Shoutcast Internet radio service, Picasa image service, RSS feeds, Kartina IPTV or to web TV content at large. For simply surfing the web the Amiko Alien 2 offers the Opera browser which – together with the OSD keyboard – creates a very pleasing user experience. The basic network features are rounded off with an FTP client for access to any FTP server for file transfer and a weather

a worthwhile investment. It will further enhance your browsing experience since aside from the keyboard it also sports a track pad.

The receiver is fully Amiko WLK-100 mini compatible and naturally we gave it a go: The two turned out to be a perfect match. Writing mails or chatting with friends is sheer pleasure and you'll find that your PC or smartphone will stay put where they are while you're browsing away on the TV. The Amiko Alien 2 supports the NFS protocol and therefore allows storing recordings right on a network drive. You'll appreciate that possibility if you like to create DVDs with your re-



by an MP3 music player and an image viewer for JPEG and BMP files. It will also play back videos downloaded from the Internet, provided they come in standard

live either, you may always use the built-in modem and connect it to your landline – either way, the world wide web will soon be at your fingertips.

forecast service.

The Opera browser comes with a jazzed up home screen with links to frequently used pages such as eBay, Bing, Google or Ama-

cordings, since it does not involve any additional file copying.

Let's go back to the Spark portal once again, because it is something which in our



file formats such as MPEG, TS, AVI, DivX, VOB, etc. All this turns the Amiko Alien 2 into a genuine multimedia centre in your living room.

Once a connection to the Internet is established the Spark software has a few aces up its sleeve. For example, a text ticker informs users whenever a new software version is available for download and the manufacturer can even use this mes-

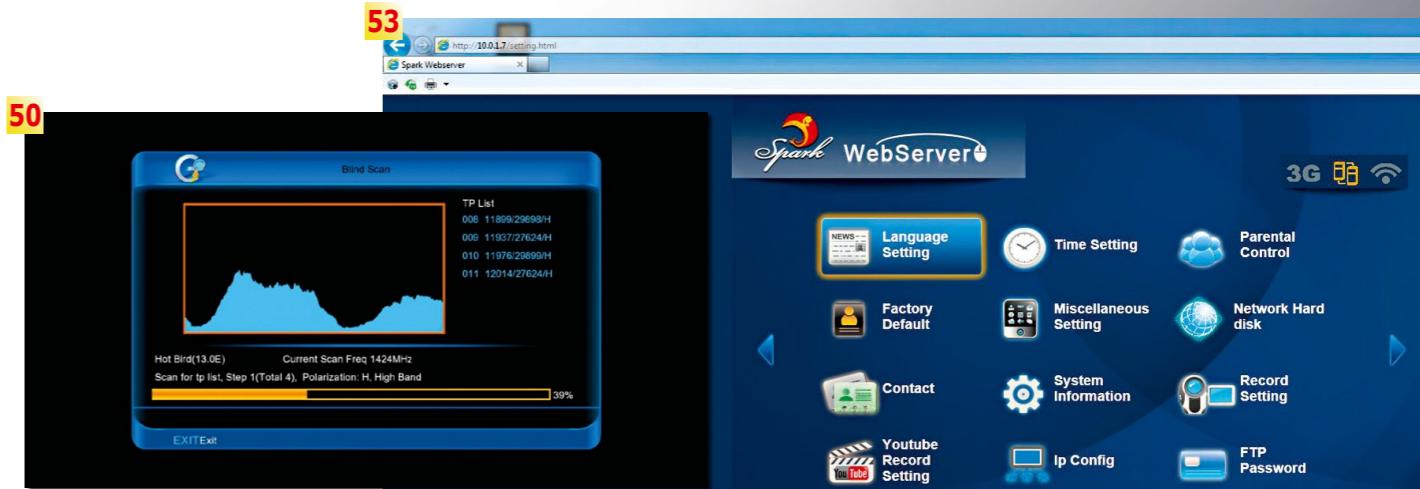
zon as well as social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.).

If it turns out you use the Amiko Alien 2 for Internet access more frequently than expected, getting the Amiko WLK-100 mini wireless keyboard might turn out to be

opinion deserves special praise. It offers a range of small applications for various kinds of use. Some of these apps are in-house developments, others come from third-party and private software developers who are able to use a dedi-



50. When doing a blind scan the receiver first looks for all active transponders of a satellite and only then performs a detailed signal scan

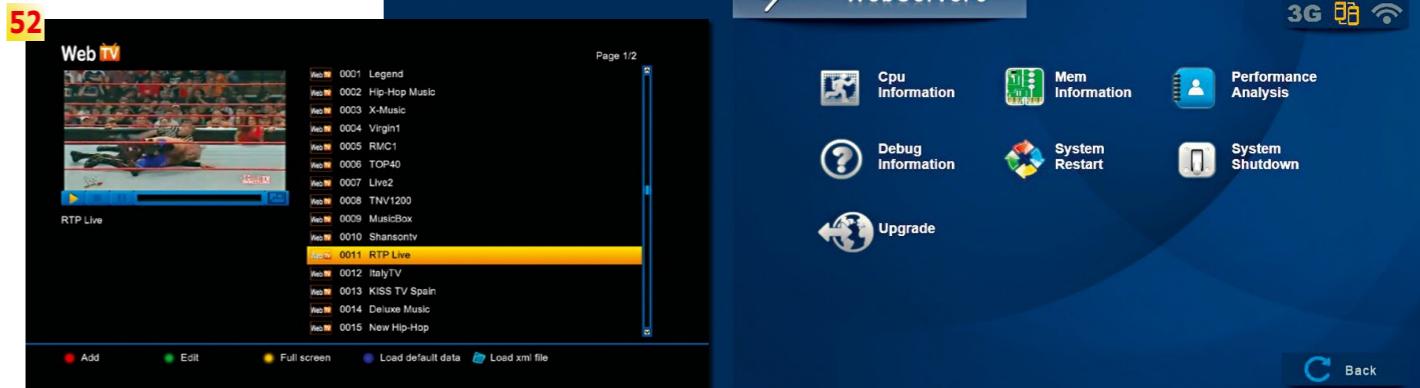


cated software interface for creating their own compatible software.

Users can find those apps in the so-called Spark App Store, which offers TV libraries from a number of channels (ARD, ZDF, ARTE,



etc.), as well as information services such as kino.de, Sport1, motorsportotal.com, kicker, nuna.tv or iConcerts. Even platforms like eBay and Twitter have



46. HbbTV is supported as well
47. HbbTV portal of French/German channel ARTE
48. The OSD keyboard comes with two layouts: classic or telephone
49. SCPC reception from TURKSAT 42° East
50. When doing a blind scan the receiver first looks for all active transponders of a satellite and only then performs a detailed signal scan
51. DVB-C reception



52. Web TV with numerous channels covering various different genres
53. With the help of the built-in web server the Amiko Alien 2 can be controlled remotely with a web browser
54. Language settings made through the Amiko Alien 2 web server
55. Status information can be called up through the web server, and it is possible to shut down or restart the receiver

their own apps and are available for download from the Spark portal, which incidentally can be launched with a dedicated button on the remote control.

It's quite striking that the Spark App Store currently features a large number of German-language apps, but we expect the number of languages and regions to increase rapidly in future.

If you're interested in a specific language only, you may use the corresponding filter in the Spark App Store, which can restrict the offering to English, German, Hungarian, Polish, Dutch or Arabic.

Even though it is a work in progress and therefore not yet fully implemented, we'd like to mention the

web server that comes with the Amiko Alien 2. Once completed, it will allow remote access and control of the receiver from any web browser.

No matter where in the world you are, you'll be able to fully control the receiver, with the range of options covering everything from video resolution to PVR settings. It is also possible to look at status information or to initiate a re-start.

Before you'll be able to use remote access you have to define a user name and password in the receiver menu, which then has to be entered in order to gain access to the receiver.

As the web server will only be released some time in the future, its features

are currently not active by default.

Right at the beginning of this review we mentioned that the Amiko Alien 2 does not care which transmission mode is used to feed it with TV and radio content.

Apart from the two DVB-S2 tuners and the DVB-T/C tuner it can even receive TV via Internet, which is hidden in the 'Web TV' menu item.

Generally speaking, this is a selection of TV and radio content that is freely available on the Internet, with all links saved in a dedicated xml file.

If you want to use the web TV function, this means you absolutely need such an xml file. Thankfully, a quick search on the Internet reveals a number of such lists

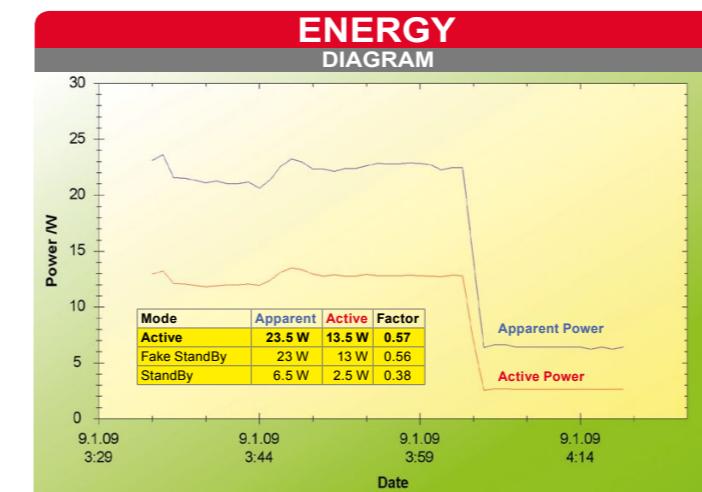
and our thanks go out to eager users compiling and updating those lists in their leisure time.

We obtained one list for testing purposes, which included an impressive variety of different genres, ranging from wrestling and music channels all the way to a 3D and HD channel, plus a number of radio stations. Stay tuned for a comprehensive review of the Spark software's web TV functions in one of the upcoming issues of TELE-satellite.

From the sheer length of this report and from our enthusiasm you can tell that the Amiko Alien 2 is filled to the brim with more features than you would ever expect. What's more, each feature we tapped into worked flaw-

lessly thanks to top-quality hardware on the one hand, and the sophisticated and proven Spark software from Fulan on the other hand.

It all goes to show that so much attention to detail pays off in the end and leaves an everlasting smile on the face of happy users.



Energy: Active use with channel switching, recording, playback, etc. in first 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of fake standby and 15 minutes of deep standby.

TECHNICAL DATA	
Manufacturer	AMIKO EU
Website	www.amikostb.com
Model	Alien 2
Function	DVB-S2, DVB-T, DVB-C Triple Tuner PVR Receiver
Input frequency DVB-S2	950 - 2150 MHz
Input frequency DVB-T / DVB-C	VHF (170-230 MHz) UHF (470-860 MHz)
Symbol rates DVB-S2	2 - 45 Ms/s
EPG	yes
Video resolution	480i, 576i, 720p, 1080i, 1080p
DISEqC	1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
RS232	yes
Ethernet	yes
USB 2.0	yes
CI Slot	no
Card Reader	yes (Conax)
HDTV	yes
MPEG4/H.264	yes
PVR	yes

Expert Opinion



+ Feature-packed receiver made up of top-notch hardware and excellent software. Despite its enormous range of features it remains easy to use and can be recommended to satellite enthusiasts and beginners alike. Thanks to its three tuners it is possible to receive DVB-S2, DVB-T, DVB-C and Internet TV, which means a single box can deal with all available transmission modes.

- Unfortunately, DVB-T2 is not supported

