

CONTENT

TOPFIELD TF6000PVR
Digital Satellite Receiver
with PVR and WLAN 14



EYCOS S30.12CI
Digital Satellite Receiver
with CI Slots..... 18



ARION 9400 PV2R
Digital FTA + CI 2 PCMCIA
twin tuner satellite receiver
and PVR..... 22



MASPRO DT330
Digital terrestrial,
BS satellite,
CS satellite receiver..... 24



**TechniSat
TechniCAM CX / CW**
CA modules..... 43

**DVB-Shop
Technotrend S1500
Budget, plus CI**
Digital satellite tuner
PCI card 44

Spaun SMS 17089 NF
Mutliswitch with
embedded power supply 46



**Chess Edition II
LNB's of
Max Communication**
Universal
LNBF's 48

Prolink-4C Premium
Advanced Digital
TV & SAT
Level Meter 50

Beginner Section:
Basic Satellite Antenna Settings – Part 2..... 10
Feature: FEC equal to 9/10 or 8/9 – what is this? 12
SatcoDX New Satellite Channels 26
Satellite Technology:
HDTV in North America 52

HDTV in Italy 53
HD in the UK 53
HDTV in Germany 54
HDTV in China 56
HDTV in Japan 58
TSI Team: Ihre Fragen, unsere Antworten 59, 62, 63

Dear Readers



Up until recently, I had believed that HDTV technology was nothing more than an expansion of existing technology. Transmissions in 16:9 format have been around for some time and can be viewed equally with a standard 4:3 format TV as with a wide screen TV. In other words, 16:9 transmissions are backwards-compatible with 4:3 transmissions. And so I thought that with HDTV the picture not only becomes wider but also the number of lines in the picture doubles.

I received the first shock a few years ago when TELE-satellite introduced the first HDTV satellite receiver: it was a standard MPEG-2 signal although a standard receiver could not display a picture. Then for some time nothing happened. Finally, in our last issue, TELE-satellite reported that a new compression method, namely MPEG-4 (aka H-264), was being introduced as was a new modulation method going by the name of DVB-S2.

And as if this were not enough, we have learned that HDTV transmissions will in part operate with FEC values that have never been heard of before: namely 9/10 and 8/9. These are values that I never knew existed. Take a look in the menu of your satellite receiver or in the software application of your satellite PC card: not only won't you find an FEC of 9/10 or 8/9, you can't even set it up manually.

These new FEC values have come as a complete surprise for us as well as SatcoDX – their software does not recognize them. When the software was originally developed, it was assumed that only the known FEC values would ever be used. There were never any indications that there would ever be additional FEC values. Naturally, the SatcoDX programmers are quite busy right now rewriting the code so that these new values can be displayed. What a mess!

It would appear that we will be getting a completely new HDTV transmission standard in every possible parameter. It seems to me to be rather all of a sudden. And it also seems to me to be a standard developed

by engineers. If politics had been involved in any way, this HDTV standard would be backwards-compatible. This is how it was with the development of color TV: the old black and white TV's could easily handle the new color TV signals. It was also like that with the advent of stereo audio: mono systems could play back stereo transmissions. Only with the appearance of digital technology did backwards-compatibility no longer work.

And now with HDTV we once again have to deal with new technology that is not in any way backwards-compatible. This can be seen as good as well as bad depending on your point of view. At the very least, it is good that HDTV is getting the most out of this new technology; there are hardly any compromises. What's not so good is that consumers now have to buy all new equipment – from a new HDTV television to a new HDTV satellite receiver.

Hmm, come to think of it, as much as this makes manufacturers happy, it also makes us as a trade magazine happy: we will have plenty of work ahead of us testing these new units so that you, the reader, will be able to make informed decisions on what to buy. With that in mind, long live this brand new technology!

Sincerely,
Alexander Wiese

P.S.: My favorite radio station of the month is "The Voice" on THOR 2,3 (359.2E), 11.293 GHz, 24500, A-PID 654. Except for the morning hours, when there is too much talk, this station rocks the remainder of the day – it will definitely keep you awake!

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