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KISS Technologies DP-558 DVD Player

by Dan Leonard published on 9 November 2005

KISS, having been bought out by Linksys owner Cisco, is starting to introduce more network friendly devices. It's latest offering - the DP-558 starts to blur the lines between PVR, DVD and media bridge, but can the network company simply buy its way into the market? We take a closer look. This personal video recorder combines an 80GB hard disc drive with a DVD-R drive. On closer inspection - the Kiss 558 is a mish-mash of technologies from a range of companies. Under the bonnet and you'll find that the HDD hardware comes from Samsung and the DVD unit from Toshiba. Even the remote is made by someone else and luckily for Kiss its chosen the design house of Bang & Olufsen for this one. By using established components and employing some stylish design input, KISS have turned out a sturdy DVD player with MP2/3/4, WMA, AC3 and OGG audio, DIVX, AVI and MPG4 video capabilities. From an empty hard drive, this unit will record up to 120 hours of video as MPEG2. Not only are there a vast number of inputs and outputs supported, but also a 10/100 ethernet port. That means online connection and a PVR in the mould of a media centre, the next big thing to shake up UK living rooms. While this unit is not a media centre per se, it is quite easy to plumb into your Windows driven home computer, or even your Apple Mac. The graphic interface and setup wizards simplify installation to your local network and the internet, but the 558 is a broadband device that requires an element of networking knowledge to make the best of it. A good understanding of files, networks and a large appetite for media is required to fully exploit it, but for anyone willing to try it, this will at the very least, transfer recorded content from closed circuit broadcasts across satellite, terrestrial and analogue to the hard drive. With the ethernet connection comes a myriad of possibilities for digital content on the move, but also some unique built in services, served direct from the manufacturer. Because the PVR runs from an 'always on' internet connection, you can access it



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from any Wi-Fi enabled location. The box can access the web at any time, but again, only if you have an always-on network (make sure you have secured your Wi-Fi network before you go out). An always-on connection supports the firmware and the electronic program guide, games and weather, accessible from your TV or from any internet connection. Using what is essentially an inbuilt FTP, stored content can be viewed, removed, or added remotely. Pushing laziness to the limit, a configured Wi-Fi enabled device or mobile phone can access the on-board program guide online and timer record from the KISS schedule. Timeshift at home, record the telly when you're out. Fantastic! But is it practical? The first problem encountered was that to run on my local network, I needed another ethernet cable, despite one coming in the box, although having a modem with one ethernet slot, and that leading to my Wi-Fi sender didn't help. Also, with the TV, set top box, modem, sender and a bleeping laptop, I was desperately short of plugs and creating a cat's cradle of wires across my living room. The 558 has an inbuilt TV tuner, but requires two antenna cables, plus three scarts, if using a set top box or plumbing through another digital unit. No surprise then, that once plumbed in, moving or rewiring is a pain. Thanks to the setup wizard, the installation process is easy, if a little slow. The live web connection was detected as soon as the box was turned on, IP address noted and each method of connection, audio and video and TV display selected via a graphic interface. It isn't the worst I've seen and is in keeping with the minimalist styling of remote and box exterior. Now, global location is selected, HDD formatted (3 mins approx) and firmware downloaded. Ready to roll. Next stage is to tune the TV channels. For some reason, the PVR-STB-TV scart combo wouldn't detect any channels. Stripping the STB out of the equation (Nokia onDigital throwback, in need of a good rest) enabled me to pick up 3 channels, but a Freeview tuner is surely a must for UK versions of the DP-558's descendents. With a 1 min minimum and 1 day 1 min max recording time, this unit will lay down up

At a glance

What is it?

HDD enabled DVD with ethernet connection

Good

Record to HDD, transfer to and from your network, and beyond

Bad

Even playing a DVD, it is very noisy

Verdict

Not cheap, but the network element will change the way you think about TV and video

Price £289.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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to 120 hours of video in MPEG2 format. I managed to transfer a 2 min clip in MPEG2 format to my Acer tablet and play that back with VLC player, and also successfully connected the box with my Apple eMac - the ePC Link' software is both PC and Mac compatible - but couldn't get a connection to the network. This probably says more about my networking capabilities than the software. I haven't yet managed to sync my mobile phone to the EPG, but I have already surprised myself with the functionality and user friendliness.

VERDICT

So far as the DVD drive goes, it played a DIVX of Tron, DVD-R and RW, read JPEGs from a CD-ROM and I haven't any audio content on disc this couldn't handle. I've reviewed STB, DVD and PVR units over the last year, but this is the first that comes close to the Topfield TVRF500 - and it is a DVD player too. The one most annoying feature? The volume. Even when connected to my telly via a solitary scart, the DVD drive was so loud I could barely hear Larry David's new series. I guess the sound of a computer under the TV is something we'll all get used to. Turn it up, the Dolby Digital's great and the Bang & Olufsen remote feels even better.