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TVonics DVR-150 PVR recorder

Can this British made eco PVR beat Sky+?

by Davey Winder published on 1 December 2006

If you have often fancied Sky+ with its pausing/rewinding of live TV and the ability to record one channel while watching another, but have barfed at the ongoing cost, then consider the TVonics.

Sure, at £190 it is hardly a cheap purchase, but there are no monthly subscription fees to mount up, and it will take less than a year to be ahead when it comes to counting the pennies.

Of course, Sky+ it isn't, and this is most noticeable in two regards: the relatively poor choice of channels you get with Freeview, and the electronic programming guide.

Sky has really developed its EPG to the max, with features that once used are never forgotten such as the ability to set a series link and have all episodes of that programme automatically recorded.

We also found the TVonics EPG to be a little slow at times, especially once we had recorded quite a few hours of programming. The 160GB hard drive enables you to record up to 80 hours of your favourite telly, with a quick one-touch record function.

Here at Pocket-lint we have to admit we are Sky converts for good reason, Freeview reception is poor and for me I am too tight to upgrade my aerial to improve matters when the quantity and quality of Sky channels is so high.

We bring this up because this has not prevented me from having a Freeview box, but has meant I can only receive the BBC channels.

But not with the TVonics DVR-150 which was only able to locate said 6 channels once, and then insisted the signal was too weak to either



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display any information about them, record them or even let him watch them.

So if you are in a weak signal area and want one of these, get your aerial sorted first. Moving the box to a friends house where Freeview reception is not an issue resulted in, err, Freeview reception not being an issue. It does raise the question of why three other boxes were able to pick up the BBC OK and the TVonics refused though.

On the plus side, the TVonics device does have twin Freeview tuners to enable that record one and watch one function, which is nice. But nicer still, and it's real Unique Selling Point (other than being the only British designed and manufactured, albeit by Sony, Freeview PVR on the market) is that it is the most eco-friendly of such devices.

The green credentials come by way of the low 20W of energy used during operation and importantly for a PVR, as it will need to be left on standby in order to record the stuff you have requested, only 3W in that standby mode.

So it uses less of the resources we need to preserve, and saves you money in the process. Nice one. TVonics also assure us that it is constructed from materials chosen to minimise the environmental impact when disposed of. Not that you could tell, because it looks and feels rather nice in its high gloss piano black finish.

Indeed, looks wise it makes for a stylish living room addition. Measuring just 18.4 x 7 x 22.7cm, which makes it the smallest on the market, it can be mounted standing vertically at the side of your telly or laying horizontal on top of it courtesy of the included and equally stylish gloss black bracket. You also get a programmable universal remote control that dealt admirably with myriad of strange TV and DVD brands we tried it with. And, happily for living room or bedroom use, as long as you don't site it on a hollow wooden box the noise levels are so low as to be hardly noticeable.

At a glance

What is it?

Ecologically friendly PVR and Freeview box

Good

80 hours recording, small, quiet, twin tuners, eco-friendly

Bad

Environmentally friendly does not come cheap

Verdict

Black on the outside, green on the inside. A twin tuner Freeview box with an 80 hour digital recorder to rival Sky, that you can buy at Tesco

Price £189.99

Our score

6/10

Your score

8/10

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It is also very easy to connect and get going, just a matter of hooking up your existing TV aerial in order to receive free-to-air digital TV and radio channels, a SCART lead and, well, that's about it. Turn it on, it tunes itself in, and you can pretty much start viewing and recording straight away.

VERDICT

If you value the reduced running costs and environmentally friendly nature of the product, then you might be prepared to pay the consumer unfriendly price this PVR commands. But it cannot compete with Sky+ when it comes to programme choice or recording flexibility.