

Topfield TF7700HSCI

HDTV receiver with eye-catching design

High-definition television – a synonym for crystal-clear video and brilliant colours. Now that the industry and program providers have finally agreed on the H264 stan-

dard for transmitting their HDTV programs the manufacturers of satellite receivers are also in a position to start offering new reception equipment for satellite viewers. All major

manufactures are currently working on their first HDTC DVB-S2 box.

Some even offer a completely finished box, like South Korean company Topfield.



Their latest development bears the name TF7700HSCI and is a CI receiver which can process both DVB-S2 QPSK and DVB-S2 8PSK signals. Since products like these only reach their full potential in combination with plasma or LCD screens – which usually feature a very stylish design – Topfield has decided to give its latest baby a very elegant appearance as well. So the TF7700HSCI has the same style as the premium range with the TF5000PVR Masterpiece and TF6000PVR, which means matte black surfaces, a width of 43 cm and a look that will enhance any living room rack.

An easy-to-read VFD display is located in the middle of the front panel and either shows the selected channel or the current time (in standby mode). Five buttons are positioned below the display and allow using the receiver without the remote control. A flap hides two CI slots for all the usual modules (Irdeto, Seca, Conax, Viaccess, Cryptoworks, etc.).

An extra treat is hidden on the back panel of the box – a small switch to select whether the video signal should be transmitted via the HDMI/YUV or euros-

cart interface. Depending on the position of this switch, the on-screen menus are adjusted accordingly.

The remote control that comes with the receiver sits nicely in your hand and has a user-friendly layout. Unfortunately, the control codes of the remote are partly identical to other Topfield models like the TF3000CIPro which we use in our test lab to control a 36V rotating antenna system.

A very comprehensive operating manual in English was also part of our package, by the time the box will be on sale officially we can expect various language versions for all respective markets.

Everyday use

When the receiver is switched on for the first time the main menu pops up and stays on the screen until all LNB settings are made and a channel search is completed. There is no pre-stored list of channels to speed up the initial setup, however.

The satellite list provided by the manufacturer comprises

81 European, Asian and American satellites, many specifics of which are outdated in the pre-stored data, though. The same is true for the pre-stored transponder data, even though these have been adapted to the new DVB-S2 standard, by and large. An automatic signal search will therefore find most HDTV channels broadcasting in DVB-S2. Luckily, new satellites can be added in a breeze and existing satellite and transponder data can easily be edited.

Like all other Topfield receivers the TF7700HSCI supports DiSEqC 1.0, 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 (USALS), which means that all configurations from a simple multifeed setup to a DiSEqC controlled rotating system or a Wavefrontier antenna with 16 LNBs can be connected and controlled effortlessly. The box comes with a whole range of pre-stored oscillator frequencies and even if you insist on using your S-band antenna with this receiver you're free to use the manual LOF setup to make it all work.

The TF7700HSCI took slightly less than eight minutes to scan all signals of an 80-transponder

satellite, which puts the box in an above average position. When setting up the receiver we noticed that it is able to communicate with its users in either German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Finnish or Slovakian.

If the video output switch on the back panel has been set to HDMI or YUV, the eurocart output options are S-Video or CVBS only, while RGB is available as well when the switch is on Scart.

The Video Format sub-menu hides a very special gem: the TF7700HSCI can send the HDMI signal as either 1080i, 720p, 576i or 576p – or the receiver can choose the appropriate setting automatically, depending on the input signal. This feature is extremely useful because a conventional SD signal that is provided as 1080i by the receiver looks very blurry and pale, whereas the same signal as 576i looks fine.

The automatic detection and switching mode works flawlessly and in our test the Topfield box



recognised the top-quality HDTC signal of HD1 right away and chose the appropriate 1080i setting, while it scaled back to 576i as soon as a regular SDVT channel was selected.

The TF7700HSCI is the first Topfield receiver without a manual selection of the TV colour norm, but this is no drawback as automatic switching between PAL and NTSC did not pose any problem for the box.

Like all other Topfield receivers the TF7700HSCI has a 5000-channel memory only for TV and radio, which is definitely not sufficient these days for a DiSEqC 1.3 box. Given the limitations of the channel memory the channel list editing functions become all the more important. Topfield has done its homework in this area and channels can be deleted, moved, renamed or blocked with a PIN code to prevent children watching unsuitable channels. Favourite channels can be moved to any number of favourite lists.

Switching between HDTV channels takes approximately two seconds, while zapping from one SDTV channel to another SDTV channel requires only one second. Due to the automatic adaptation of the screen resolution it can take up to three or four seconds when moving from an HDTV to an SDTV channel or vice versa. If this stretches your patience just a little too much you can always turn off this automatic feature and select the appropriate manually on the remote control.

The signal tuner used by Topfield leaves a strikingly good impression. The only minor problem we noticed is that it sometimes took some seconds until the TF7700HSCI identified and displayed transponders with 8PSK or QPSK modulation.

Weak signals, on the other hand, didn't seem to be a problem for the receiver when we tested this on EURO BIRD 2 26° East, NILESAT 7° West or ASTRA 2D 28.2° East. Just don't take the signal meter values as set in stone, as they appeared to show some rather strange results at times, such as a signal strength of 14% combined with a signal quality of 78%, which turned out to be 71 dBuV with a C/N reading of 7.3 on our measuring equipment.

The handbook we received with the receiver did not include any technical specifications regarding the integrated tuner, which means we had to perform our SCPC test without manufacturer-provided details. The 12633 V transponder on EUTELSAT SESAT 36° East with a symbol rate of 1 Ms/s could not be locked and processed in our test – it seems the tuner needs everything upward of 2 Ms/s to find a selected signal.

Of course we put HDTV reception under particular scrutiny for this test and we are happy to report no image freezes or software crashes. For HDTV channels we looked at free-to-air European channels on ASTRA 19.2° East, TURKSAT 2A 42° East, EUTELSAT W3A 7° East, ATLANTIC BIRD 5° West and of course HOTBIRD 13° East. We also tested the encrypted programs of Euro1080 on ASTRA 3A 23.5° East and did not encounter any problems, as the Topfield box accepted our Euro1080 smartcard in the Irdeto module and decoded the HD1 and HD2 channels right away.

If you're more of an experimental type you'll like a nice feature that Topfield has integrated into its latest model. Similar to what we have become to know from MS Windows XP the receiver can save the systems settings at a certain stage and then go back to exactly these settings at a future point in time. So if you mess around with your channel list or some other configurations and would like to undo all these changes, you can easily go back to the saved settings. Even a reset to default does not delete these saved data, so no more tiresome re-configuration for hours if something has gone wrong.

As Topfield is constantly working on improving its products the receiver is able to update its software via satellite or via the serial data port. There is also a standard USB-A interface on the back panel. This is used to update the receiver's software, which can be downloaded from Topfield's website www.topfield.co.kr. Additionally, you can also edit the receiver's channels with Topfield's own Vega channel editing software.

Topfield has taken care about everything, this receiver is fully future-proof!

TECHNIC DATA



Manufacturer	Topfield, Seongnam/Korea
Fax	+82-31-778 0801
E-Mail	inquiry@topfield.co.kr
Model	TF7700HSCI
Function	Digital satellite receiver for SDTV/HDTV in DVBS2 (QPSK/8PSK) in MPEG2 and MPEG4
Channel memory	5000
Symbol rates	2-45 Ms/sec.
SCPC compatible	yes
DiSEqC	1.0 / 1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3
USALS	yes
HDMI	yes
Scart euroconnectors	2
Audio/Video outputs	3 x RCA
Component output	3x RCA
S-Video output	no
UHF Modulator	no
0/12 Volt socket	no
Digital audio output	yes
EPG	yes
C/Ku band compatible	yes
Power supply	90-250 VAC, 50/60 Hz



Channel search |



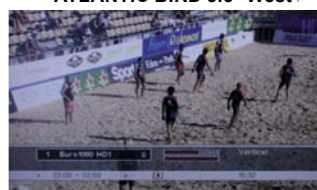
Channel search |



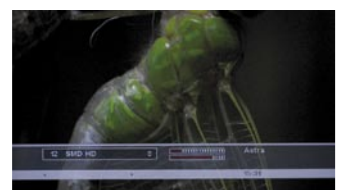
Testing HDTV of Canal+ via ATLANTIC BIRD 3.5° West |



Main menu |



HD1 via ASTRA 3A 23.5° East |



SMD HD via ASTRA 19.2° East |

Expert conclusion

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The TF7700HSCI is a very sound SDTV and HDTV receiver which is equipped with a range of useful features. Add to that the smart and very user-friendly OSD that we have come to expect from Topfield and you have the perfect family box.

HDTV reception of DVB-S2 in H264 standard works flawlessly and thanks to the HDMI interface there's virtually nothing in the way of crystal clear viewing pleasure on plasma or LCD screens.



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The memory can store up to 5000 channels, which is on the low side. The satellite list is partially outdated and the remote control will also address other Topfield equipment within its reach.