

Arion AF-4000HDCI

Perfectly equipped HDTV receiver with a stylish design

The AF-4000HDCI comes in piano-lacquered case in standard rack size (43x27.5x6.3 cm) and sports an extremely easy to read 12-digit display as well as two status LEDs to confirm commands sent by the remote control and to identify a locked tuner signal. The manufacturer has also added two CI slots behind a flap on the right side of the front panel and a total of eight backlit buttons for controlling the receiver without a remote control. To provide an even more appealing look of the front panel the AF-4000HDCI features a vertical blue and dimmable LED bar.



HDTV reception via ASTRA 19.2° East |

Turn the receiver around and you'll discover a perfectly equipped rear panel, providing the standard satellite input and loop-through output, HDMI, 2 scart euroconnectors, 3 RCA sockets for stereo audio and video, 3 RCA sockets for YPbPr, an optical digital audio output as well as an RS-232 interface for updating the receiver's operating software. Thanks to the AF-4000HDCI's extraordinarily silent fan, which is controlled automatically, there is no need for ventilation slots on the upper side of the case. There is even a mechanical power switch to round off the brilliant overall picture of this product.

The remote control takes a bit to get used to, as it is sur-

prisingly big. However, once you get used to its ergonomic design and the layout of all the keys you wouldn't want to do without it anymore.

What's more, the remote control can be used to address existing TV sets, VCRs or DVD players and the operating manual lists a multitude of different manufacturers' codes to program the remote so that after a minute or two we were able to control the LCD TV in our editorial office with the ARION remote control.

Speaking of the operating manual, even absolute beginners should manage to master this HDTV receiver with the help of all the comprehensive and easy-to-understand

instructions, complete with useful illustrations.

Everyday use

When we turned it on for the first time, it became evident that our test unit had been designed for the German speaking market, as it features pre-arranged channel lists for use in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. But Arion offers pre-arranged channel lists for other markets as well.

All free-to-air and encrypted HDTV channels which can be received in Europe are saved in a separate favourites list.

In case you're not entirely happy with some default settings all you need to do is open the easy-to-navigate main

menu and personalise the receiver to your liking. Altogether, you can choose from 23 languages for the OSD (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Finish, Polish, Slavic, Hungarian, Czech, Slovenian, Rumanian, Greek, Turkish and Farsi).

If you prefer not to connect the AF-4000HDCI to your TV using HDMI you can manually select the output signal type (RGB or CVBS) as well as the aspect ratio and the colour system.

When changing between PAL and NTSC the receiver issues a warning stating that there is a risk of no image being displayed anymore if the TV set



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switched on transponders can be deleted or added in next to no time. So now's the time to fill the receiver's transponder list with channels, which is done with an automatic channel search. We tested the unit on an 80-transponder satellite and clocked a little over ten minutes for a complete channel search.

In addition to the standard search mode you can activate the network mode or a manual search, while pros can search for channels using the relevant PID values. The only negative aspect of what is in general a perfect channel search mode is the limited capacity of the channel memory. No more than 4000 TV and radio chan-

the current and next event as well as additional icons indicating teletext, subtitles, Dolby Digital audio, channel options and the aspect ratio of the currently selected channel.

As with all other HDTV receivers, the AF-4000HDCI is able to put out the video signal via HDMI in 576p, 720p or 1080i. These three modes as well as the aspect ratio can be selected with a dedicated key on the remote control, which we believe to be a very handy solution. Thus it is perfectly possible to watch HDTV channels using 1080i while regular SDTV channels are set at 720p, for example.

Zapping means fun with

used cannot process the particular colour system. We appreciate this extra information, as we keep receiving calls from desperate readers who have – deliberately or not – made these changes only to be left with a blank screen.

The digital audio signal is available as Dolby Digital or PCM and thus should provide an appropriate signal for every

Thankfully, this HDTV receiver is compatible with all DiSEqC protocols, i.e. 1.0, 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 (USALS), which means it works perfectly with a rotary motor antenna just as well as with a 16-LNB multi-feed antenna.

The satellite list comprises 76 European and Asian C and Ku band satellites, each with current transponder data. If



kind of home theatre system. In line with other current digital receivers the AF-4000HDCI is able to sync its internal clock with the time signal transmitted via satellite. In addition, it is possible to automatically switch to daylight saving time and even to set the dates on which the switch to DST and back will be performed.

Once all basic settings are completed according to your personal preferences the receiver needs some information regarding the reception setup used. If you live in Europe and use the widely popular ASTRA 19.2° East antenna you're all set because the Arion receiver is pre-configured for exactly that setup.

If your equipment is different, then simply enter the antenna setup menu and change the settings accordingly.

that's not enough, five additional birds may be added manually.

Thanks to the huge variety of pre-programmed or manually selectable LOF values the AF-4000HDCI is a match for virtually any available LNB. Even an S band antenna is possible, if you so desire. The up-to-date transponder list can be edited for each single satellite at the touch of a button, which means that deactivated or newly

channels can be stored, which we believe simply isn't enough when taking into account the two CI slots and the available motor control. Arion should definitely address and solve this issue.

Press the EXIT key now to switch to the first channel on the list, once all initial setting and the channel search are completed. The AF-4000HDCI inserts a well-arranged info bar with information regarding

this Arion receiver, as it takes a little less than a second to switch from one channel to the next. Only when the new channel broadcasts a HDTV signal does it take slightly longer.

We tested the receiver with a Samsung 40" LCD screen and were truly impressed with the video quality provided by the HDMI connection. Even SDTV channels were presented with remarkable quality and the smart euroconnector also pro-



Info bar |



Clearly arranged main menu |



vided a correct picture. It's a shame that the number of free-to-air HDTV channels in Europe is still rather limited, so it's all the more important that all standard CI modules can be used with the receiver. While we experienced problems with the pre-installed software at first, company Satforce provided us with an improved version during our test which solved all issues we discovered in the beginning. We were then able to successfully receive and test the HDTV offering of various European providers and in addition, all standard Irdeto, Viaccess, Cryptoworks and Conax modules worked flawlessly with the AF-4000HDCI.

A low-threshold tuner is just as valuable as reliable CI support, so that the weak BBC signals from ASTRA 28.2° East can be received as well. The Arion AF-4000HDCI mastered this task brilliantly, too. While the weak horizontal transponders of NILESAT 7° West came in effortlessly at our test site in Vienna, our Munich test centre was happy to report flawless reception of ASTRA 28.2° East.

Low symbol rates could not upset the Arion receiver, even though the technical specifications published by Arion (DVB 1~45 Ms/s and DVB-S2 10~30 Ms/s) were not fully met in our tests. It was only for symbol

rates of 1.6 Ms/s and higher that the tuner was able to lock a signal. However, this is the case for the huge majority of competing models as well and many manufacturers therefore specify 2~45 Ms/s in their datasheets.

By the way, the AF-4000HDCI supports the required modulation types QPSK and 8PSK for both DVB and DVB-S2 reception.

The perfect overall impression of this receiver is complemented by a number of additional features. For instance, you can save the channel list and all settings in the internal memory. If you happen to mess up your channel list or to delete one of your favourite channels at some stage you simply load the existing configuration from the internal memory and undo any damage you may have caused.

Software updates can be loaded through the RS-232 interface from a PC or directly via satellite. We couldn't ask for more. In case your TV set at home does not feature teletext simply use the internal decoder of the AF-4000HDCI. In addition, an organiser and a calendar are at your disposal.

Arion has scored a really huge success with the AF-4000HDCI!

Expert Opinion

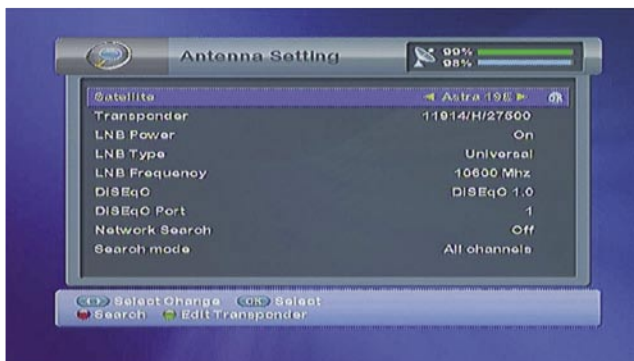


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A design that is elegant and pleasing to the eye, a wide range of features, technically sophisticated hardware, and a clever user interface. Combine all this and you get a receiver that will make any newbie happy as well as please any pro with its endless possibilities.

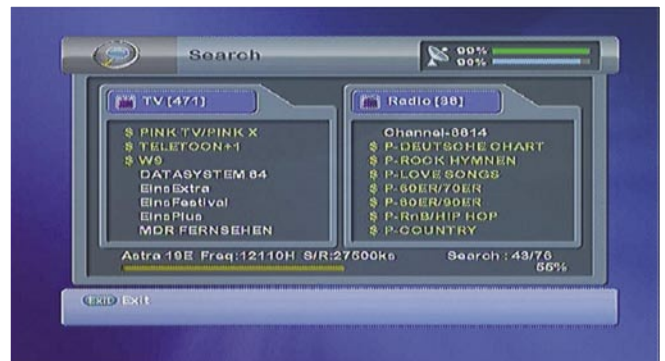
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The memory with capacity for only 4000 entries should be expanded.

TECHNIC DATA

Manufacturer	Arion Technology Inc, Arion Building, 1042-1 Hogye-Dong, Dongan-Gu, Anyang-City, Gyeonggi-Do, Korea 431-080
Homepage	www.arion.co.kr
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E-Mail	info@arion.co.kr
Model	AF-4000HDCI
Function	Digital HDTV satellite receiver with CI slot
Channel memory	4000
Satellites	81
Symbolrates	1~45 Ms/sec. (1.6 Ms/s and above in our tests) for DVB and 10~30 Ms/sec in DVB-S2
SCPC compatible	yes
USALS	yes
DiSEqC	1.0 / 1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3
Scart euroconnectors	2
Audio/Video outputs	6 x RCA
YUV	yes
HDMI	yes
Modulator output	no
0/12 Volt connection	no
Digital audio output	yes
EPG	yes
C/Ku-Band compatible	yes
Power supply	AC 100-240 V, 50/60 Hz
Power consumption	35W max.



Defining the various options of a satellite |



Channel search |