Incorporating terrestrial reception into a satellite receiver is not always a good idea – it usually removes the chance of a second satellite tuner and struggles to compete with cheap Freeview receivers that cost only £30 anyway.

Although the Technomate TM-7102 HD-T2 Super does incorporate a terrestrial tuner it adds real value too, because this is a three-tuner receiver, with two satellite tuners in addition to the terrestrial module, and both satellite and terrestrial tuners are for HD reception as well as standard SD.

The TM-7102 HD-T2 is also a PVR, with a stonking 1TB hard drive and the capacity to add additional storage via USB, it has two common interface slots and a multicam for encrypted channels (Technomate encourages the use of patches for the more obstinate encryptions), and there is an optional (and desirable) analogue input option too.

Build and connectivity

The TM-7102 HD-T2 is a square, solid, traditional-looking machine, all in black with a display in the middle of the front panel to show the channel name, menu, time and so on. On the right side there are two buttons and a natty four-way control cluster with the power light around the edge. Very Sky+.

The receiver is pre-loaded with data for 1,500 satellite channels and there are copious configuration options and a very fast blind search.

The EPG for DTT channels supports 7-day DVB data and can be used to schedule recordings. View what’s on six channels or one at a time.
At the back are two LNB inputs with loopthrough sockets (one input can link to the other with a single LNB), which can cater for DiSEqC 1.0 and 1.1 switches or DiSEqC 1.2 and USALS motorised dish mounts.

The terrestrial input has a loopthrough output too, and there’s a further pair of terrestrial connectors for the UHF modulator (a rare sight these days).

The main output is the HDMI socket (1080p-capable) but a trio of component outputs is also provided, as well as separate composite video and TV and VCR/recorder Scart connections. Separate audio connections are taken care of with a pair of phono sockets for stereo analogue sound and an optical S/PDF for digital audio. There are also three data connections on the rear panel – an RS232 socket (largely redundant), RJ45 network Ethernet connector, and a second USB socket for more permanent storage connections.

The remote control is almost as crowded as the rear panel, with 53 buttons. Several of these are sensibly dedicated to a particular function, which makes using the TM-7102 HD-T2 all the easier.

Basic use
The 10,000 channels that the TM-7102 HD-T2 can store are displayed in the onscreen list altogether or one satellite (plus terrestrial) at a time, and can be ordered as stored, by name, transponder, or encryption. A dedicated button on the remote takes you straight to the alphabetical list, and the whole system is quick and easy to use. You can also rename channels, delete them and set up your LNB arrangement and delete the unwanted satellites. You’ll need a terrestrial scan and that takes nearly four minutes, but in the test the sensitive tuner found even the weaker multiplex with ease. In time, the pre-programmed satellite channels will become outdated and you will need a full installation. For satellite setup, the LNB arrangement is set to single LNB (with the inputs linked); twin LNBs (to use the two tuners like a Sky+), or two separate LNBFs aimed at different satellites.

Then the DiSEqC switch or DiSEqC motor connections are set to define how each satellite is accessed. Finally, the satellites are scanned for active channels. This can be done in five ways – the normal database scan, an individual transponder scan, PID scan, blind scan, and a special fast scan for Canal Digitaal and TV Vlaanderen viewers. The database scan manages a reasonable speed – nearly six minutes to find all the channels from 28°E. Conveniently, you can set the receiver to scan all the satellites, in succession and leave it to it.

The Advanced scan of an individual transponder uses the tuning details from the database or you can enter your own. The PID scan is another variation of the transponder scan in which you enter the channel PID’s. The blind scan is not as flexible as that of some receivers. You cannot alter the frequency increment to speed up the process, although you can limit the polarsations or frequencies covered. The transponders found are inserted into the satellite’s database, overwriting outdated entries where appropriate. It’s very fast – finding every transmission from Astra 28°E in just 8.25 minutes. You almost don’t need database scans. Finally, there’s the broadband connection. We had some difficulty getting (and keeping) the TM-7102 HD-T2 connected to our network (some kind of IP address clash or some difficulty getting (and keeping) the TM-7102 HD-T2 connected to our network). However, once it was active, overwriting outdated entries where appropriate. It’s very fast – finding every transmission from Astra 28°E in just 8.25 minutes. You almost don’t need database scans. Finally, there’s the broadband connection. We had some difficulty getting (and keeping) the TM-7102 HD-T2 connected to our network (some kind of IP address clash or some difficulty getting (and keeping) the TM-7102 HD-T2 connected to our network). However, once it was active, accessing the internet was straightforward.
The front panel conceals twin CI slots, two smart card readers and a USB port.

The TM-7102 HD-T2 provides 16 favourite channels lists, each with a programmable name that can be populated with any of the channels from the satellite, or terrestrial tuners (you can even add all the HD channels in one go). You can then select a favourite channels group and your channel choice is constrained to those channels only. A mosaic button fills the screen with thumbnail images of consecutive channels, up to nine at a time. A more useful means to get to the channel you want is the Recall button, which produces a menu of the last 10 channels viewed.

You can also watch what’s connected via the analogue input, or even two channels at once with picture-in-picture. The inset picture is fixed in the top right of the screen but it can be two sizes, its content selected from a special PIP channel menu, and swapped with the main picture with a dedicated button.

Either the main picture or the PIP can be from satellite, terrestrial or the analogue input connectors – which makes keeping an eye on a security camera a doddle.

The EPG operates in two modes – showing 90 minutes of programmes across six channels or six shows on the current channel. You can hop a day forward or back and reserve or record a programme with a single button press. The event timer can be programmed manually too.

The TM-7102 HD-T2 can make use of the Freeview proprietary EPG data so you get the full week’s programme schedule on display, but only now-and-next from satellite channels. However, interactive services aren’t supported for Freeview or Freesat channels.

PVR and multimedia

The 1TB HDD is on a caddy in the receiver’s side, so access is no problem. You can also add more storage via USB. There’s also little limitation to how much you record at once. With the two LNB inputs connected to separate or twin LNBS, you could record two satellite channels from different transponders, another from one of the same transponders, watch a terrestrial channel and keep an eye on the front door with a security camera connected to the analogue inputs in the PIP window. Of course, with the satellite inputs looped together you are more restricted but even then you can record or watch live video from five different sources.

A recording can be started manually or by the event timer (set manually or by the EPG) and the TM-7102 HD-T2 will also pause live broadcasts. Reception buffering (so a pause is instant, and you can rewind a live programme) can be turned on or off. You can start to watch a recording before it’s finished, and resume where you left off before. You can also fast-forward and rewind at up to 32x or slow-mo at ¼ speed, and move the progress bar to any point in the recording and place bookmarks to jump between them.

A section of a recording can be copied or deleted using thumbnails of the first and last frame of a section as a guide.

You can also play back photos, MP3 files and a host of video formats stored on USB memory (or even transferred to the hard disc). Hidden among the built-in games in the ‘Entertainment’ menu is access to YouTube and with the photo and MP3 playback section is a service dedicated to maps and weather in cities of the world and access to internet radio – which can be recorded, edited and exported via USB.

Performance

We had little trouble with everyday crashes on this receiver. The HD quality is excellent, with a level of detail and clarity above that found by many receivers. Even up-scaled SD channels appear solid and life-like from the HDMI output. Only the quality of the analogue input signal was found at all wanting, and that’s because of the digital-analogue-digital conversion it undergoes.

Recorded images are as good as live and the sound from the TM-7102 HD-T2 is particularly full and dynamic, even from the analogue outputs.

Verdict

Getting a reliable internet connection can be tricky and the scans are a touch slow, but that doesn’t detract from an excellent top-tier unit. The TM-7102 HD-T2 is expensive, but three HD tuners and an analogue input make it an awesome AV centre for your home. Thanks to flexible antenna connectivity, it can provide video from almost anywhere – satellite, terrestrial, local storage, and even the internet via YouTube – and image and sound quality are second to none.

A well-featured PVR, huge hard disc, a very fast satellite blind search, Freeview EPG, multicam card readers, and all-round ease of use are the cream on the TM-7102 HD-T2’s multi-layered cake.