Nextorm USB Box
Satellite TV for Your Laptop

Imagine a satellite receiver that you can take with you wherever you go. Now imagine that this satellite receiver is small enough to slip into your shirt pocket! Well, imagine no more: the Nextorm USB Box has arrived. It is not much larger than a deck of cards yet almost everything that is needed to deliver a satellite TV picture is built into this little box. Just connect a power supply, an IF input cable from a satellite dish and a USB cable (supplied) to a PC and you are ready to enjoy satellite TV.

This receiver might find the greatest appeal to those who primarily use laptops and would like to be able to watch satellite TV on them. As long as the computer has a USB 2.0 port, satellite TV on your laptop can now be a reality.

On one side of the silver-colored box (you could hardly call it the front side) is the USB port to link the receiver to a PC. Here you will also find a bright blue power LED as well as what appears to be an infrared port for a remote control. Our test unit did not come with a remote control. On the opposite side are two "F" connectors; one for the satellite IF input and the other is at the moment not used. The only other connection is the 5V DC from the included power supply. There isn't really room for anything else.

Everyday Use

The package included a CD-ROM that contained Nextorm's setup software as well as the user manual in PDF (Acrobat) format. A printed version of the user manual was not provided. The minimum requirements for the PC are Windows 2000 or XP, with a 500 MHz CPU and 128 MB of RAM plus USB 2.0 support and at least 50 MB of free hard disk space.

Installation was relatively painless: connect the satellite IF cable to the IF input of the Nextorm USB box, connect one side of the power supply to the 5VDC connection on the receiver and plug the other side into a standard wall outlet. The power supply is rated for 100 – 250 VAC at 50/60 Hz so it can be plugged in almost anywhere in the world.

Finally, with a PC up and running, plug in the USB interface cable to the receiver and then to an unused port on the PC. Windows will recognize that new hardware was installed but this can be cancelled. Instead, run setup.exe from the included CD-ROM to start the installation wizard.

Once the software installation is complete, simply double-click on the Nextorm icon to get things started. The Nextorm control panel/player will appear. Before any satellite TV can be watched, the user must first configure the player for satellite reception. By clicking on the appropriate button in the tool bar at the top of the player window, you can access the Configuration menu. You can select from over 130 satellites (!) in the drop-down list.

Unfortunately, it does not appear possible to add new satellites or edit the names of existing ones. You can however, add or delete transponders for each satellite.

For the local oscillator frequency (LOF), any value is possible. You can choose from "normal", "universal" or "custom". If custom is selected, the user can enter any LOF that is needed, including those for the S-band. To make things even more interesting, the Nextorm USB box also supports the DiSEqC 1.0 and 1.2 protocols as well as USALS.

Four different antenna configurations can be stored (Dish1 to Dish4) containing LOF information and DiSEqC 1.0 and 1.2 settings. Each satellite can be assigned to one of these four configurations. For example, Dish1 could be assigned an LOF of 10.750 GHz and a switch position of DiSEqC B so that any standard Ku-band satellite such as Telstar 5 could be associated with the Dish1 configuration. Dish2 could be set up for C-

band (LOF = 5.150 GHz), Dish3 for universal LNB's, etc. As mentioned before, DiSEqC 1.2 for antenna motor control is also supported. These settings are also taken care of in the Configuration menu.

Selecting a satellite from the drop-down list in the configuration menu reveals the list of transponders for that satellite. The transponder data is for the most part up-to-date although there are a few cases where an old transponder is still listed or a new one has not yet been added. All of the transponders are listed by number (TP1, TP2, etc.) instead of by frequency.

Clicking on a transponder number will show the downlink frequency, symbolrate and polarization for that transponder. If you only want to scan a particular transponder, you may have to click on several of them before finding the desired transponder. Transponders can be added or deleted with the click of a button.

Once a satellite has been setup, it can be automatically scanned with the click of the "Scan Sat" button. A complete scan of the Ku-side of Telstar 5 was completed in just two minutes. After a channel scan, there will undoubtedly be some channels that are of no interest to you. But unlike most satellite receivers where a dedicated edit menu is provided, channel editing with the Nextorm USB box is handled directly from the main viewer window.

All of the channels for a satellite are conveniently listed to the left of the actual video display. Simply right-click on the channel name to display a list of options that include deleting the channel or moving it to a Favorites list. From here you can also click on "Edit" to display all of the channel's parameters (frequency, symbolrate, polarization, PID data, LOF and DiSEqC settings).

According to the specifications in the PDF user manual, the Nextorm can process symbolrates from 2 to 45 Ms/sec. although our tests showed that only signals with symbolrates starting at about 2.7 Ms/sec. could be reliably handled.

Switching from one channel to another is as simple as double-clicking on the desired channel name in the channel list. The time to switch to another channel on the same transponder is just under two seconds. It is just about 2.5 seconds when switching to a channel on another transponder. These times will make channel surfing a chore instead of a joy.

Now, what are you supposed to do if your favorite program is coming on but you promised to take your spouse out to dinner for your anniversary? The answer to that is easy: simply activate the recording function in the Nextorm USB box. By pushing the red "Record" button in the tool bar at the top of the screen, your favorite program will be recorded on your PC's hard drive so that it will be ready for you to view when you come home from your dinner (if you're not too busy doing something else).

But what if you are at home already watching that favorite program and someone comes knocking at your door? This dilemma is also easily solved with the integrated time shift function. Simply click on the "Pause" button in the tool bar to pause the live picture. While you handle the visitor at your front door, the program is being recorded in the background. When you are finally able to get back in front of your PC, click the "Pause" button a second time to continue watching that program from the point at which you walked away a few minutes earlier. You won't have missed anything.

Even more interesting is what happened when we tuned to an MPEG 4:2:2 channel: the Nextorm USB box was able to decode all of the NBC MPEG 4:2:2 signals on AMC1 in the Ku-band effortlessly and display a perfect picture. It was even able to present video and audio from the CBS HD channels on Telstar 6. The audio was for the most part crystal clear although the video image was at times filled with distortion.

Although the USB box that we received for testing did not come with a remote control, we discovered quite by accident that this function does work. The remote control from another receiver interacted with the Nextorm USB box.

The PDF user manual was detailed in its content although only available in English.

Expert conclusion

Ron Roessel
TELE-satellite
Test Center
North America

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The Nextorm USB box is an extremely compact fully functional satellite receiver for use with a PC. The USB interface makes it ideal for use with a laptop. Installation is easy after which it delivers interference-free video and audio. The receiver was also able to handle 4:2:2 signals error-free.

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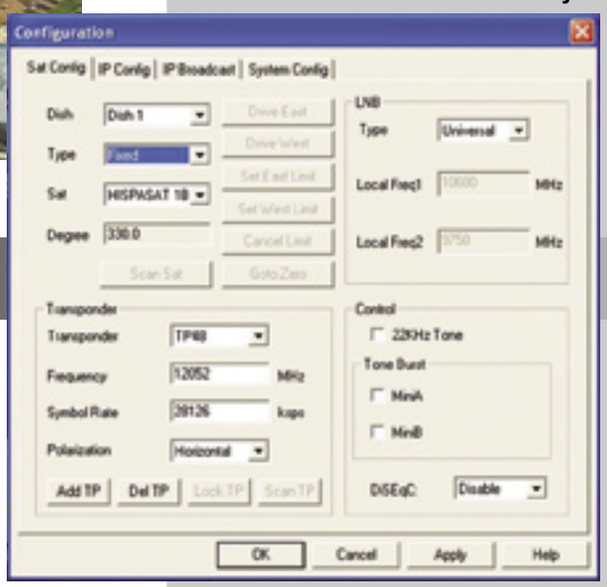
It is a little slow at switching between channels and it does not come with a printed user-manual. The PDF manual is only available in English.

NBC 4:2:2 Signal From AMC1

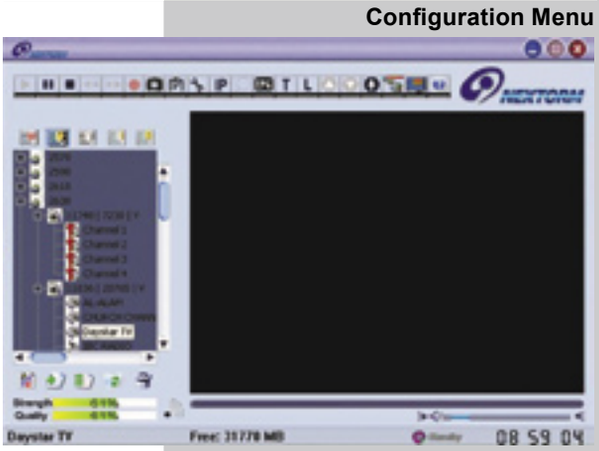
Canal Vasco on Hispasat

Nextorm
USB Box

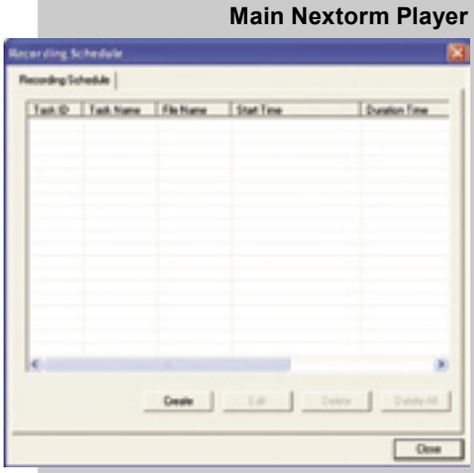
Control Panel Player



Configuration Menu



Main Nextorm Player



Schedule Recordings

TECHNICAL DATA

Manufacturer	Nextorm Digital Limited, Shenzhen, China
Fax	+86 755 83896019
E-mail	nicolas@nextormdigital.com
Model	USB Box
Function	Digital FTA Satellite Receiver USB Box
Channel Memory	Unlimited
Satellites	130+
Symbolrate	2-45 Ms/sec.
DiSEqC	1.1, 1.2
USALS	yes
C/Ku-band Compatible	yes
SCPC-Compatible	yes
Looped-Through Output	no
Modulator Output	no
Programmable 0/12-Volt Output	no
USB Interface	yes, 2.0
Power Requirements	5VDC from a 100-250 VAC, 50/60 Hz Power Supply

TEST RESULT — SATELLITE INTERNATIONAL TELE

Channel Memory	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐
Channel Scan Speed	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐ ☐ ☐
Channel Switching Speed	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Video Quality	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐ ☐
Audio Quality	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐ ☐
Tuner Sensitivity	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ☐ ☐ ☐