

Telly on a stick

Catch up with your favourite shows and turn your computer into a Personal Video Recorder (PVR) in less than five minutes by plugging in a USB TV tuner

1 ADSTech MiniDualTV

£99 ★★★★★

It may be one of the bulkier sticks here, but for good reason: the MiniDualTV can receive both analogue and digital broadcasts and is compatible with PAL, NTSC and SECAM television standards. For anyone who travels regularly, it's a highly versatile proposition. All the usual trimmings are included, such as PVR functions and time-shifting features. ADSTech supplies its own software for organising recordings and other media, but the tuner is also compatible with Media Center. With a strong signal, picture and sound quality is impressive, but at £99 it seems a tad overpriced.

2 August DVBT201

£25 ★★★★★

TV on the cheap is what August has in mind with its USB Freeview Receiver. At under £25 it's a steal, especially considering the extras in the box: a portable aerial and a remote control. Setting up is easy, too: just plug it in and install the supplied drivers. With a decent signal, picture quality is very good and the accompanying software is laden with a seven-day programme guide and PVR functionality for time-shifting live TV from the single tuner. Unfortunately, there's no Vista support, so owners of the latest Windows operating system will have to look elsewhere.

3 Videomate U2700

£69 ★★★★★

Compatibility with Windows Vista



4 Kworld DV3-T 580U TV Stick

£29 ★★★★★

This snappy single-tuner sets itself



5 WinTV Nova-TD Diversity

£66 ★★★★★

Hauppauge's Nova-TD Diversity is a bit of a powerhouse. It comes with two digital tuners and includes two antennas for watching one channel while recording another. The seven-day EPG is fully compatible with the dual-tuner system, and Hauppauge's Diversity technology helps to boost picture quality in weak signal areas. Considering the amount of technology squeezed into this thumb-sized gadget, all-round audio and visual quality is impressive. It's Vista and Media Center compatible, but perhaps the best bit is you can pick it up cheaper online.

6 Miglia TVMini Express

£35 ★★★★★

There's no question that Apple does a lot of things right, but Steve Jobs and crew are yet to come up with their own answer to live TV on a Mac. Miglia, however, has. The TV Mini-Express is clad in Mac-friendly white and sits up a piece of cake. Picture and sound quality from the single tuner are very good, and recorded shows can be quickly exported to an iPod or streamed to Apple TV via the bundled software. Also in the box are an external antenna and a USB extension lead for using the TVMini if other devices are blocking USB ports.

7 Pinnacle PCTV DV8-T Flash stick

£59 ★★★★★

It may look like a run-of-the-mill single-tuner TV device, but the PCTV DV8-T Flash stick hides some clever technology in its pint-sized shell. The main eyebrow-raiser is the built-in 1Gb of memory. As well as storing all the necessary software to get going in Vista and XP, recorded shows can be recorded directly onto the stick. PVR functionality is par for the course, and programmes are easily scheduled within the simple-to-use EPG. The included software is compatible with digital and internet radio, too, and picture quality is excellent in strong signal areas.

8 Terratec Cinergy T USB-XE

£49 ★★★★★

Looking like a long-lost brother of the Miglia, Terratec's Cinergy T USB-XE is a sleek TV tuner for PC. There's nothing to shout about too loudly but what it does do, it does well. It's a single-digital tuner TV that will find all Freeview channels available in your area. A seven-day EPG lists all current and upcoming shows and will record episodes of *Corne* straight to the computer's hard disk. A full-size TV aerial can be plugged straight into the stick and, for those who enjoy blocky, yet unexplainably soothing graphics, it also supports Teletext.