



Dabs DabsValue PVR Card

Price £60 Web www.dabs.com

What's in a brand? Is a Leadtek, Hauppauge or AverMedia-branded TV tuner better than a rebadged card from Dabs? Well, the big companies have got experience in designing and manufacturing cards, while Dabs (www.dabs.com) simply sells them. But look closely at the features and it's not so clear cut.

Ultimately, it's all about the tuner type, how good the MPEG2 picture is, and whether the price for these features is competitive. The DabsValue Digital TV/PVR Card is actually a Compro VideoMate DVB-T300 and, like AverMedia's Hybrid cards, you can use it in either

DVB-T or analogue modes. This dual operation gives it a flexibility that the Black Gold can't equal, and while it doesn't have the extra FM radio functionality that the Hybrid+FM brings to the table, it's a solid performer that fully justifies its inclusion in this test.

The DVB-T300 is supplied with an IR remote control and a software CD that includes the *ComproDTV* application (for video capture and timeshifting).

DETAILS

Tuner type Analogue and digital terrestrial (DVB-T)

Number of tuners 1

Interface PCI

Video encoding formats MPEG1, MPEG2

Video capture software *ComproDTV* (timeshifting, seven-day EPG, HDTV ready)

MCE compatible Yes

Connectivity Coaxial aerial, composite, S-Video

Extras IR remote control, installation CD

ComproDVD 2 for MPEG2 playback and *Ulead PhotoExplorer 8 SE* for image editing. As usual, the own-brand PVR gets a point for effort, but it's worth investing in a more powerful system. The DVB-T300 supports BDA drivers, so it's Media Center-compatible. It also supports S3/S4 'wake up recording'.

The DVB-T300 also claims to be HD-ready, but a lack of broadcast HD content in the UK means that claim is hollow. The picture is decent enough with standard TV signals, though we should mention that some of the more obscure Freeview channels suffered from the occasional MPEG2 wobble.

That said, the performance of this DabsValue card comes as a pleasant surprise. It makes you realise that what sets any market-leading card apart is its array of bolted-on extras.



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PCF says... "This card shows that there's often very little difference between PCI tuners."

