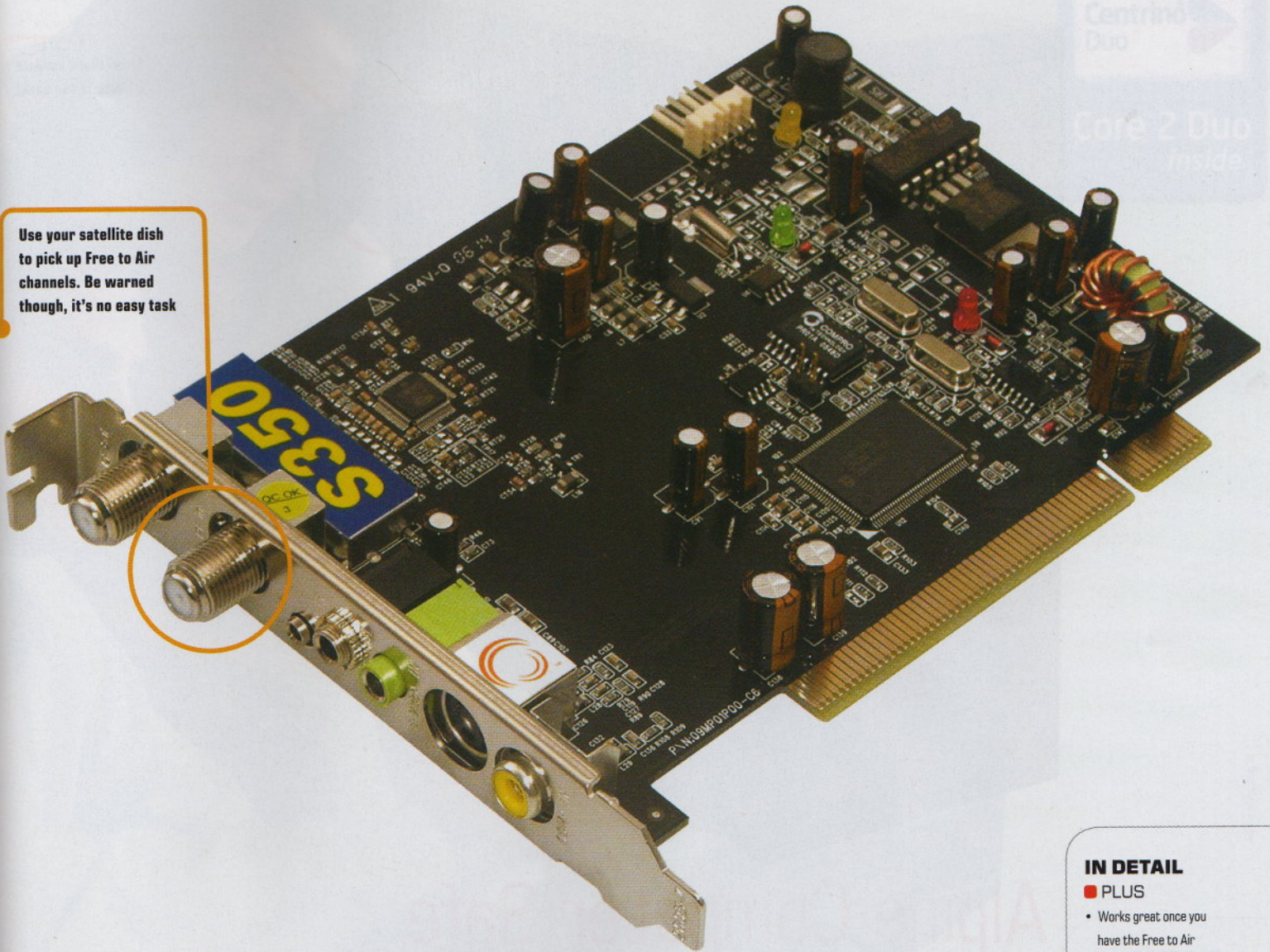




Centrino
Duo

Core 2 Duo
inside

Use your satellite dish to pick up Free to Air channels. Be warned though, it's no easy task



VideoMate S350

RRP: R875

Supplier: Frontosa (011) 466-0038

Internet: www.frontosa.co.za

Before the days of DStv's PVR, the only way you could digitally record your favourite TV shows was to purchase a TV tuner card for your PC. Not only do these cards allow you to watch your favourite TV channels on your PC, but you are also able to record, rewind live TV, and virtually everything a modern PVR can. The only downside is that you need to have an antenna cable laid to where your PC is located in order to pick up a signal.

While this technology has been around for ages, it certainly isn't a technology of the past. Compro recently sent us its latest digital TV tuner card, the S350. Unlike traditional TV tuner cards though, it can connect to your satellite dish allowing you to watch Free to Air channels. The S350 is basically a

standard digital TV capture card. It supports high-definition TV, and features twin-LNB connectors. Because there is no smartcard facility on the S350, there is no way to pick up DStv directly, but considering that this is a digital TV tuner card, you can connect to a feed from your decoder connected to the S350. Doing so will give you all the functionality of a traditional TV tuner card, such as recording your TV shows, view picture in picture, and rewind live TV.

As mentioned before, the main feature of this product is to pick up Free to Air channels using your satellite dish. In essence, Free to Air refers to the free channels you can pick up by tuning into any one of the hundreds of broadcast satellites floating in space. Sadly, this process is rather tricky. The ComproDTV software features a myriad of features, and the manual is not very helpful either. After a few hours of configuring various settings, we picked up a few religious

channels and some radio channels. Once the channels have been configured, the software you use to view them with is very easy to master. Recording a show is simply a matter of pressing one button. The time shift feature is just as easy to use, and this makes rewinding live TV a breeze.

At the moment, we see the Compro S350 as only being useful to technically minded people who want to experiment with Free to Air reception. To get the most out of this card you would need to do some research to ensure you have the correct settings for the channels you hope to pick up. On the other hand, this card works well if you connect it to your DStv decoder, making it work much like a normal TV tuner card. Until the day we see more Free to Air channels available locally with a support channel to back that up, products like the Compro S350 will only be used by a select few in a rather niche market. **SACM**

IN DETAIL

PLUS

- Works great once you have the Free to Air channels configured

MINUS

- Difficult to configure
- Not many decent Free to Air channels

CONCLUSION

While the concept is great and this product has proven itself in Northern hemisphere countries, South Africa is not yet the ideal place to pick up many Free to Air satellite channels.

Regardt van der Berg



SPECS

DVB STANDARD

DVB-S

VIDEO/AUDIO FORMATS

Video: MPEG-2 Main Profile & Main Level

Audio: MPEG-2 Audio Level I & II

RESOLUTION

PAL 720x576 max NTSC

720x480 max