

SOLID SIGNAL'S HANDS-ON REVIEW

CHANNEL MASTER CM-7004 CONVERTER BOX TUNER/DVR



Guide 4:19PM

	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM
2.1 KCBS-HD	The Doctors		Dr. Phil	
2.2 KCBS-SD	The Ed Sullivan Sh...	The Ed Sullivan Sh...	Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In	
4.1 NBC 4-LA	Steve		The Ellen DeGeneres Show	
4.2 COO-TV	Quincy, M.E.		Murder, She Wrote	
5.1 KTLA-OT	The Robert Irvine Show		KTLA 5 News at 3	
5.2 Antenna	Mr. Belvedere	Hogan Family	Silver Spoons	My Two Dads
5.3 TBS-TV	Hair			
5.4 TBS	QYOU ZONE		QYOU ZONE	
9.1 KCAL-OT	Judge Mathis		The People's Court	
11.2 KTTV-SD	Harry		The Real	
11.3 UCR-TV	The Greatest Thing That Almost Happened			



CHANNEL MASTER CM-7004 TUNER/DVR

It's not often that a device really knocks it out of the park, but the folks at Channel Master have really brought their A-Game. With the release of their new CM-7004 Tuner/DVR, I had a chance to spend some time with this little gem and I'm happy to share my impressions with you.

It all starts with a very nice retail package with the Channel Master logo on it, nice and shiny. Even though everything ships over the internet now, it's nice to see when a company pays attention to the packaging.



A CONVERTER BOX? OR SO MUCH MORE?

Channel Master brands this as a “converter box.” If you were around ten years ago, you remember converter boxes. Back in the mid-2000s, the US Government handed out two \$50 vouchers per household, intended to be used for the purchase of “converter boxes.” These devices would let older televisions use the new digital signals. This was an important part of the government's strategy for digital television, and here at Solid Signal we sold them in huge numbers. The converter box was hands-down the hit of the 2007-2008 season for us.

This CM-7004 can be used that way – it can output signals to an older television if you want it to. But that's nowhere near everything it can do. Let's take a look.

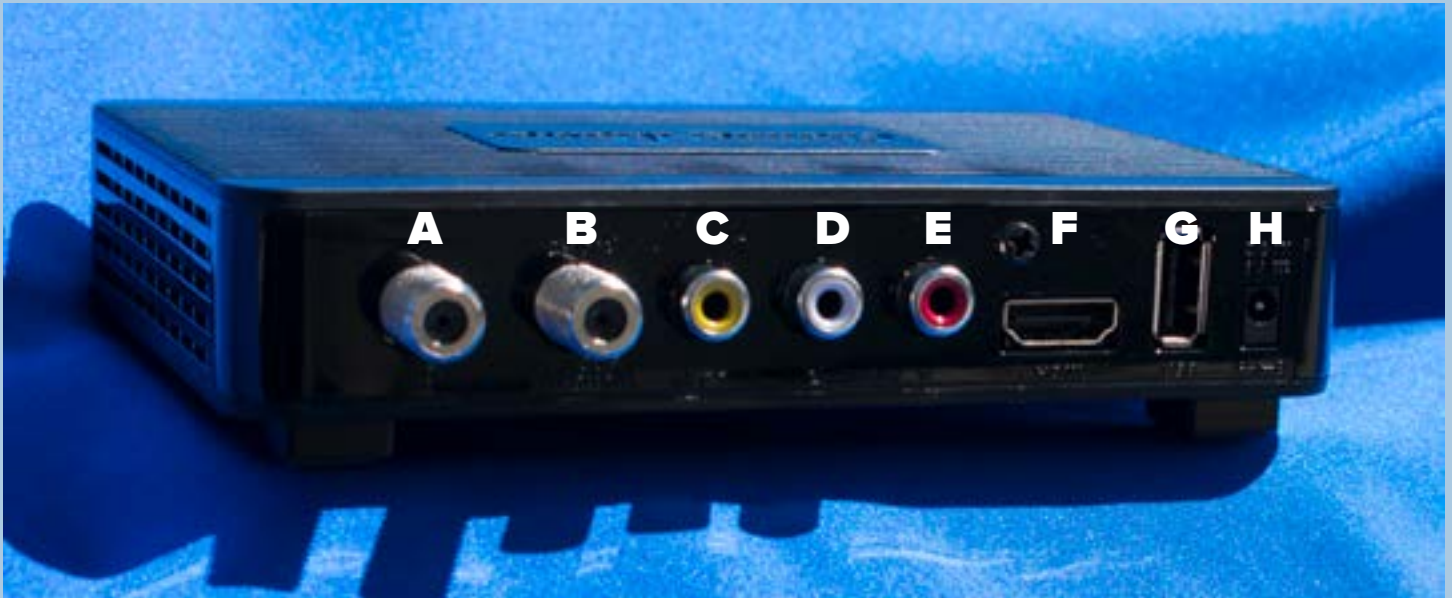
This unassuming little black box is a little smaller than a paperback book. Strangely, it looks like it bears a familial resemblance



to DIRECTV's Genie Client, with its rounded corners and shiny front. Who knows, maybe the same designer did them both.

What's out front isn't super impressive, but you do get everything you need out back.

WHAT'S IN THE TRUNK



For the real techie, this is the most important part. From left to right, you see the antenna input, RF output (for older TVs), composite connections (also for older TVs), HDMI port (for newer TVs and monitors), USB port and a power adapter port. In other words everything you'll need. From left to right:

ANTENNA INPUT (A) receives the signal from any antenna.

ANALOG OUTPUT (B) outputs a compatible, standard-definition signal to an older TV, on channel 3.

COMPONENT VIDEO (C) outputs video suitable for connecting to a VCR, capture device or television.

ANALOG AUDIO (D/E) RCA connections for use with a TV, VCR, audio receiver, or capture device.

HDMI OUT (F) High definition output for use with newer televisions.

USB PORT (G) For connection of flash drive or hard drive. Turns this box into a DVR.

POWER CONNECTOR (H) connects to supplied power adapter.

Any combination of outputs may be used, and all are active at the same time. So, you can connect a video capture device or old TV as well as a monitor or new TV and they will get the same signal. This device won't turn a standard definition TV into a high-definition one, but it will put out an excellent SD signal to an older TV.

THE REMOTE CONTROL



You get a surprisingly serviceable remote control with this unit. Most older converter boxes will disappoint you with the remote, but this one has some universal remote features, a nice set of backlit buttons, and overall feels very good and solid in the hands. It comes with a pair of batteries as well.

The green button in the center is labeled DVR and it will take you to any recordings that you have made or let you change schedules.

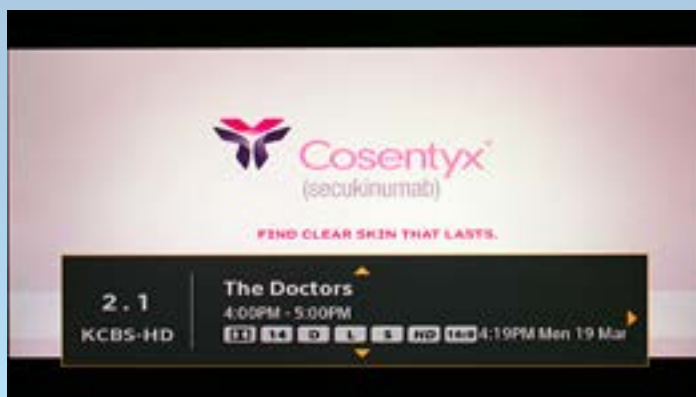
Looking at the closeup, it's possible to see the excellent build quality, which is not something that you often see in converter boxes. This is a remote that feels good in the hands and works very well even from a reasonable distance.



HOW IT WORKS

The video at the end of this review will give you a much more comprehensive look at the menus, but what you get overall are sharp, clear menus that are easy to read from any distance.

There is a very nice 2-hour, 10-channel guide that is as good or better than what you see from cable or satellite providers. The data all comes from the PSIP signal embedded into the



broadcast signal. There's no charge for guide data, but in general you're only going to get about 24 hours of data. For a device like this one, it's enough.

There is a VERY comprehensive on-screen display that gives you every bit of information you might need. Again, it's easy to read and navigate through.

WHY WOULD YOU USE THIS DEVICE?



I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that you haven't had an old tube TV in some time. That doesn't mean you should stop reading. Even if you have a new TV with a great tuner, you should consider a box like this because it's actually an upgrade to what you have now.

If you've used other converter boxes and been disappointed, prepare to be pleasantly surprised.

A NICE STRONG TUNER

In the past, Channel Master was renowned for their tuners. The CM-7001 was a masterpiece. Sure it was the size of a pizza box but it was the ultimate in tuning. I'm pleased to say that the CM-7004 is also very sensitive. It was able to pick up 12 program sources that my TV's internal tuner couldn't.

If you're an antenna TV watcher you've noticed that the internal tuners in TVs have really gone downhill the last few years, with some TVs not even having tuners. You will definitely want to pick up this tuner box even if you have a newer TV. It's very likely to be a lot stronger than what's built into the TV.

MILLENNIALS MIGHT NOT EVEN HAVE A TV BUT...

This device will turn any monitor with an HDMI input into a TV. Sure you will also need a speaker if the monitor doesn't have one but that's not a really big consideration. If the monitor only has one input you'll want to pick up an HDMI auto-switching cable. [They're really a great value at Solid Signal.](#)

This box's ability to feed any monitor is great for people who don't watch a lot of TV but still want the option. While you can get a lot of live video on the internet, not everyone has an unlimited data plan. This is the device your college-bound child will love in the last three days of the month after they've hit their data cap.



This auto-switching HDMI cable is a great add-on if you don't have enough HDMI inputs.

BEST OF ALL...

There's really a third thing this box does very well. People familiar with other converter boxes won't be surprised, but this Channel Master device converts itself into a very serviceable DVR with just the addition of a cheap flash drive.

I plugged in a 64GB drive I had lying around and it immediately started formatting it. Best I can tell it takes about 2GB of space per hour of recording time, and it's recommended that you use a drive 16-128GB in size. You can use a USB hard drive or a flash drive, but they recommend it be brand new and never used.

You can start recording live TV by pressing the record button on the remote, or schedule recurring recordings by time and channel. Unfortunately since there is only 24 hours of guide data you can't really record by show, but you can set recurring times to record and keep an eye on things. That's not as good as a cable or satellite DVR but it's pretty good for occasional use.

Recordings are stored in TS format which usually means MPEG-2 transport stream. I connected the flash drive to my computer, but I wasn't able to play any of the recordings on it. This wouldn't be a good choice for you if you were trying to make permanent recordings of live TV.

You'll definitely want to go into the user settings and enable "Timeshift." This gives you the ability to pause live TV. While this does take up some room on the hard drive (you get about a half-hour buffer from what I could tell) it's the kind of feature you expect from this sort of product and it's perfect for those moments when someone is at the door. You can also rewind and replay live TV if you're not quite sure what you just heard.

You get a nice little progress bar when you pause live TV, it's just the icing on the cake.



SHOULD YOU BUY THIS DEVICE?

If you are an antenna TV watcher, I would say definitely. It's a better choice than your TV's tuner, it has a very robust remote, and it has simple DVR features that will make it easier for you to cut the cord without feeling like something in your life is missing.

It's also a good device for the occasional TV watcher, especially if it's someone without a standalone TV in a dorm room or bedroom. Just fire it up and pretty much any monitor is a TV.

Here's a video review that shows a full unboxing and other closeups of the device. If you have a 4K TV you can get a great look at it. You may be prompted to launch a browser window when you click on it, that's normal.

[Shop now for the Channel Master CM-7004 Converter Box Tuner DVR!](#)



ABOUT SOLID SIGNAL

Solid Signal is more than just an online retailer. Solid Signal, specializes in distributing the latest in high-tech equipment and product research to professional media installers and the tech-savvy consumer. In addition to providing a choice of hundreds of high-quality, name-brand, digital audio and video equipment, Solid Signal offers product information, installation guidance and troubleshooting assistance to enhance customers' experiences.

Because of its product knowledge and research, Solid Signal is able to help customers determine what products work best for them and provide sound advice on what equipment is needed for optimum audio and video performance. As a CEDIA member, Solid Signal can better serve professional media installers.

SolidSignal.com is your source for DIRECTV equipment, supplies, and support. We have over 10 years' experience in installing and supporting satellite equipment. Our technical staff is ready to answer all your questions!



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