

*Solid Signal goes...*  
**HANDS ON**



*HR44 Genie DVR*



# Direct from CES...



**We showed it to you** *at an exclusive CES event.* In fact, that's a picture taken from that event. Now, we've had a chance to put the HR44 Genie DVR through its paces, and we're bringing you all the information you need to know about the new Genie DVR from DIRECTV.

First things first, this DVR is so new that we can't even put up pre-order information on it. We don't know when it will be here or when we'll even have pricing. So if you're looking to upgrade to the 5-tuner goodness of the Genie system, take a look at the **HR34 Genie DVR** available now. Most of the features are the same.

In fact, the specs for the HR44 Genie are more or less the same as its older brother. You'll find five tuners inside, and that same 1 terabyte hard drive will store about 200 hours of HD programming or about 800 hours of SD. As we all know, DIRECTV uses a "variable bit-rate" encoding scheme so that it's impossible to forecast the exact number.

You'll also find **Genie Recommends**, the system that records suggested content but doesn't take up any user-available hard drive space. You'll find everything that has made DIRECTV's DVRs a hit in the past: HD menus, On Demand, custom favorites lists, whole-home viewing (up to 3 programs can be played from the playlist at a time) and Genie-specific features like picture-in-picture and up to 100 Series Links.

Longtime DIRECTV customers may be saddened to find out that the HR44 Genie, like the HR34, is SWM-only. You'll need the new single-wire system for this DVR, no way around it.

*So what makes this HR44 Genie worth talking about? It comes down to two words: **tiny and fast.***



# Tiny...



*From top to bottom: H25 receiver, HR44 Genie DVR, HR24 DVR*

If there was one word to describe the HR34 Genie DVR, it wouldn't be "small." The HR34 towered over its fellow DVRs sporting huge fans on the sides. It was the Incredible Hulk of DVRs... not slender, but mighty powerful. DIRECTV takes a quantum leap here with the HR44, which is even smaller than an HR24. It's really only a little bigger than an H24 receiver, except it has large vent areas on the left and right. The front panel size is almost exactly the same size as the H24.

Without those massive fans, it's quiet too. It's barely noticeable even in the quietest room. It doesn't win the silence crown -- that still belongs to the C31 Genie Client -- but it comes mighty close.



The secret is simple: this is the first DIRECTV DVR to use a power supply "brick" instead of having the power supply in the box. This seems to be the direction that DIRECTV is going with all its products, since the H25 and C31 Genie Client both use power bricks. It makes sense, because it cuts down on cooling requirements and also makes the power supply easier to replace. Someone must have noticed that the power supply is among the most common points of failure in older DVRs. The brick is different from those used on the H25 and C31. It uses a different connector and is a 12 volt, 4 amp power supply.

# and fast!

DIRECTV DVRs all got a speed bump with the increase of the HD menus last year, and even though the HR34 was fast enough, it was never as fast as the HR24. That changes here as well. The HR44 is hands down the fastest DVR we've ever tested and we've got the video proof at the end of this review. It's almost impossible to press buttons faster than the DVR will respond.

The increased speed is obvious whenever you're using the menus. It's still a little slow to tune channels because that's a consequence of using satellite technology. You'll also find that the C31 Genie Client is faster when using the HR44, since it gets a lot of its menus from the Genie DVR as well. It's a welcome improvement and puts DIRECTV right on top of the DVR game.

Forget about long reboots, too -- the HR34 was notorious for 20-minute reboots especially if it was getting new software. The new HR44 never took more than 6 minutes to boot up, and usually took about 4 minutes. What a difference!

## HOW FAST IS FAST?



*Check out this exclusive video showing the difference between the HR34 Genie and HR44 Genie (You may be prompted to leave your PDF viewer.)*



# In detail...



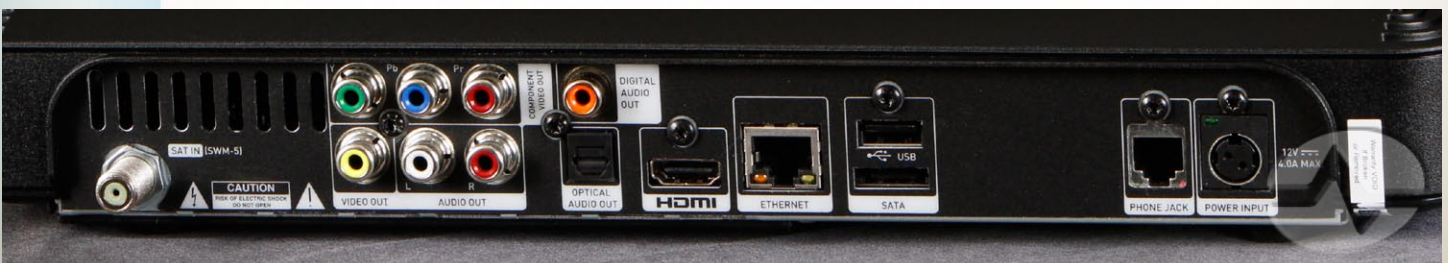
The HR44 Genie DVR uses the same resistive touch panel used on H24, HR24, and HR34 DVRs. Like the H25, it features DIRECTV's mildly refreshed logo on the front panel and embossed into the top. The top left and right are covered in vent holes and like earlier devices there are vents on the side. You really get a feeling how tiny it is if you're replacing an older DVR. It sort of floats in the middle of the shelf.

There's a single door on the front that houses the access card, reset button and the almost useless USB port. It still charges up your iPhone pretty well. We can also see by the model number HR44-700 that this one was made by Pace, but according to reps at the Consumer Electronics Show, Samsung will also be making these under the HR44-200 model number.

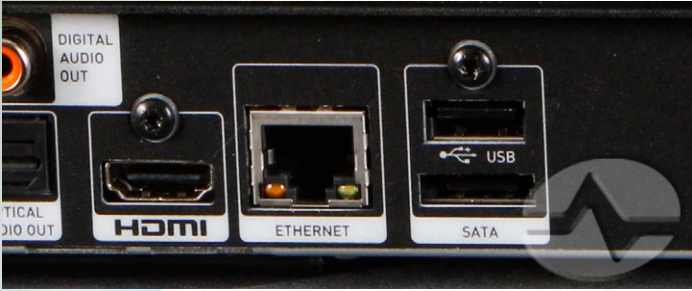
The back of the HR44 is pretty packed, but it's missing some of the outputs from earlier devices. You'll still find USB (for the [AM21 antenna module](#)) eSATA for hooking up an external drive, and even a landline phone jack. What's missing is the old S-Video jack. If you want to connect this to an older TV, the red/yellow/white composite ports are your only hope. There's component and HDMI ports of course and... what's this?



DIRECTV put the optical audio port back! This soundbar-friendly option was missing from the HR34. You could use an adapter but now the port has returned, making home theater setup even easier!



# Networking...



The HR44 Genie DVR gives you options you didn't have before. The HR34 could act as its own Cinema Connection Kit -- in other words run ethernet into it and it would provide internet service to all your other receivers. The HR44 does this too, but it takes networking a step further. It includes a wireless adapter built in so that you can disconnect your cinema connection kit altogether and connect to your

router wirelessly! The setup function is built into the "Connect Now" menu when you are first setting up the DVR. If you want to use it with a cinema connection kit, because you're not in wi-fi range, you have that option as well. The HR44 will behave perfectly, configuring itself automatically for your existing DIRECTV network. Streamlining the network connection process is very important for new installs, and if you're the sort who doesn't like looking at extra black boxes, it's important to you as well. There have been various rumors that there will be a truly wireless DIRECTV receiver, one that doesn't need a coaxial cable. This isn't that receiver, and the folks at the Consumer Electronics Show weren't talking, but putting wireless networking in the DVR certainly points to something like that in the future. Oh well, we will have to be patient...

## The new remote...

The HR44 is expected to ship with a new remote which is similar to the hotel remote we showed you last year. The button placement has changed somewhat. GUIDE and LIST are now at top while RECORD and RED move to the left. Otherwise the experience is the same. The remote has one button for play and pause, and no stop button. You can use the left button to go back to a menu if you want to stop, or press any number button to tune to live TV on that channel.

The remote is one of those "good news, bad news" affairs. The good news is, if you don't like it, any white RC-series remote will work in infrared mode. The stop buttons and color buttons from that remote will even work. The bad news is that the new RC71 remote uses a completely different technology for RF mode, which means if you're accustomed to putting your DVR behind a door, you'll have to use the new remote. The old one won't work.

It's a blessing in disguise, though. DIRECTV's RF implementation never worked with Zigbee or RF4CE products, meaning that high-end users could never program DIRECTV RF into their single remotes without a separate IR blaster for the DVR. The details are still leaking out, but there is some reason to believe that the current remote might work with other home automation products more effectively. Let's hope that when someone does program a third-party remote for DIRECTV's new RF scheme, they include a code for the STOP button. It's true, you'll probably miss it.





# Wrapping it up...

If you've been put off by stories that the HR34 Genie is too loud, too slow or too big, you'll definitely be interested in the new HR44. It has performed flawlessly in all our tests and it should be a great addition to the DIRECTV lineup. The replaceable power supply is a big hit, because it keeps the DVR quiet. Built-in wireless has worked perfectly throughout our testing.

**...Well done, DIRECTV!**

## Independent User Review

With the introduction of the HR34, DIRECTV added the most cutting edge advanced HDDVR to their line up of set top boxes. Fast forward 1 year later and DIRECTV has done it again with the introduction of the HR44! The first thing you notice is the decrease in size of the HR44 but don't let the size fool you of what this upgrade is all about. The word that comes to mind when you first use it is SPEED!! The HR44 is blazing fast compared to the HR34! The first time you experience this new speed is during the boot up of the HR44 and how significantly faster that task completes. Another new feature the HR44 has is the ability to connect to the internet wirelessly. You can use the wireless feature in place of the CCK for internet connectivity. The HR44 is using the same HDGUI firmware that the HR34 uses. The whole user experience is so much smoother and faster with the HR44. Scrolling through the guide you get to see just how fast things are. When you come across a banner ad for a movie for example, it doesn't even hesitate anymore. Another new change that comes with the HR44 is the RC71 remote. This is a completely redesigned remote. It's got a good ergonomic feel and like the HR44 is smaller than the previous DIRECTV remote. The remote also supports RF.

When DIRECTV launched the HR34 they changed the game of HDDVR's. With a 1TB HDD, 5 tuners, SWM support, and later the addition of the "genie" software the HR34 was top of its class. Now with the release of the HR44, you get everything the HR34 offers but in a smaller footprint, a new processor, wireless capability and a new remote. The HR44 is sure to be the standard for all future HDDVR's!

*Special thanks go to Signal Labs member Alebob911 for this review,  
as well as for the studio photography used in this document*

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