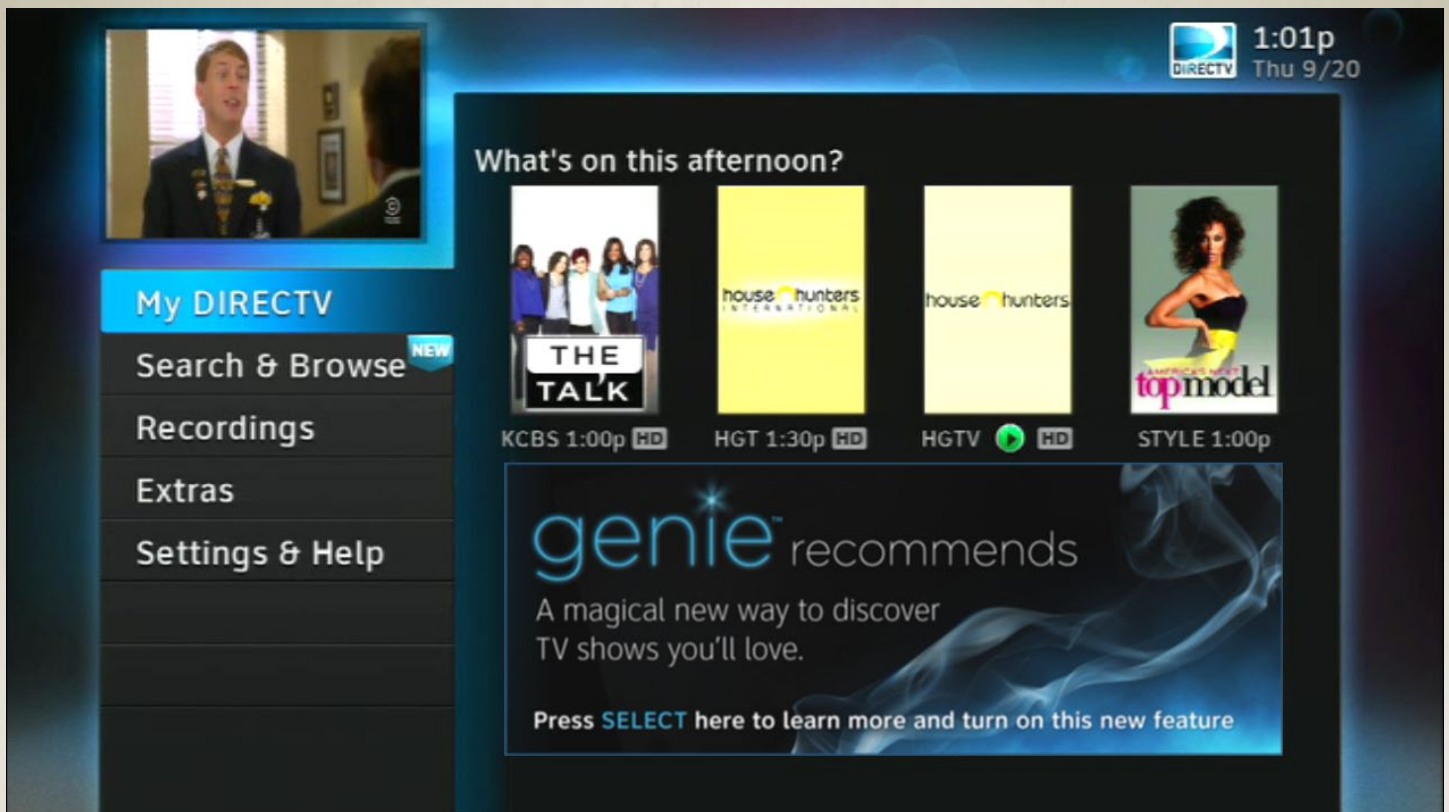




HANDS ON:

**DIRECTV GENIE HD DVR
and
GENIE RECOMMENDS**



Blame it on the 486. Ever since Intel figured out that using numbers for its microprocessors didn't protect them, technology companies have been giving catchy names to consumer electronics. Intel never released a 586, choosing the made-up name "Pentium" instead. The trend actually goes back even further, with Apple choosing to name a computer "Lisa" back in the 1980's, but ever since the Pentium, the trend has been snowballing. Cell phones always had catchy names starting with the first MicroTAC, but it was Motorola's RAZR that weaned the mobile world from model numbers. DVR technology jumped on the bandwagon with DISH's Hopper, originally known as the XiP813, and now DIRECTV's on board with the Genie.



For about a year, we've been calling this little beast the [HR34 Super DVR](#). It's always been a little hard to find (except at Solid Signal of course) and DIRECTV never marketed it. Now, it's finally getting its time in the sun... with a new name: *Genie*.



Genie is more than just a DVR. It's a whole home media system that combines with the [Genie Clients](#) (which, until recently were known as C31s.) The Genie does all the work, recording up to five things at the same time and storing all that content on a one-terabyte hard drive. The Genie clients do everything the main DVR does (except picture-in-picture) and they're totally silent, use 5 watts of electricity and they're the size of a paperback book.

If you've read any of our reviews of Genie or the Genie Clients, you might have been impressed, but until now, DIRECTV's lesser DVRs could do pretty much everything that Genie can do. So, DIRECTV decided to change that. Starting with the fall 2012 software release, there's a new feature: Genie Recommends.

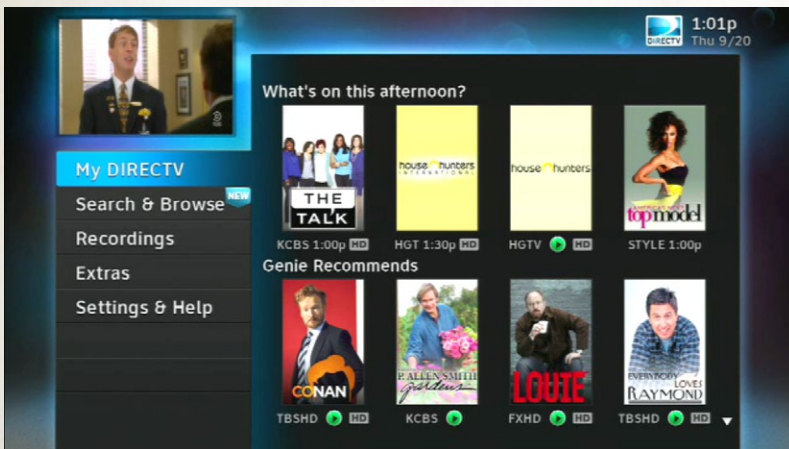
Genie Recommends is suggestions done right. Programs that you might like are recorded to your hard drive but stored where pay-per-view movies have always been stored. That means that no matter how many suggestions you record, you'll never take up any of your hard drive space. Programs are "just there," and they don't require an internet connection. Just like any other programming, playback is instantaneous..

GENIE RECOMMENDS



When you get the update, you'll see that your "You Might Like" menu has been replaced by a banner. Highlight that banner to turn on Genie Recommends. It's off until you turn it on, and if you don't like it, you can turn it off again.

After you've turned Genie Recommends on, it takes 4-6 hours for it to begin to populate with programs you might like. At first, it's just going to grab what it can, but if you leave it alone for several days, it will find programs that match your viewing style. In the image above, all four of the programs at the bottom are available to watch instantly, and they don't take up any more space. You'll also notice the arrow at the lower right... that's telling you that there are even more programs. Arrow to the right and then down to see them. Typically you'll see about 32 programs.



Highlight a program and select it and you'll see a list of episodes. Anything with a green circle is ready to watch

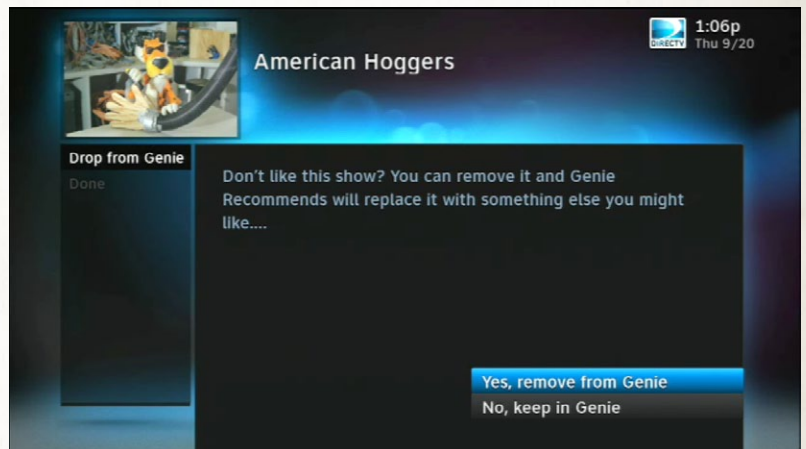
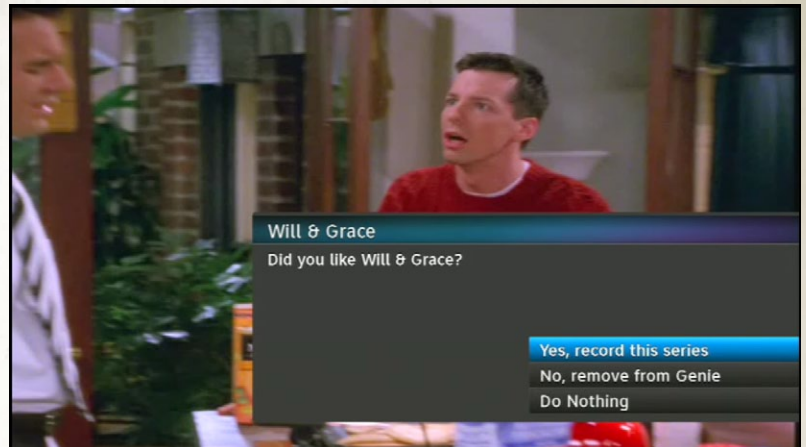
right now. If you are internet connected, you'll also see a list of on demand programs. These don't download until you ask for them. Highlight any program and press {PLAY} and you'll start watching.

GENIE RECOMMENDS

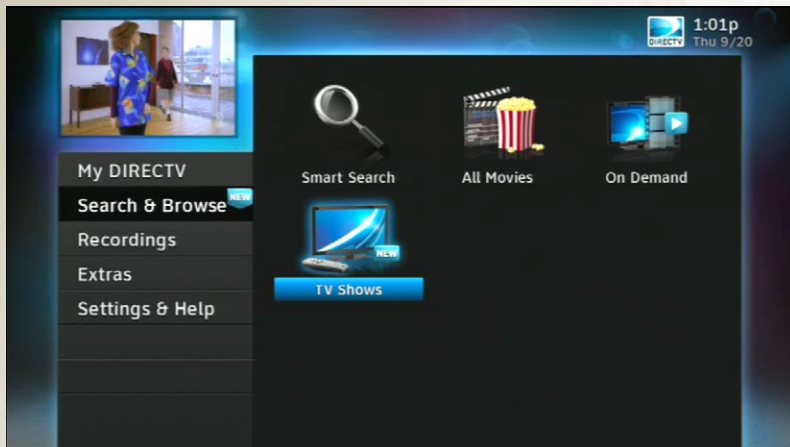
The experience is identical to watching any other program that you recorded, except at the end you have new options to consider.

If you like the show and want to record it all the time, Choose “Yes, record this series.” If you didn’t like it at all, choose “No, remove from Genie” and all its episodes will be deleted. Or, you can choose “Do Nothing” and the programs will stay in your Genie Recommends menu.

If you really, really hate one of Genie’s suggestions you can manually drop it. Highlight a program, press {SELECT} then highlight “Drop from Genie” and you’ll be able to torpedo that foul program immediately. You’ll get a message like the one above telling you the deed has been done.

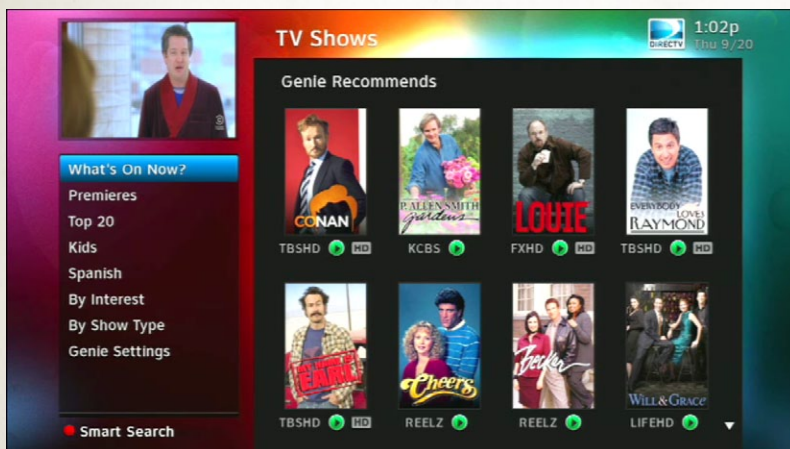


THE SEARCH AND BROWSE MENU

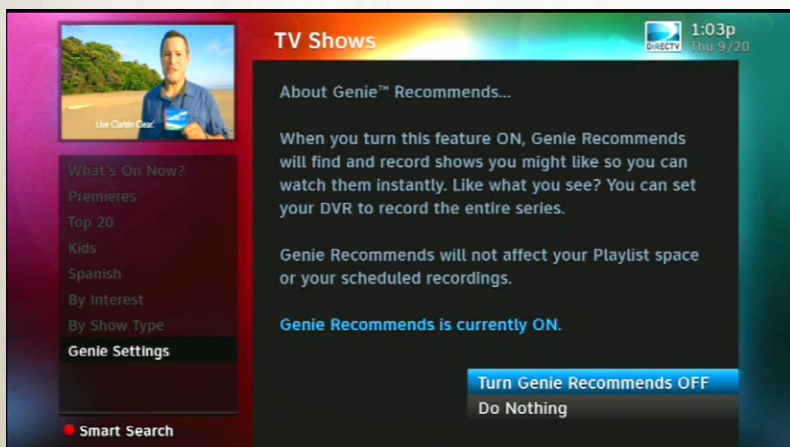


There's another way to get to Genie: **The Search and Browse Menu.**

You'll see a new item there: TV Shows. Highlighting it and selecting it will take you to a new, colorful menu. If you've left Genie alone for a day or two, each category will be full of programs to record.



You'll also find the Genie Settings menu, which will give you the option of turning Genie Recommends off and on. There's no real reason to turn it off since it doesn't save you any hard drive space, but if you've never found anything in the Genie menu that you like, and the idea of the DVR working hard to put programs on that you'll never watch doesn't appeal to you, this is your opportunity to do something about it. Turn Genie Recommends off and the "You Might Like" menu will replace it, just as it has always been.



While it's not really newsworthy when a company takes an existing product and gives it a new name... DIRECTV is doing the right thing here. They tried their hand at branding with the clumsily named "DIRECTV Plus HD DVR" but everyone called it the HR20 anyway. Now, they have a name that will work in commercials and in print. DISH has had far more success marketing the "two guys from Boston" shouting "Hoppah!" at each other than DIRECTV has had with its HR34, and giving it a fresh name and an official product introduction seems wise.

Genie Recommends is great. The first few days it tried to record a lot of things I didn't like. I ended up "dropping" some of them because I really, really didn't like them. But, I left it alone for about a week and the recommendations started getting better all by themselves. You don't have to manage this feature, it's "just there." When there wasn't anything on live and my playlist looked pretty bleak, all of a sudden I had about 16 hours of programming that I actually liked, all ready for me. It wasn't "must-watch" TV... I have Series Links for all that stuff, and Genie Recommends won't record anything you have a series link on. It was just stuff I liked, ready to watch and I didn't have to do anything.

Well done, DIRECTV. The Genie DVR, Genie Clients, and Genie Recommends... this is how television should be.

If you're interested in seeing a demonstration of Genie Recommends, here's a short video:

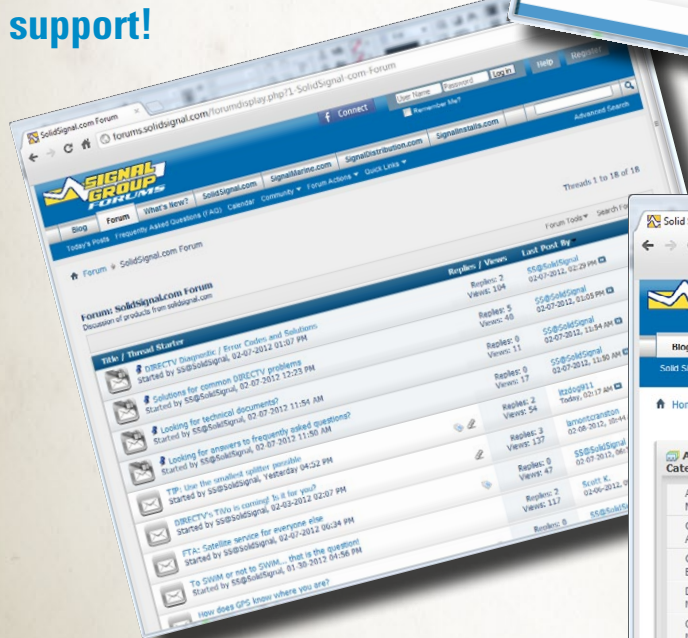


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