

PCTV HD Ultimate Stick by Pinnacle

This paragraph is what the advertising says it will do and it does do it very well.....Watch and record SD and free HD TV with no service fees on any PC using the Pinnacle PCTV HD Ultimate Stick, featuring a personal video recorder application that runs from the stick's on-board flash memory. Plug it into any PC and start watching and recording TV in seconds – no software installation required. It supports both analog (NTSC) and digital (ATSC) TV signals. The tuner hardware is also ready for ClearQAM (unencrypted digital cable). Using the unique FlashPVR technology, you can record up to 2 hours of TV directly to the stick for playback on any PC. You can also save recordings to your hard drive in MPEG-1/2 or DivX formats or even direct-to-DVD.



In the package is the stick, a telescoping antenna with a cable so that it can be placed conveniently a few feet away, a remote control, a recovery CD, an A/V adapter cable and a bag about 4 by 6 inches that will hold all the pieces for travel. I plugged this unit into a USB port and it loaded and ran. I have the antenna sitting next to a metal venetian blind and in the Phoenix area, it picks up 26 stations. Now.... the software finds all of the stations, high or low signal strength, analog, digital and HD. Some come in really good and a few at the low



signal end are fuzzy. Some of the stations in this area are in Spanish. I sized the picture and have it running on half of my screen, while I work on things like this review on the other side of the screen. The regular channels have a square picture while the HD signal is wide screen and depending on what they are showing, the wide screen may have a black border. I recorded shows and played them back later but this is something that I don't do often. It may become more appealing as I use this more and identify the

shows I really like and may miss. Spouse has a notebook set up facing the TV while I am at a desk in another room. I'm enjoying catching a mid day show or the noon news. I have a HP Vista notebook that is almost a year old and the HD stations are just beautiful. Yes, it works on XP too!

We attended a conference in Las Vegas and stayed in our RV. The campground was just a block off the strip and didn't have cable so we were using the roof top antenna. The little stick with the antenna sitting in the window did just as good a job as the big antenna on the RV roof. The staff at Pinnacle told me there is a Christmas tree shaped antenna that will increase reception in areas with lots of tall buildings or if you're out boon docking away from civilization. Take it anywhere you take your notebook and try it! Ooh....did I mention sports? You can record those games and pause and rewind or watch again later at your convenience.

I sit in front of this notebook screen most of the day and I enjoy the news programs usually at half screen because I'm working on something else but sometimes at full screen. Full screen for movies is great, but generally I retreat away from this 17" screen to a big TV and a more comfy chair with popcorn to watch a movie. I haven't explored absolutely everything the Ultimate Stick will do yet, I'm still learning about some of the formats. It's a cool tool that does what the package says it will do, does it easily.....and it's fun!