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Review: KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition (SA295-Q DE)

Date: December 7th, 2009

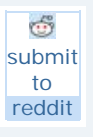
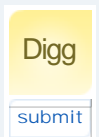
Author: Ryan McLaughlin

Manufacturer: Kworld

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Most new TVs sold today have a built-in HD tuner. This makes it very easy to watch HD TV if your cable company provides unencrypted HD (clear QAM) or if you have an HD [antenna](#) (ATSC). If you have an older TV you probably don't have a built-in HD tuner and if you want HD TV you have to make a decision. Do you buy a new TV, or buy an external HD tuner?

External HD tuners come in many forms including cable and satellite boxes, or ATSC and QAM tuners. The KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox is (as the name indicates) an ATSC/QAM tuner. This means it works with unencrypted [HD signals](#) from an HD antenna or from your [cable provider](#).

Features

- HDMI/DVI/YPbPr Supports 1080i Video Output
- 1 click PC/TV changeover switch
- Parental Control Function
- Supports ATSC (over-the-air digital TV), and Unencrypted QAM Cable TV
- Supports [MP3](#) / JPG playback from USB storage
- Power Smart Function

With HDMI, DVI, and YPbPr connectors the KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition (SA295-Q DE) has the ability to connect to just about any TV or computer monitor. This means you don't have to buy a new TV in order to get [HD content](#) on your old TV.

If you connect the External ATSC/QAM TVBox to your computer monitors DVI port then you can easily switch back and forth between TV and your computer with the click of a button.

If you are using the SA295-Q DE at home, then you can use the built-in parental controls to keep your children from seeing inappropriate material.

The External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition supports both ATSC (over-the-air digital TV) and unencrypted QAM cable TV.

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With playback support for JPG images and MP3 audio files the External ATSC/QAM TVBox can turn your TV into a digital photo frame or a jukebox. These files are played via the USB port on the front.

The SA295-Q DE is also environmentally friendly. The built-in power smart function can be used to automatically power-off the TVBox when its been idle for more than 30 minutes/1 hour/2 hours/4 hours.

Design

The design of the SA295-Q DE is fairly simple, but it has lots of options for connecting to a TV or monitor. The External ATSC/QAM TVBox has a rectangular look with features on every side.



Top

The front is probably the least busy with only a small light on the left, an IR receiver in the middle, and a USB port on the right. The light on the front indicates the current state of the External ATSC/QAM TVBox. For example, when it is starting up the light is pink, when it is in DVI/HDMI or VGA mode the light is blue, and when it is YPbPr or AV mode then the light is red. The USB port can be used for displaying photos or playing MP3s on your TV.



Front

On the left side are a set of component and [audio outputs](#).



Left

On the right are some controls for volume, channel, language, and power.



Right

The back is loaded up with inputs and outputs. Starting with the left there are two DVI ports, one for input and one for output. This is great if you want to connect it to a computer monitor and it only has one DVI port. The SA295-Q DE acts like a DVI switch and lets you choose which signal to send to the monitor. Next to the DVI ports are two audio ports. Just like the DVI ports there are two, and they switch with the DVI ports. The next two are the coax and power plugs.



Back

The SA295-Q DE comes with a lot of extras including a remote, stereo audio cable, DVI-I cable,

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ATSC Antenna, DVI-D to HDMI cable, DVI-I/F to VGA/M adapter, HDMI/F to DVI-D/M adapter, and a VGA/F to DVI-I/M adapter. Just a warning, the antenna is very weak and very poorly designed, I would go so far as to say it is completely unusable and should probably just be thrown away. Why do I say this? First, it is a very simple telescoping antenna and not very big, also the base is super small and it tips over very easily, so getting it to stay in only place is almost impossible.



Adapters and antenna DVI-D to HDMI cable DVI-I cable

The remote that comes with the SA295-Q DE is necessary for many of the functions to work, unfortunately the remote has a few design quirks. The most obvious is that all of the buttons are labeled with icons and they are not very intuitive. For example, at the top next to the power button are two buttons. The first one is a box with a line through it, and the second one is a gridded box. Without looking them up I could not figure out what they do. It so happens that the first one switches the DVI port between computer and HD signal, and the second is for changing the resolution.



Remote

Performance

Well I have to be honest, when I was asked if I wanted to do this review I was a bit skeptical about the product. The reason I was skeptical is that the last time I reviewed a [KWorld product](#) it didn't perform very good.

So with that disclosure out-of-the-way lets get started. Hooking up the SA295-Q DE is not very difficult. I chose to use the component connections to my monitor because my monitor supports PIP (picture in picture) and that allows me to watch the TV and work on my computer at the same time. At first I did not get a signal, and then I read the instructions and found that I had to select the correct output. Once I selected the Component output I saw the setup screen.

The setup screen asks some simple questions like language, timezone, and TV source. Once selected the External ATSC/QAM TVBox scans for channels.

I first tried using the antenna that is included with the SA295-Q DE but it only found one channel and it was so weak I could not get a picture. So I next tried hooking up my cable. Luckily for me, my cable company provides a few unencrypted HD channels along with the analog channels. The SA295-Q DE was able to pick up 38 channels in all. About 20 of those channels were music only, and the rest were a mixture of HD and SD TV channels. I did notice that none of the analog channels showed up.

Once the channel scans were complete watching the channels was easy. The video and audio was pretty good. Some of the channels appeared choppy, but I was unable to tell if it was the signal from my cable company, or the External ATSC/QAM TVBox. Some channels were worse than others and with others it only started after you were watching for a few minutes.

MP3 and photo playback is also easy. I quickly loaded up some MP3s and photos on a USB stick and inserted it into the USB slot on the front of the External ATSC/QAM TVBox. I was hoping that it would automatically switch to USB mode, but it didn't and I had to use the remote to change the mode. From this screen you simply click on the file or you want to play. If you have things organized in folders it is easy to click on each folder and get to the songs or pictures you want. You can even start a slideshow of all the pictures that are in a particular directory. One thing I was hoping for is the ability to have a slide show with music. However that is not possible, or at least I could not figure out how to do it.

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There are other features and settings that may be useful in your home. A couple of include parental controls, close captioning, and the EPG (Electronic Program Guide). The parental controls allow you to setup a limit on TV ratings and then password protect the settings so kids cannot change them. The EPG is supposed to provide the channel listings for today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, but in my setup it did not work. I could not get any listings, and I could not find a way to assign listings to the SA295-Q DE.

Support and Warranty

The KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition (SA295-Q DE) comes with only a 1 year warranty. For a device like this where they are almost no moving parts I would expect at least a 5 year warranty.

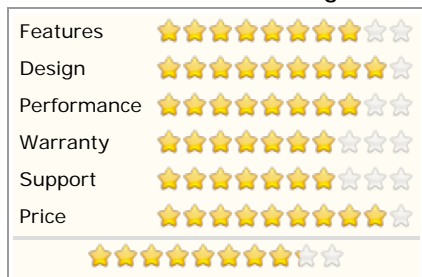
Support can be had through their website in the form of a FAQ/online support database, or by contacting their support via email. However, before you can contact their support you must first signup as a member of the KWorld User's Club. The process is not painful, but it does require you to fill in your personal and product information.

Conclusion

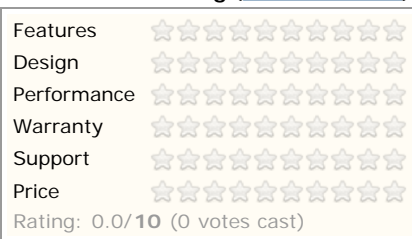
Overall it performed fairly well. I don't have any major complaints, just a few small ones, and nothing that couldn't be fixed with a software update. If you are in the market for an HD tuner and you are willing to put up with a few quirks, then the KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition (SA295-Q DE) may be for you. To help make up for the quirks it has a fairly decent price. The KWorld External ATSC/QAM TVBox HDMI Edition can be found on [Amazon for only \\$89](#) and [Newegg for only \\$79](#). Just make sure you have access to HD ATSC/QAM channels before you go out and buy this.

If all your TVs already have HD tuners and you are just looking to add HD to your computer, you are better off with an HD tuner like the [Hauppauge WinTV-HVR-2250 TV Tuner Card](#).

Author Product Rating



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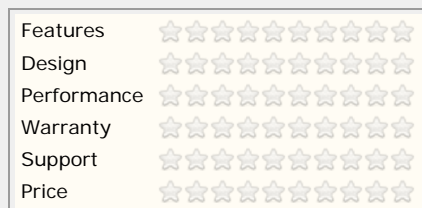
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