



Hidden talents

Chris Jenkins auditions a potent, media-savvy PVR

A stylishly glossy high-definition Media Centre, the LaCie LaCinema Black Max is essentially a 500GB hard drive in a box so black and featureless it could be mistaken for the monolith from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but it has hidden talents which set it apart from the competition.

The front panel is distinguished only by a USB 2.0 port, but when you look around the back you find a plethora of PC and AV connections, including HDMI, component video, composite video, S-video, optical digital audio, stereo analogue audio, RF IN/THRU, three more USBs, and Ethernet.

The package comes with an external power supply, a bundle of cables (including HDMI), a software suite on CD, and an infra-red remote control handset. A 1TB version is also available for around £500.

LaCinema:
The design will suit minimalists



Highs

- A multifunctional server connecting PC and TV, the LaCinema is compatible with a huge range of media files. It uses Twonky Media Server software and, unusually, can record from its Freeview tuner. The onscreen menu system is clean, clear and intuitive. Locating and categorising files is a doddle.

- AV performance is excellent, with HD support, upscaling of standard-

def to 1080i, and DTS passthrough to an external decoder.

Lows

- It's quite an expensive way to achieve what it does, although the LaCie's one-box convenience is welcome.

HCC VERDICT

LaCie LaCinema Black MAX0
£390 Approx

Price check: www.techradar.com/599128

Overall: 1 2 3 4 5