



Proudly Presents:

A FIRST LOOK

**DISH Network ViP 922
SlingLoaded DVR**

By Scott Greczkowski

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Introduction:

Back in May of 2008 DISH Network held its annual retailer event called Team Summit. I was fortunate to be in attendance at the Team Summit general assembly on May 16th and what I heard that day has had me excited for over two years.

The big announcement was a new satellite receiver from EchoStar, announced as the DISH 722s. This receiver was the satellite geeks dream receiver, as it had almost everything a satellite enthusiast could want including a built in HD Slingbox and an amazing new user interface. There were other features announced for the 722s such as a built in web browser, SlingCatcher functionality which would let you watch other Slingboxes on your 722s, and even a feature called Clip & Sling, that would allow you to capture video clips and send them to your friends. The 722s also was going to use a new state of the art touch pad remote, the remote has minimal buttons and no numeric keys. Most of the operations would be done with the touch pad and a trigger built into the back of the remote.

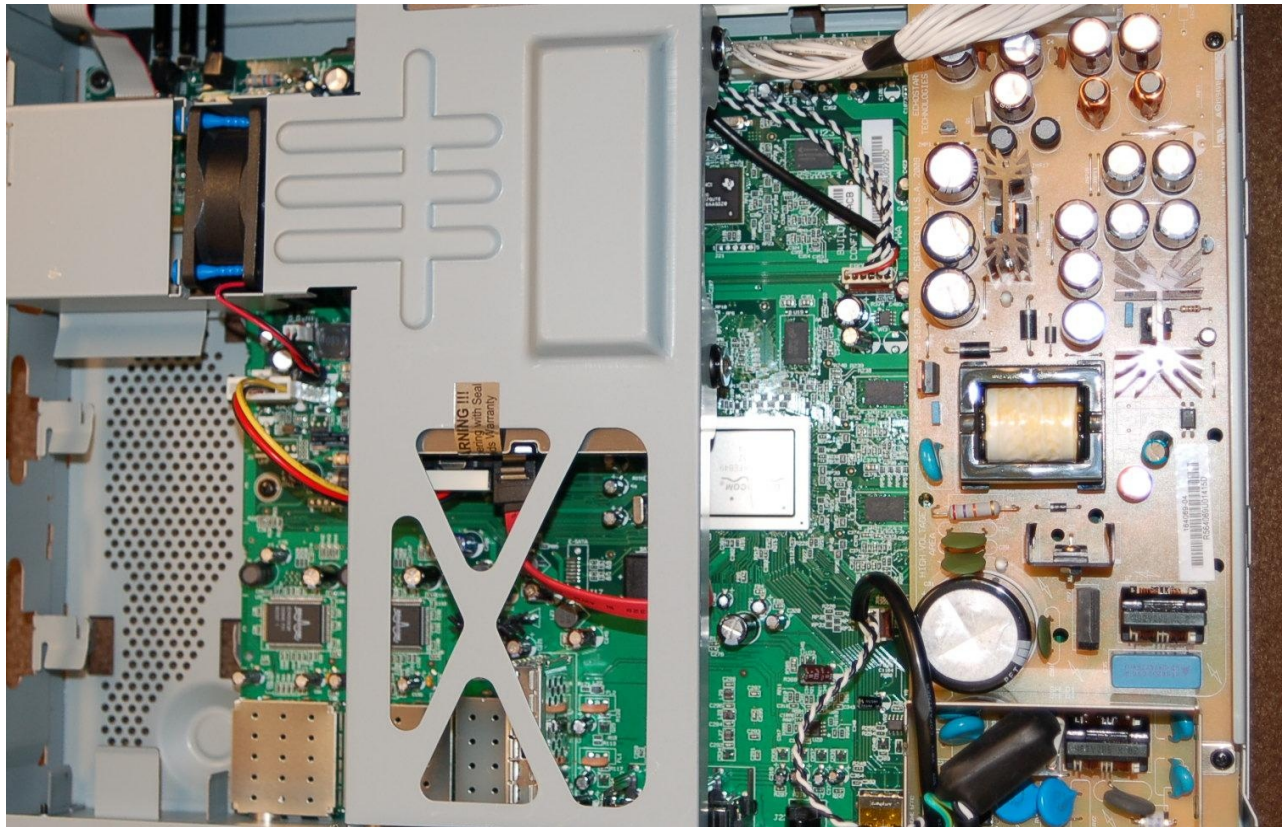
What a difference 2 years makes! With the release of the S100 software the only features left from the original feature set are the new interface and the built-in Slingbox. The receiver itself even has a new name, the box is now known as the ViP922 SlingLoaded DVR.

Thank to the folks at DISH Network I have been able to beta test this receiver for over 10 months and what a journey that beta test has been. I won't sugar coat things and will be the first to admit that those 6 months were a rough journey, and a few times I wanted to take my 922 and throw it out the window. But as they always say, Rome was not built in a day, and I am glad I stuck it out with the 922. The wizards at EchoStar have done it again and made another receiver which has already won awards and will win even more. The 922 has come a long long way and is now the crown jewel of my entertainment center.



(The 922 as it arrived from DISH for the beta complete with the dual Touchpad Remotes)

When I received my 922 I unboxed everything and then I did what any good satellite geek would do – I popped off the cover to see what was inside. In looking around I noticed that the electronics inside the 922 looked a lot like the 722k receiver.



(The Insides of the ViP 922 SlingLoaded DVR)

The Remotes: The 922 came with two of the touchpad remotes, which are seen below. Over the testing period one of my major dislikes with the 922 was these touchpad remotes. The new remotes did not add anything to the 922 experience, and if anything seemed to diminish from the experience. Unlike any other DISH DVR you couldn't sit in front of the 922 using one of the Touchpad remotes and just control the receiver. In order to use the 922 required spending a few weeks just getting over the remote's learning curve. This view was shared by other beta testers, and the touchpad remotes were pulled from the shipping 922's. The 922 now ships with a single 32.0 remote. (Shown below on the right)



With the new 32.0 remote the 922 becomes a pleasure to use. Anyone who knows DISH Network DVR's can easily pick up the remote and figure out how to operate the 922. The new remotes operate at a new 2 Gigahertz range and each remote has its own unique address assigned. There is no more messing with remote addresses or worrying about conflicts with these new 2G remotes. Setting up a remote to work with the 922 is as easy as hitting the SYSTEM INFO button on the front of the receiver then pressing and holding down the SAT button on the front of the remote.

The new remotes have a neat new feature; can't find your remote, no problem! Press the SYSTEM INFO button on the front of the 922, then use the arrow keys to click on the locate button for the remote your missing. The remote will then start beeping and will be for a couple minutes until you find it.



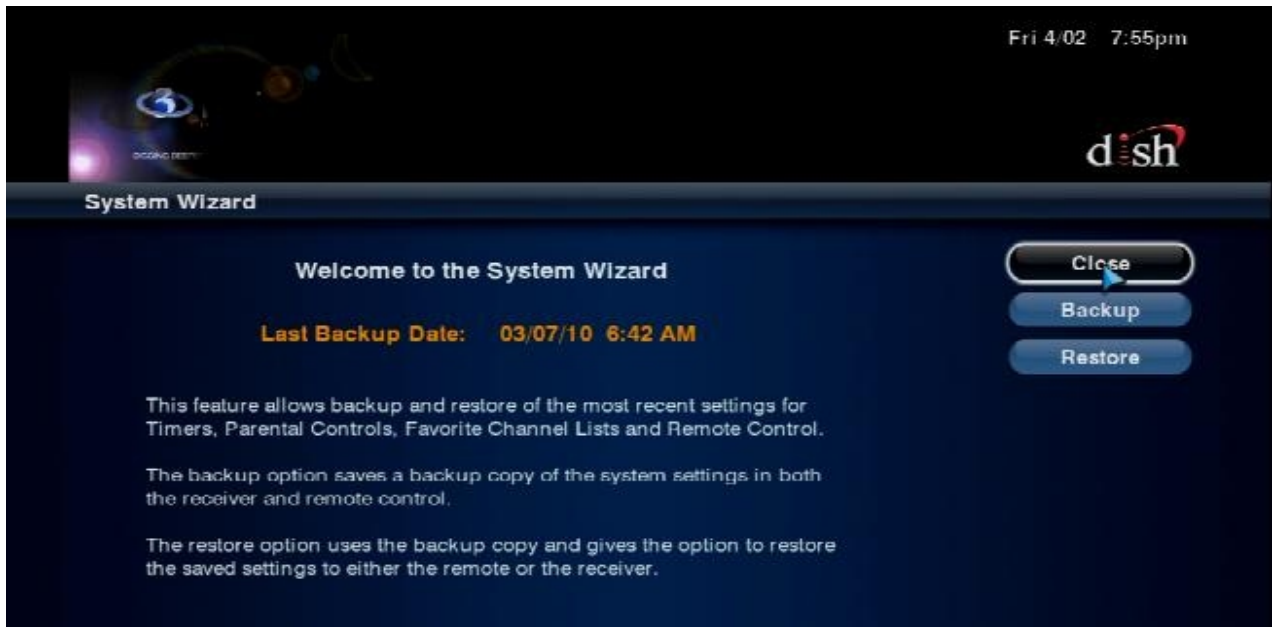
(Left: 722k 21.0 Remote Center: 30.0 Touch Remote Right: 32.0 922 Remote)

The new 32.0 2G remotes also have amazing range. I am able to use the 32.0 remote anywhere in my house, the range is much greater than the old Dish Network UHF remotes

Another thing great about the new 32.0 Remotes and the 922 is that your 922 programs the remote for you! Just go into the settings then select remote and you will be able to search for codes for your TV, DVD player and an AUX device, such as a audio amplifier or VCR. Once you have found the brand of device just follow the on screen prompts until you find the correct codes for your device. Once you have found the correct one the code is automatically programmed to your remote. The code database is constantly updated by satellite so most components work with the 922 remote... but if not the 32.0 remote is also an IR learning remote. You can teach your 32.0 remote the IR codes of almost any remote! .

Speaking of IR remotes, since I have been testing the 922 one of the common question's has been, what if I want to use my own IR remote, such as a Harmony remote... NO PROBLEM! The 922 supports all universal IR Remotes, when programming your IR remote just use DISH Network IR Remote Address number 1.

Like the 722k, the 922 features the System Wizard which lets you back up settings to your remote control. Items backed up to the remote include Timers, Parental Controls, Favorite Channels Lists and Remote Control settings. I don't know why DISH Network hasn't made it so that you can back up these settings using a USB memory device. I don't see many people backing up their settings often on their remote. A screen shot of the System Wizard is shown on the next page.



(System Wizard Welcome Screen)

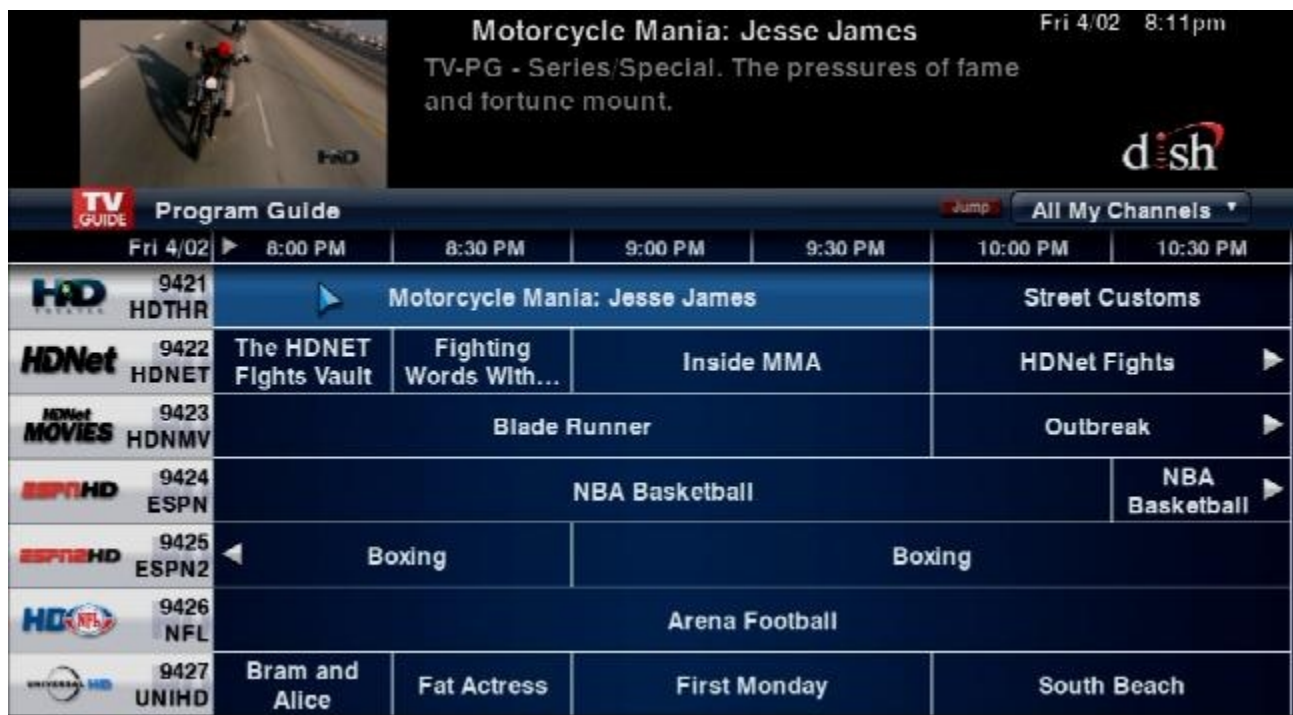
The Interface: One of the best new aspects of the 922 is its amazing new HD interface. The new 922 takes full advantage of the full area of the wide-screen high definition screen and the new interface is also eye pleasing and easy to use.

The main menu is the heart of the 922 interface. You can do almost everything from this menu.



(The Main Menu of the 922)

A number of the functions on the main menu are also accessible on the remote control. Functions like the Guide and DVR are just a single button push away! Let's take a look at the new DISH Network 922 Guide. The guide takes advantage of all the HD real estate on your HDTV and brings channel logos to the DISH Network program guide!



(Here is what the guide looks like on the 922!)

Sometimes there is more information available than what is able to display on the top of the screen, to see it all just press the info button. The screen will look like the one below.



Notice there is a new button called DISH Recommends. If you press that button it shows you other shows which you might be interested in that are like the show you are watching now!

For the most part the guide acts just like any other DISH Network DVR guide. Press the guide button repeatedly to scroll through the guide options. One thing I don't like about the new software is the SHOW HD ONLY in the guide has been changed to "Show HD & SD." If they have that then why does it have All My Channels and All Available as selections. (HEY DISH... Bring back the ALL HD option!)

Like the 722k the 922 does not come with any over the air digital tuners. You can add over the air digital tuning by purchasing a MT2 tuner cartridge. This is the same ATSC over the air tuner cartridge used by the 722k.

The 922 comes with a huge one terabyte hard drive. Some of the space on the drive is set aside for use for "On Demand" movies and specials. Not only is On Demand content delivered via satellite but also via your broadband connection. When you start On Demand you will see a warning (that you can shut off) letting you know that downloading large files might get you in trouble with your ISP and their fair use policy.

When you get into on demand your cursor will be on a pull down menu marked Watch Now on DishONLINE. For the titles that are listed as "Watch Now" those are the events you can watch instantly as they were downloaded to your hard drive. For the DishONLINE titles those are events which will need to be downloaded over your broadband connection.



Both Watch Now and DishONLINE contain many free and pay movies, shows and specials some available in HD and full 1080p! With Watch Now and DishONLINE it is almost impossible for someone to say that there is nothing to watch.

The DVR screen is also new and gives you a visual look at your recordings! To play the latest recording of your favorite show just scroll over to it and press the play button on your remote it's that easy! And for each show they are grouped together. You can even create your own folders, so that all your shows go in your folder, while your kids recordings can go into another folder.

On this screen you can also select the pull-down to see your timers, rentals and daily schedule.



(A look at the new graphical DVR screen)

The setting screen is the heart of setting up your 922, where you can configure almost everything in

your 922.

The parental control features lets you block out particular channels or shows by tv/movie ratings. In addition you can set it so that the Slingbox has different restrictions, so that the kids can't log in and watch a R rated movie. The restrictions are separate between TV1 and the Slingbox.

Time Default Settings let's you specify the default settings for all timers, such as start early, end late, Max Events to Keep (I love that one!), and Priority.

The Remote Control settings allow you to setup your remote control to control your TV, DVD and other aux device. A tip for everyone with a Universal IR remote control... go into the IR settings and enable the Universal Remote, which is disabled by default!



My Account takes you online so that you can check your bill, pay your bill or add programming. The My Account function dials into DISH Networks servers via your phone line or broadband connection. It should be noted that all transactions done via this program is being done securely.

The Help Function tells you all about your 922, with easy to understand help guides. The help feature also has interactive walkthroughs on how to do things and even videos on how things work.

The Weather Feature gives you the latest weather conditions and forecast for your area and up to 4 other areas that you select. Forecast offer a complete 5 day extended forecast, maps and more!

A new feature to the 922 is Home Media which allows you to access music and pictures from your home DLNA server. While the feature does work, its feature set is lacking. It definitely needs more features, like a shuffle play feature and the ability to play videos stored on your network (another shortcoming). However I expect that as time goes on the feature set on the 922 Home Media feature will become richer with new features and innovations.

You will notice a Sling "TV Everywhere" button on the main menu, by selecting this you are shown a page which tells you how to use the Sling feature of your 922.

The Purchase History button shows you a list of all purchases you made on your 922, things like PPV and VOD purchases are shown here.

Caller ID History shows the history of Caller ID data that you have received. (Note; this requires telephone service with caller ID service to function.)

The Broadband screen is an important one, as it gives you the status of your broadband connection, and allows you to activate your 922 for DISH Remote Access.



(This is the BROADBAND setup screen.)

And finally the last thing on the S100 release software is a new button marked “My Media Transfer” this appears to be External Hard Drive support for the 922! Since getting the S100 software I have not had a chance to test this feature as I don't have an extra external hard drive available. While I have not had a chance to try it, I have received word from other testers that it works! I have also not taken my EHD from my 722k and tried to see if the 922 will be able to view recordings from the drive. I don't want to lose any of my recordings.

The Setup:

Setting up the 922 is really no different then setting up any other DISH HD DVR, the only difference is that the 922 requires a broadband connection. (If you don't have broadband then there is no reason to have a 922.)

The layout of the back of the 922 is almost like a 722k, with the exception being that the UHF Antenna on the back is a newer style UHF antenna for the new 2G remotes.



The settings screen options are all self explanatory so I will not explain them here in this document. If you have a question about any of the 922 settings I will be happy to answer them on SatelliteGuys.US!

Operation:

Honestly the 922 operates much like the 722k, but with a new interface. If you like the 622 or 722 you are going to love the 922. The new layout and screens give you the feeling that this is a real good piece of equipment that was professionally done. Its a receiver your will be proud to show off to your friends and make them jealous!

Picture in Picture works a little different than a 722k



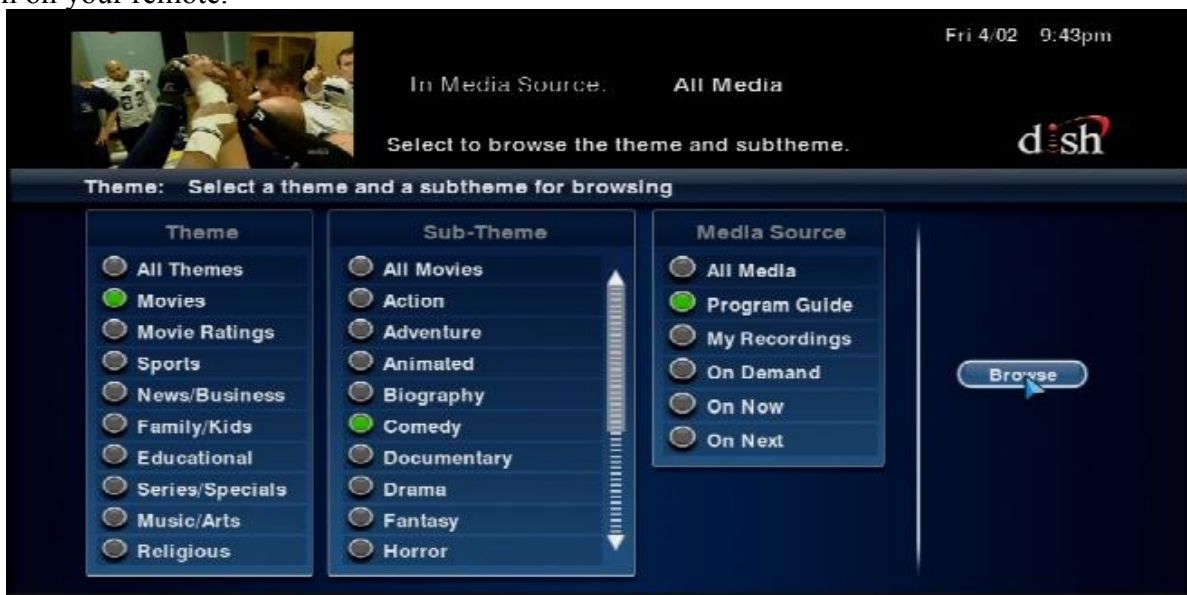
You will notice there is a menu at the bottom which lets you select the PIP options. (You can shut this menu down by clicking the X.) It should be noted that PIP does not work if someone is connected to the Slingbox when you are trying to use it.

One of the amazing features of the 922 is the new search feature. There are so many different search options that it's hard for me to explain them all here.

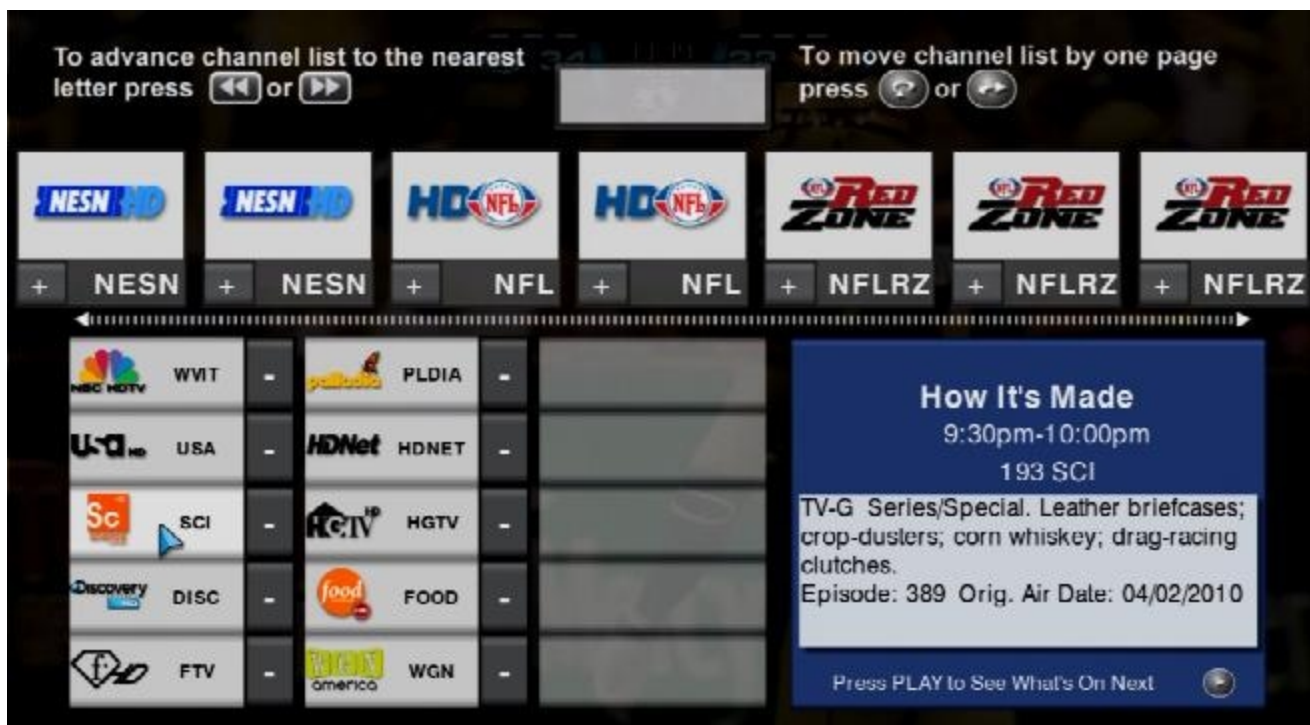
In the main Search screen you will see what looks like a normal search, but you can search by title, description, and actor. Plus you are able to search from all media, the program guide, your recordings, on demand, on now and on next.



In addition you can browse by Theme, Sub Theme and Media Source, to do this press the Left Arrow button on your remote.



Another neat thing you can do is setup your favorite channels, and by pressing the GREEN button on your remote, you will never have to remember a channel number again.



The above screen was a staple when we were beta testing the 922, I am glad to see it survived onto the release software. This screen worked great with the touchpad remote and still works great with the new 32.0 remote!

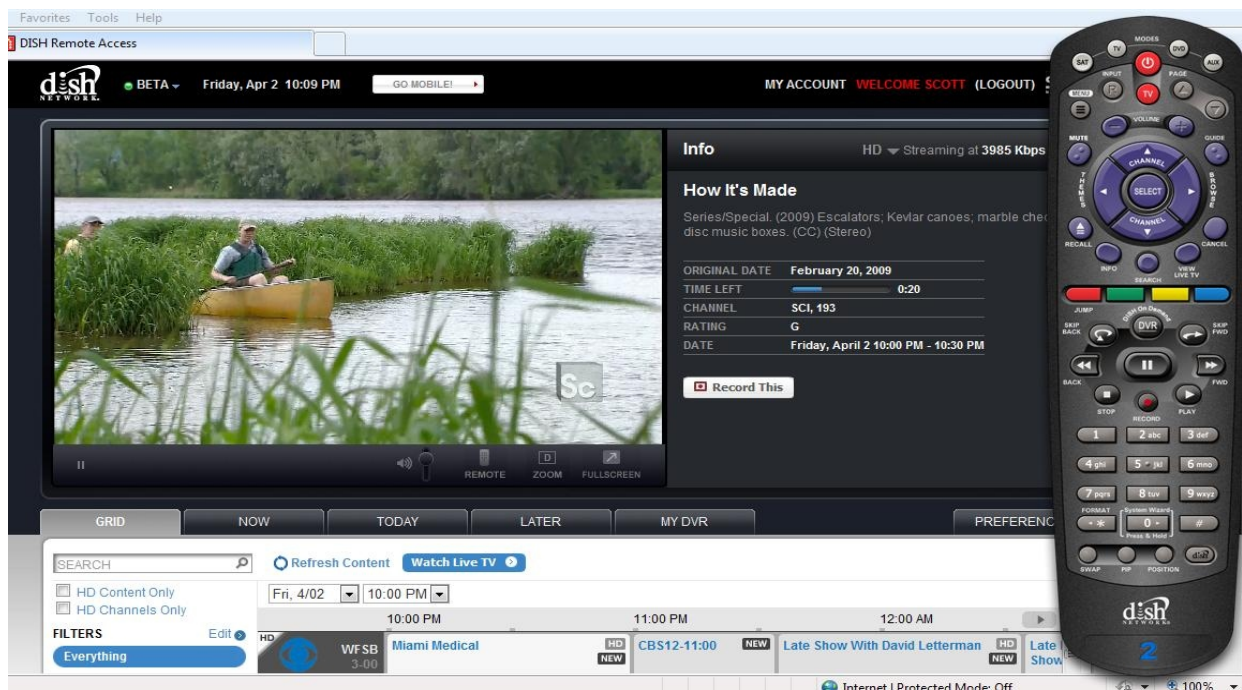
One of the biggest new features of the 922 is one we haven't really talked about in this review and that is the Slingbox portion.

The Slingbox portion allows you to watch your TV Everywhere... you can watch online and you can watch on your PDA. In a number of months we have seen the Slingbox portion grow before our eyes.

The first time I was able to watch my 922 from remote in full HD I was amazed by the picture quality I saw. While I own a Slingbox Pro HD unit, the HD quality from the 922 seemed much better. I don't know the technical reason for why it looks better, but to my eyes it does! Now understand that your Slingbox quality will depend on your broadband connections upstream bandwidth. Not all broadband connections will be able to stream in HD, in fact like the Slingbox Pro HD you will probably need an upstream of 3Mbps or higher. SD streaming however only requires an upstream speed of at least 600Kbps or higher.

The Slingbox tunes into the TV2 portion of the 922. With the release software this is one of the only time the 922 goes into Dual Mode so that the Slingbox can watch live television via the second tuner of your 922. While the front of the 922 has a mode button pressing it gives you a message that the feature is disabled.

I don't expect to see TV2 output enabled until DISH releases their Sling attachment known as the Sling Receiver 300 which will allow TV2 streaming in full HD to another HDTV on your network.



There is one big thing I don't like about the Slingbox on the 922. In order to watch your 922's Slingbox online you must do it by logging into Dish Remote Access at DISHNetwork.COM. (Or you can watch on your Smartphone with that phones version of the Slingplayer software.

You can also watch your 922's Slingbox if you have an older version of the Slingplayer software installed on your PC. If you try watching on a newer version of the Slingplayer software you are told that the software does not support that Slingbox and to watch it at the Dish Network website.

I don't understand why you can't watch on the newer Slingplayer software when it works on the older version of the Slingplayer software. The good news is I am told a future Slingplayer software release will indeed support the 922's Slingbox.



(Watching the 922 on an older version of the Windows Slingplayer)

Overall Thoughts:

As far as a satellite receiver / DVR goes the 922 is rock solid. Have no fear of putting this receiver as your main DVR. Using the 922 is enjoyable and you are always surprised at what this thing can do. If you have the upstream bandwidth then the built-in Slingbox can give you the most amazing television experience no matter where you are.

While the HD streaming looks good it does have some small issues, for example if you are watching via Slingbox in SD mode you can see the guides and menus, but in HD mode you don't see any on screen graphics or menus.

There is so much that the 922 does, but there is also a lot that is missing from the 922 as well. Missing is the web browser and other Sling features such as SlingCatcher functionality as well as the Clip and Sling feature.

I do feel that over time we will see more and more features added to the 922. It is my feeling that now that the box is stable it is time to get this long awaited receiver out to the marketplace. Rome was not built in a day.

While not officially confirmed it seems that the 922 will have higher monthly equipment fees, including \$10 for the monthly whole house DVR fee and a \$17 charge for a SlingLoaded Receiver. (Note the most expensive equipment on your account is free, so chances are most won't see this charge unless they have more than one 922 on their account.

Because of these fees, I would recommend to many of those readers with a 622/722 that they might be better off with a separate Slingbox Pro HD unit. A separate Slingbox will give you more overall Sling functionality such as more video inputs, plus an ATSC tuner and enjoy the Sling functionality with no additional monthly fees.

However if you like living on the edge and having the latest in equipment then I have no problem recommending the 922 to you. The 922 is a rock solid box and all included features work very well.

Honestly the Dish ViP 922 SlingLoaded DVR is the best there is and nothing else comes close. While some people will consider nothing more than a 722k with a new interface and built in Slingbox and for now the people saying this are correct. However I believe over time this amazing receiver will become even better. The release software on the 922 is rock solid and when the software matures this amazing receiver is going to get even better.

With its minor flaws, I still can honestly say that there is no better receiver on the market. Compared to any satellite receiver out there the 922 will beat them hands down. The 922 is not for everyone, but for those who want the best it is here. Even with its flaws and missing features the 922 is now the new benchmark for satellite receivers.

Thank you again to DISH Network for allowing me to be part of the team in testing this amazing new receiver.

— Scott Greczkowski

NOTICE: The 922 used in this review was obtained from DISH Network under their Team Summit Retailer First Look Program. Retailers who paid to attend Team Summit 2009 were invited to help test the 922. I was a paid attendee for Team Summit 2009 and received this 922 under that testing program. Thank you to DISH Network for including their retailer partners help shape the future of this amazing product!

THANK YOU!

This review wouldn't be possible without the support and help of a number of folks, first a big thank you to DISH Network, while beta testing this unit I spent lots of time documenting my findings to them and spend a lot of back and forth emails working with them. You can not imagine how hard these folks worked to get this product to where we are today.

Next a big thank you to the SatelliteGuys staff for helping me polish this review. A big thanks to Stuart628, Dfergie, RockyMtnHigh and Ilya for their “elf” work on this review. I am proud of all of our SatelliteGuys staff for helping us to run not only one of the most informative satellite forums on the internet, but also one of the friendliest. These guys work hard in the background making sure the site runs smoothly for everyone!

A really big THANK YOU to all our supporters who support the site financially. These folks known as “Pub Members” have kept SatelliteGuys online over the past year. While SatelliteGuys has continued to grow and serve more traffic our ad revenue has taken a steep decline because of the economy. These supporting Pub Members have stepped up to the plate and helped us keep the lights on for all in these difficult financial times.

If you have learned anything from SatelliteGuys or if SatelliteGuys has saved you money please consider becoming a supporting “Pub Member” so that we can continue to keep the lights on. For more details on becoming a supporting “Pub Member” please visit <http://www.satelliteguys.us/payments.php>. Thank you again to everyone for their support!

A big THANK YOU to my wife for letting me take the time to not only do reviews like this but also run SatelliteGuys. There are times when I spend more time working on SatelliteGuys then I do spending time with her and the kids. SatelliteGuys is my hobby and a true labor of love, I thank her for allowing me to spend so much time spreading my love for this amazing technology!

Finally THANK YOU for not only reading this review, but for being SatelliteGuys! We are proud to be America's Largest and Most Popular Satellite Discussion site, we wouldn't be able to claim this honor if it were not for you! I am proud of the fact that so many people choose SatelliteGuys as their home for all the latest news, rumors, talk and information.