Subject: Adventures in Home Theater PC's - First impressions
Posted by sub-zero on Fri, 21 Jul 2006 21:51:08 GMT
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After leaving work yesterday, I hit up the local Fry's Electronics and picked up a Hauppauge PCI WinTV GO card with the soft PVR function. So now I had all of the pieces to finally create my HTPC. I'm going to break down the experience in two sections; Hardware (Quality and installation) and Software (Installation, functionality, and ease of use)Hardware:The card itself is pretty good quality. My only complaint is that it's using a Connexant chipset and Connexant has never been know to produce any quality chipsets. Aside from that, the card seems to stand up qaulity wise to other similarly based products. It has a standard COAX and Component video in connector. The connectors seem to be pretty heavy duty, good solder joints, heavier metals. So all in all, seems to be a pretty good card hardware wise.Installation really didn't take much at all. The card just sat in to the PCI slot like any other. Next I made the connection to the COAX connector, ran the line out audio from the card in to the line in audio connection on the motherboard and the installation was done.Software:This is where is got a little hairy. I put the card on a newly built system, so I had to do everything from OS installation, Video Card installation, driver install for the card and motherboard chipset. Once all of that was done, the card finally would install correctly in the device manager. The Win2000 software that came with the card installed next along with the remote control driver and software. The remote control software is buggy and hard to use at best. The Win2000 software for the actual viewing of the television feed was very clunky and did not produce a good picture in my opinion. The scan ranges that it looks in for the TV feed doesn't quite fit the range that my cable service put out. After messing with the settings for scan ranges in frame interlacing, I still could not produce a good image that was to my liking (Chock it up to me being a perfectionist, but I want good quality)Included on the disc (And to which they don't tell you about in the documentation) is a trial copy of SageTV. Now this program was MUCH better. The scan ranges were perfect, and the user interface was extremely intuitive. If anyone knows how to use a Tivo, then you will know how to use SageTV. Only problem I had was that SageTV did not properly user the included Hauppauge remote control. A few of the keys worked, such as channel and volume up and down, mute, and select. I was not able to get the PVR function to work properly, but this could attributed to one of two things.1. I did not have the correct software drivers for the SoftPVR function2. Or I did not have a large enough harddrive installed yet (Only have a 15 gig in there right now as an OS drive)I'm going to play around with this some more today and i'll post more of what I find with it.