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MacMerc Review

TubeStick hybrid from equinix

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Fast processors have allowed PVR makers to shift video





crunching back to the [CPU \(#\)](#). Digital television signals have made it even

easier to crutch quality TV on your Mac. The result? Tiny TV receivers with HD power.

The TubeStick, paired with its software sidekick The Tube adds flexible and powerful video capabilities to your Mac. Hybrid decoding means you'll be able to record video from digital cable, digital over-the-air (including HD) and analog cable and broadcast. There's an adapter for recording S-Video and RCA video too.



Added: June 5th 2008

Reviewer: **Brian Burnham**
[\(mailto:brian@macmerc.com\)](mailto:brian@macmerc.com)

Related Link: [Product Page](http://www.equinux.com/us/products/tubestick/index.html)
[\(http://www.equinux.com/us/products/tubestick/index.html\)](http://www.equinux.com/us/products/tubestick/index.html)



Hardware

The TubeStick has a build one cut above a USB flash drive, which sounds bad but is pretty typical for this product segment. They are all made of plastic. The unit heats up during use, which the manual says is normal. The included antenna does very well, and has a conveniently magnetic base.

The hardware isn't where these adapter's shine, though the TubeStick is very Apple-



white and is generously equipt with adapters and cords. With the **Elgato Hybrid**

<http://www.macmerc.com/reviews.php?op=showcontent&id=146>) roughly the same size and form factor, the [software \(#\)](#) is the real differentiating factor.

Software

First, a complaint. The Tube installs with a trial version of MediaCentral. The application sounds interesting - pulling in online media with your own, managing them in one place. What annoyed me is that there is no way to opt out of the install. To ad insult to injury, the installer adds this demoware to your dock. That's personal space.

The application (The Tube) itself has a cool interface, and is pretty easy to use. Recording TV, scheduling recordings and managing recorded clips is easy. The dark look has a very Front Row feel. It also has all the major features - nice on screen display, full-screen, a sometimes-automatic programming guide and Closed Captioning.

I was impressed with a few of the unexpected features. The Tube exports clips to all of your favorite Apple portable devices and syncs with iTunes, but it also allows you to export clips to a web-based TubeToGo account for [remote access \(#\)](#) and sharing. You can stash your recordings on .Mac or an [FTP server \(#\)](#) and access them from your iPhone (or touch). You can also schedule recordings from your iPhone or iPod touch.



The other new and unexpected feature didn't blow me away personally, but others will find it cool: integrated chat. TubeTalk allows you to chat with other The Tube users watching the same show. The social integration doesn't stop there: rankings help you choose programs popular with other viewers and of course, your buddies. You can even 'watch together' with your buddies, even changing channels in sync.

What's missing? I didn't like the programming guide as much as Elgato's TitanTV. TitanTV is much more visual. Also, missing is an easy way to edit out commercials. To edit you have to export your recordings to iMovie.

Conclusions

Going up against a very mature and very Mac-centric EyeTV is tough, but The Tube makes up for some software shortcomings with unique and very Web 2.0 features like online clip sharing and buddy integration.

The TubeStick is as flexible as it gets when it comes to inputs. If the software shortcomings don't bug you, you'll dig this easy TV receiver. You'll need an [Intel \(#\)](#) or G5 Mac and a hundred-some bucks.

Pick up the TubeStick at [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0019R5FPI/macmerc-20/ref=nosim/) (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0019R5FPI/macmerc-20/ref=nosim/>) with free shipping.

[Brian](http://brianburnham.com) (<http://brianburnham.com>)

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