

New gadget turns HDMI-enabled TV into smart TV

The Piko smart stick is an ingenious little gadget that turns any HDMI-enabled TV into a "smart TV", using built-in Wi-Fi to stream content. It is a bit more than that, actually.



Once set up, the Piko stick, running Android 4.0, turns your TV into a PC-like or tablet-type device that you control using an "air mouse", running apps and browsing the Web right off your "idiot box". It's a fully functioning microcomputer.

There is quite an array of very small bits and cables to unpack, and the set-up guide is not big on explanations. But if you are already moderately tech-savvy, the components will be familiar.

From box to play, the whole thing took less than five minutes to set up, but Luddites or gran might need some extra guidance. Once it is connected to the home Wi-Fi network, you are good to go.

The device comes with several pre-installed apps including YouTube, News24, SuperSport, a few games, a Kindle app, Web browser and e-mail client, as well as simple gallery, video and audio players.

Plus, you are able to download any other apps of your choice through the Google Play Store.

The only limiting factor to overcome is the point-and-pray fiddly air mouse. However, that difficulty is more an issue of adapting to a new controller, rather than a failure of the technology.

It works fine for selecting apps and files in the file browser, but if you are making the adjustment from a touch or standard mouse control on games for example, you'll find it quite difficult to play at the level you are used to.

The device comes with a USB hub, so once you have exhausted the novelty of watching YouTube videos or playing Angry Birds on your big screen TV, you can play media directly from an external hard drive, or access content from various online sources. You could also use your TV for general Web access instead of using a family PC, but if that's the case, adding a keyboard via the USB hub would be highly recommended.

If that isn't enough, the really good news is that this is home-grown technology, developed by a Durban-based group called Maslow.

Piko smart sticks are available directly from Maslow's website, as well as through Game stores, HiFi Corp and Takealot.com.

View the review

For more, go to www.maslow.co.za

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