

SageTV Tip #2: Why did I choose SageTV?

After reviewing the major Personal Video Recorder (PVR) software offerings, I decided that SageTV was my application of choice. Its feature set and price point made it very attractive, and there were several other "features" that swayed my decision. Read on to see why I chose SageTV over the competitionâ?¦.

jimstips.com

There are several excellent PVR offerings to choose from, and they all have their benefits. These range from free applications like GB-PVR and MythTV to commercial applications like BeyondTV and SageTV. These applications are all excellent, offer feature sets that are surprisingly complete (although, some are more complete than others), and have excellent user and developer support.

The free offerings are amazingly robust. I found that GB-PVR and MythTV to be very interesting solutions. There are other free offerings, but these two were the "biggies" that caught my eye.

GB-PVR
GB-PVR is clean, and feature-rich, and has a close user following. It runs on Windows, and offers some nice functions in a slick UI. But from what I understand, GB-PVR is a closed-source application with limited development resources. It also fell short in a couple areas that I was looking for.

MythTV
MythTV is an Open Source PVR application that runs on Linux. It really is the benchmark for most PVR software offerings. It has a huge user community, and offers many features found nowhere else. Its Linux dependence, however, is both a blessing and a curse. Linux is an wonderfully stable, robust, and powerful free Open Source operating system that can very easily handle all the tasks of a PVR. But it also comes with the baggage of administering a Linux system. To its credit, Linux is now a lot easier to setup and manage these days, but to be used effectively, it still requires a lot of technical knowhow.

As much as I respect and like the free offerings, two things swayed me toward commercial products: First, I wanted to keep things Windows-centric. My home PCâ??s are all Windows XP boxes, so I wanted to keep things consistent. Second, I felt that if I was going to invest the money into an HTPC, I also wanted to invest in a PVR company that provides good support and continued R&D. That brought me to two other excellent choices:

BeyondTV
I next looked at BeyondTV, and it looked very solid and feature-rich. As a PVR, it really packs a punch. Itâ??s feature set is very complete, and its user interface is simple and slick. But unfortunately, it fell short in other areas, notably in its integration of photo viewing, MP3 management, and video playing capabilities. These were integrated as an add-on to the core package that lacked the seamless integration I was looking for. If you want a solid PVR, BeyondTV is an excellent choice. But if you want to manage other media, you may want to check other options.

SageTV
When I tried SageTV, I was immediately hooked. SageTV integrated everything I was looking for: PVR, MP3, Photos, Video, and DVD Playbackâ??all in one slick UI. The integration of the media functions is very tight, making the overall user experience consistent, easy, and pleasing to use. SageTV also integrates other goodies like Weather forecasts into its UI, and as of the latest beta version (v6), includes two other Online capabilities: Google Video, and TV Editorials. SageTV, the company, seems to be very solid and innovative, and their support is very responsive. In fact, not more than a week after I purchased version 5, they came out with a much-improved, beta release! And for a beta, it is very, very stable.

jimstips.com

SageTV also has a very active user community of very dedicated users. The users are knowledgeable, kind, and have a real passion for making SageTV a success. You can find solid and reliable answers to any SageTV-related question in the user forums.

Another thing that hooked me on SageTV is in how its architecture was designed. It has an open API that enables developers to create third-party "plugins" and enhancements that extend and improve upon the core product. In fact, several of these plugins are, in my opinion, so well written that they really should be part of the core! All registered users gain easy access to SageTVâ??s Studio application that allows complete customization of the product. While itâ??s not for the faint of heart, itâ??s also not rocket science. I was able to make a couple tweaks without too much hassle.

One point of note: You may notice that I excluded Windows Media Center edition 2005 (MCE). While MCE is an excellent, mature, and feature-rich product, it also comes with the baggage imposed by Microsoft that I simply didnâ??t want to deal with. Overall, MCE is an excellent product, and if you are fully Microsoft-centric, the go for it. But if you want total control over your PVR, you have to look elsewhere.

So, is SageTV perfect? No. But it is maturing into a very powerful media center application. And with its varied client applications, and its extendibility through third-party plugins, it is not a limited product. Coming from the "standalone" DVR world having used ReplayTV and Moxi DVRâ??s for years, I can say that SageTV is very refreshing. It really packs a lot in, and works very, very will as a home theater PVR solution.

Category

1. SageTV Tips

Tags

1. find
2. Google
3. Moxi
4. ReplayTV
5. review
6. SageTV

Date
11/12/2026
Date Created
11/07/2006

jimstips.com