

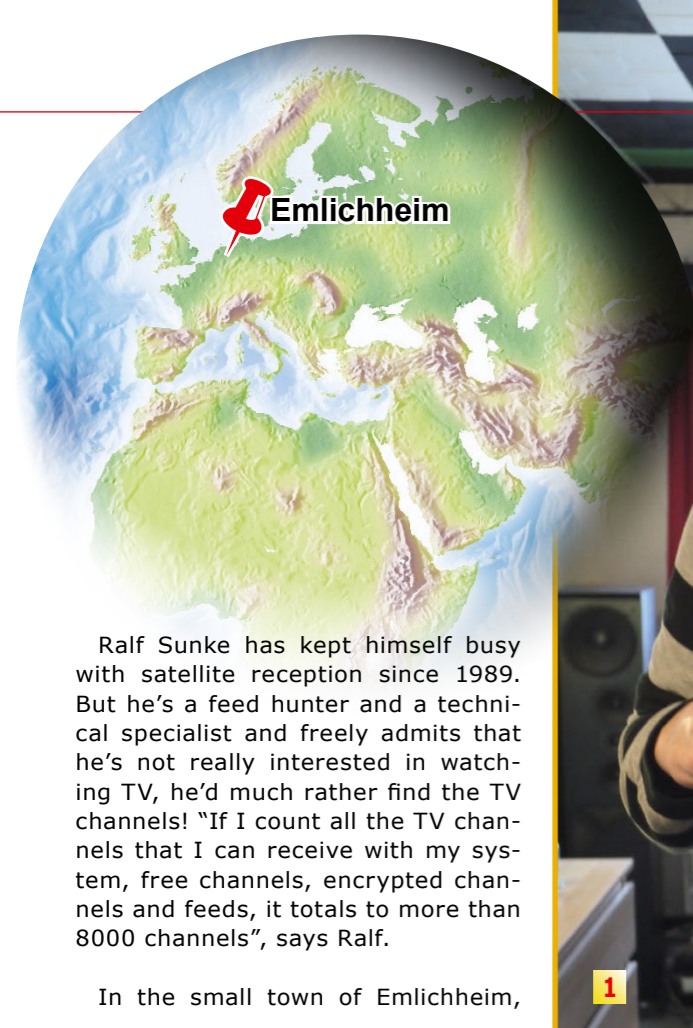
“My Motto: Find TV, Not Watch TV”

- *Receives more than 8000 TV channels from 41 satellite positions*
- *Collects feed horns and LNBS*
- *Learned everything on his own*
- *Proved with the construction of a milk carton dish that simple solutions are also possible*

Feed and Feed Horn Collector DX-Ralf

■ Ralf Sunke has been a satellite DXer since 1989 and has been reading TELE-satellite for many years. The construction scaffolding in front of his house has been there for more than 10 years; he uses it as a place to mount some of his dishes. A 1.87-meter antenna is to the left and is currently pointed to 68.5E. Above that is a 1.05-meter dish with four LNBs (for 13.0E, 19.2E, 23.5E and 28.2/28.5E). Another 1.8-meter antenna is to the upper right and can be moved with an actuator motor; underneath is a 90cm dish for 19.2E as well as a motorized 90cm antenna.





Emlichheim

Ralf Sunke has kept himself busy with satellite reception since 1989. But he's a feed hunter and a technical specialist and freely admits that he's not really interested in watching TV, he'd much rather find the TV channels! "If I count all the TV channels that I can receive with my system, free channels, encrypted channels and feeds, it totals to more than 8000 channels", says Ralf.

In the small town of Emlichheim,



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in extreme western Germany, Ralf Sunke over the years has managed to put together a one-of-a-kind collection of satellite dishes and satellite feed horns along with a vast number of C-band and Ku-band LNBs.

His specialty is the mechanical design of the feed horns. "There aren't many people that are familiar with the mechanics of feed horns" he explains to us, "A perfectly matched feed horn can significantly increase reception."

A weak spot with many feed horns is the lack of water resistance of many of the makes. "That was really the reason why I became a satellite

1. On the left is a milk carton from a local supermarket and on the right is a satellite dish made from a number of these empty milk cartons.

2. Front side of the milk carton dish. The inside of the milk carton container makes for a perfect reflector surface.

3. Closeup view of the homemade stapled milk carton dish.

4. DX-Ralf DXing: he's receiving a channel from INTELSAT 906 at 64.2E in the C-band.

DXer”, remembers Ralf about his first satellite system, “That was a standard reception dish for ASTRA but it stopped working after only a year.”

He wanted to take care of the problem and started to disassemble the feed horn and LNB from his first small system. That was the start of a long and deeply involved learning curve; since then he’s immersed himself even more deeply in the subject of feed horns and matching them to LNBs. He learned the basics on his own and began collecting feed horns and LNBs from various manufacturers.

“I got a lot of my stuff from hobby colleagues but I also acquired much of it through eBay.” Especially interesting to him were components that were only manufactured in small numbers; he has amassed a one-of-a-kind collection of dishes of all shapes and sizes. He used many of these dishes together with modern LNBs. With each individual antenna

he had to keep an eye on other parameters and either match and optimize it with the correct feed horn or LNB mount or both.

“Unfortunately I can’t install any more dishes, my landlord won’t let me”, comments Ralf sadly; he would love to install more antennas. But he can be proud of what he has. He has two large 1.8-meter antennas, a 1.0-meter dish, two 90cm dishes and another 80cm antenna. He rearranges things quite often whenever he wants to try out something new. One of his small Ku-band dishes is motorized as is one of his large C-band antennas.

“I can receive a total of 41 satellite positions including some of the more difficult ones like RASCOM at 2.8E on which I’ve seen quite a few TV channels from Libya.” The hardest to receive is the AFN Pentagon channel on 1W. “I can only get this channel when it’s cold outside and when the air is very dry. This transmission comes di-

rectly from the USA and is intended for the retransmission via HOTBIRD”, explains Ralf.

“I used to be more active”, he admits, “but since it seems that there’s always a new TV standard appearing and I would have to have a receiver for each of these standards, it’s taken some of the fun out of it for me.”

His specialty is the mechanical side of things, not the software side. DX-Ralf, the name he calls himself when he communicates with his hobby friends, is very mechanically creative. One of the highlights of this creativity is the satellite dish that he fabricated from simple milk cartons that he stapled together. “I came up with the idea after realizing that the inside surface of milk cartons are coated with aluminum foil for protection; this makes for a perfect reflective surface.” Once he approached the parabolic shape by trial and error and cut out the necessary elements from the empty milk cartons with the



■ Just a small selection of Ralf Sunke's enormous feed and LNB collection that he put together over many years. He took each individual piece and thoroughly studied it to find its advantages and disadvantages. Over the years he has built up quite a bit of invaluable knowledge in this area.

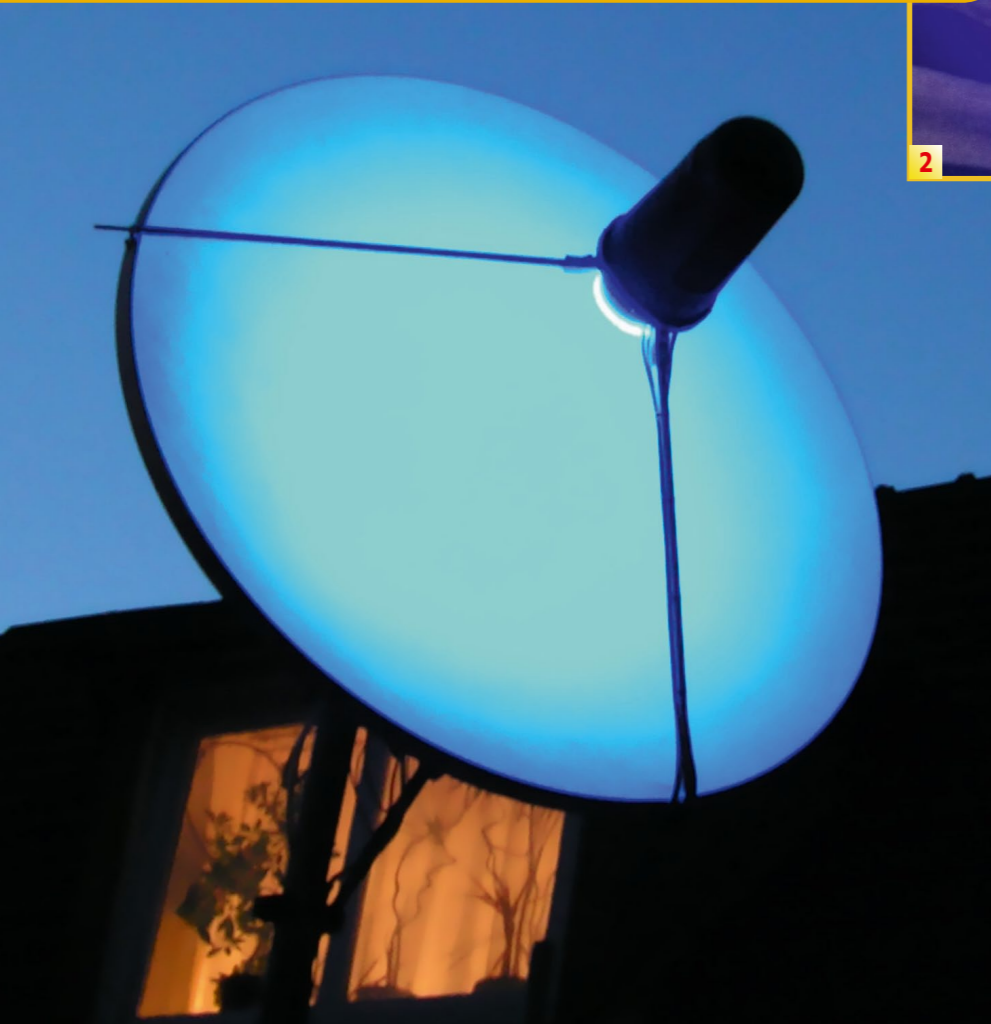


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1. What's this? A dish light. A C-band feed with an LED light strip in the outer groove.
2. Ralf Sunke shows us what the dish light is good for. At night he can illuminate his dish thereby scaring his neighbors into thinking that aliens have landed on Earth.



2



help of a template, he stapled the segments perfectly together. "The feed horn cover is a simple can in which I mounted a very narrow LNB", says Ralf who then points out the support stand, "This piece came from a TV antenna and these pieces here are simple threaded rods."

One night a light bulb went off in his head and he came upon the idea to take LED light strips, like those used to pimp a car, and bend them into a circle and install them in the feed horn of his dishes. It gives his dishes a supernatural look to them.

It's no wonder that his neighbors look at Ralf's hobby with some skepticism. "They simply don't understand what I'm doing here", says Ralf, "They say that I can only watch one channel at a time anyway, what do I want with 8000 channels?" But it's not about watching 8000 channels, it's about being able to receive 8000 channels.