

This universal remote wants to control your smart home sans hub

Universal remotes might be on a comeback tour if devices like Cantata's Haptique RS90 and RS90X actually materialize and are as good as advertised. The connected remote purports to double as a comprehensive smart home controller, but it's merely a Kickstarter hopeful for now. Serial remoters (remotees?) have pledged more than \$300,00, with less than \$10,000 needed to fully fund the project as of writing, and there's currently an estimated ship date of August 2024.

What separates this from the sparse competition is that it's hub-free. You won't need a separate box plugged in to the TV or IR repeaters to make this work. It comes with a charging dock and has a relatively roomy 3.2-inch color touchscreen for the Android-based OS. The display sits above a suite of 24 essential physical buttons to navigate and control it all, including one that initiates voice control. In addition to compatibility with more than 3,000 traditional devices with infrared like TVs, projectors, Blu-ray players, and A/V receivers, the sleek phone-shaped RS90 has Wi-Fi and Bluetooth to interface with newer smart home devices and platforms (and even the PS5, eventually).

Cantata is promising early support for smart home integrations with devices from popular brands such as Philips Hue and Sonos, third-party and otherwise open-source hubs and platforms like Samsung SmartThings, Homey, and Home Assistant, and direct control for web-based services like Spotify and Netflix. That's in addition to receivers from the likes of

Yamaha and Denon, plus popular streaming devices such as the Amazon Fire TV Stick, Nvidia Shield TV, Apple TV, and Roku.

“Now you’ve got a whole bunch of apps instead of remotes,” he said to *The Verge*’s Nilay Patel in the extensive interview. “The real question was, ‘Can we be an app selector? Can we somehow be the interface between all those apps and you?’ We looked at it. We all thought hard about it. We realized that app selection is the domain of players that are already in the market doing a good job. We’ve got to be able to do something special for customers.”

Which is true! I’m now able to get by with a single LG magic remote to control most simple functions for my soundbar, TV, streaming boxes, and even my Xbox Series X / S (mostly thanks to HDMI-CEC). I only need to keep track of a few remotes for the odd occasion that I need to do something more specific. But that equation changes if you have dozens of other smart home devices or a more complicated A/V setup with pieces from different brands, but to this point, my smartphone fills those gaps well enough.

The Haptique RS90 aims to solve all of that. The thought that it can adequately serve as a one-stop smart home hub sounds too good to be true, considering it’s already a little behind the curve – it lacks Matter support, for example – but at least *someone*’s trying. You can currently pledge €240 (about \$258) for the new Kickstarter darling, but the listing suggests it’ll retail starting at €360 (about \$387) once early bird preorders dry up.

<https://www.theverge.com/2024/6/18/24181245/cantata-haptique-rs90-rs90x-universal-remote-smart-home-controller>