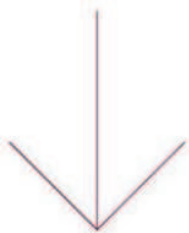


# Stream your media

Free your movies and music with these gadgets



SYNC ONE OF THESE MEDIA STREAMERS TO your home network and channel all of your stored digital music, TV shows, movies and photos to your TV, surround sound system and other AV kit. Choose one with an internal hard disk and you don't even need a network. It's the future of home entertainment, some say...

**1 BEST... LOOKS**  
**DUNE HD BASE 3.0**  
 £275, WWW.DIGITALERA.CO.UK

Designed to fit in amongst high-end home cinema separates, the Dune HD Base 3.0 makes up for its lack of Wi-Fi by packing 7.1 analogue audio, component, composite and HDMI. It can also decode Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD.

A quick-load hard drive slot makes it easy to add extra storage to the in-built 512MB, and you can back up ripped

Blu-rays, though that will take up a lot of space.

Unfortunately our review model struggled to play MKV – a format that stores both hi-def video and audio in a compressed file for quick streaming of films. Dune claims this is just a glitch. **LOVE** Cinephile styling. Supports ripped Blu-ray **HATE** Expensive



**2 BEST... BUDGET OPTION**  
**ASUS O!PLAY HDP-R3**  
 £140, WWW.ASUS.CO.UK

The compact O!Play doesn't have space for an internal hard drive, but eSata and USB 2.0 ports support external storage, while 802.11n Wi-Fi and memory card slots provide plenty of playback options.

The user interface is clear and simple to use, but prone to cryptic error messages, and there's occasional lag identifying media files. Once that's

overcome, the O!Play accepts most file formats, but 1080p MKV playback over a network is too choppy to comfortably watch. Stick to 720p and you'll have no problem, though. **LOVE** Wide variety of connections and file support. Clear interface **HATE** Hi-def files prone to judder. No hard drive



**1**  
BEST...  
LOOKS

**2**  
BEST...  
BUDGET  
OPTION

**3**  
BEST...  
SPACE  
SAVER

WORDS: JULIAN PROKAZA; PHOTOGRAPHY: EUGENIO FRANCHI; FURNITURE: COURTESY OF THE CONRAN SHOP



**3 BEST... SPACE SAVER**  
**LACIE LACINEMA MINI HD**

£250, WWW.LACIE.COM/UK

Despite being miniature, the LaCinema still squeezes in a 500GB hard drive. Connections are limited, but HDMI, ethernet, 802.11n Wi-Fi, two USB 2.0 ports and optical audio cater for most situations.

The LaCinema Mini HD struggled connecting to a shared network, but quickly hooks up to a plug-and-play (UPnP) server. Hi-def video

playback is painfully slow to load even over a wired network, and it struggles to play audio from some MKV files. Factor in the tiny remote control and cramped, monochrome interface and it seems decidedly overpriced.

**LOVE** Ultra-compact size. Built-in 500GB hard drive  
**HATE** Slow to load HD content. Poor interface



**4 BEST... EASE OF USE**  
**APPLE TV**

£223, WWW.APPLE.COM/UK

Apple's is the simplest streamer to set up and its 160GB hard drive means it doesn't need to be connected to your home network, and extra storage can be added via USB. HDMI, component video, optical audio, ethernet and 802.11n Wi-Fi are on hand to connect your PC and TV.

You're initially limited to iTunes media – HD movies cost £10 to buy

and £3.50 to rent; TV shows from £1.19; songs from 79p. Media bought/ripped elsewhere is supported though, and if you're happy to hack you can add a BitTorrent client or Boxee support.

**LOVE** Slick set-up. Online movie rentals. Plenty of third-party hacks  
**HATE** Hassle to stream anything non-Apple



**5 BEST... OVERALL PERFORMANCE**  
**MEDE8ER MED500X**

£150, WWW.DIGITALERA.CO.UK

The slightly larger Mede8er has HDMI, component, composite and ethernet ports. Wi-Fi isn't included as standard – it costs an extra £24 – but it must be said that wired connections are much better for streaming HD. There's no in-built storage, but you can add a 1TB hard drive for £155.

Supporting a wide range of formats and

boasting a well thought out interface, media playback is smooth with impressively fluid 1080p. Even large MKV files stream effectively, although audio can be ever so slightly glitchy.

**LOVE** Room for a massive internal hard drive. Connections aplenty  
**HATE** Glitchy audio files. Cluttered remote control



**EXTERNAL STORAGE**

**WESTERN DIGITAL MY DVR EXPANDER**

Connecting to your server via eSata, the My DVR contains 1TB of storage, enough to hold 120 hours of hi-def video  
£100, WWW.WDC.COM

**BUFFALO MINISTATION LITE**

This more compact option is available with storage from 250GB to 640GB  
FROM £60, WWW.BUFFALO-TECHNOLOGY.COM

