

objects of desire

alright, M8?

IF YOU'RE INTO STREAMING
MEDIA AROUND THE HOUSE,
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE
THIS – FROM MEDIA SERVER
WIZARDS IMERGE COMES THE
XIVA MUSICM8...



Stream of consciousness: break free from the tangle
of wires and embrace the future!





Slim enough to slip almost anywhere if you're looking for AV intelligence, XiVA marks the spot.

Sonos. The Logitech Squeezebox. The Linn DS. If you're a switched on, tech-savvy kind of person, these terms should be familiar to you. No? Okay then, how about the Nintendo Wii? The Microsoft Xbox 360? The Sony PlayStation 3? We trust you'll have heard of those...

The reason for this list of toys? Well, they all share something in common – namely the ability to pick up videos, songs and pictures stored on any computer or storage device attached to your home's Wi-Fi network and send it to the nearest screen or set of speakers. Once you've taken a bite of the networked media cake (I know, weird allusion, but stay with me), then you'll never want to go back. In terms of convenience, it can't be beaten. All of your albums, films and holiday snaps ready for instant recall whether you're in the living room or bedroom, with no need to faff about with discs. If set up correctly, you can even access your media library remotely via the Internet wherever you are in the world. But there's a problem.

The computer.

You need it to rip the songs from your CDs, download those movies from the Internet and get those pictures off your camera. You need it to add stuff to any networked hard drives you might possess. And most of the time, you have to leave it turned on if your remote devices are to receive anything. As for all the software tinkering one often has to perform before any of it actually works, don't even get us started. In short, it's a pain.

Cutting out the middle man

But, friends, help is now at hand. Imerge's XiVA musicm8 (or

'Zeeva Music Mate' for those of you who don't speak marketing), is a media streamer's best friend. Why? Because it can add, extract and store music from your CDs complete with track information and cover art, keep enormous amounts of content on its capacious 1TB hard drive, download podcasts, keep your various bits of media organised and do a whole lot more besides without your PC or Mac getting so much as a look in.

Put simply, it's a vast, connected jukebox into which you feed CDs, which can then be played back on any games console or streaming device that recognises it – which, since the musicm8 is fully 'plug and play' and compatible with widely-used MP3, crystal-clear lossless FLAC and uncompressed WAV formats, means pretty much all of them. As Imerge themselves succinctly put it, you just 'rip, store and stream'.

As the name suggests, the musicm8 is primarily intended to work with your record collection, but it'll happily store photos and play videos too, both of which can be added via the unit's USB port or from a PC/Mac connected to your home network – yes, all right, so the computer does get involved occasionally.

On the subject of which, Windows, OS-X and even Linux users should be in for an equally smooth ride, whether that's playing the contents of the musicm8 in iTunes, tweaking its configuration, adding hefty .avi files to its hard drive or accessing the musicm8's library via a laptop in a Singapore hotel room. Yes, Imerge haven't forgotten the neatest aspect of this whole streaming malarkey – full control of everything it can do through a remote web interface that you can access from anywhere with a web browser and an internet connection.

The one stop shop

The XiVA musicm8 isn't exactly revolutionary, in as much as it doesn't do anything radically new that similar hardware from various manufacturers doesn't do already. Where it does succeed, however, is in combining several otherwise clunky and ungainly components – the network attached hard drive, the optical drive and internet connection of a computer, a dedicated media server – into one sleek little unit pitched not at custom install professionals, but you – the avid listener, viewer and all-round media connoisseur.

As time goes on, chances are we'll see others produce something similar. Whether what they come up with is as reliable, easy to use and prepared to work smoothly with so many diverse platforms does, of course, remain to be seen...

Price: £799

www.imerge.co.uk

