

# GROUP TEST

We test and compare the latest products

## Media streamers

Andy Shaw lines up the best media streamers to see which models deserve to occupy space by your TV

**M**ost of us have a large collection of media on our hard disks, from digital photos to home movies, but while a computer is a great facility for storing media, it isn't always the place to enjoy it - particularly if your home computer is tucked away in a bedroom or a study. It's far better to stream the contents of your hard disk to the living room TV where you can enjoy your movies, videos, photos and music on a big screen from the comfort of your sofa.

To get this content from your PC to your TV, you will need to use a media streamer over your home network. If you already have a Wi-Fi or HomePlug network in your home, all you need is the media streamer. We've looked at eight leading models to see which is the best at displaying PC- and internet-based media on your TV.

### HOW WE TESTED

We tested the devices with a wide range of popular media file formats and containers, from ripped Blu-ray discs to humble MP3s. The performance of each file type was analysed and logged.

We also looked closely at how easy the media streamer was to use, the quality of the interface and whether the device offered decent value for money. On models that included online services, we compared the devices' ability to handle streaming media from websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

Testing by Kat Orphanides

### D-LINK BOXEE BOX | £200 | [www.d-link.co.uk](http://www.d-link.co.uk)

FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★☆

### VERDICT

★★★★★

The D-Link Boxee Box is not just another nondescript box with a bog-standard remote control - it's an attractively designed unit with a remote that sports a sparse-but-functional look on one side and a handy QWERTY keyboard on the other. This uses a radio connection, rather than infra-red one, so you don't need to point it directly at the Boxee.

Since we first reviewed the Boxee in Issue 255, it's been updated by D-Link to iron out some of the early bugs. Connect it to your network via Ethernet or Wi-Fi, and it will browse through your folders directly or access them via a UPnP server (such as Windows Media Player), if you've got one set up. It will recognise the type of media it's looking at and provide thumbnails accordingly. If you prefer, you can plug your media directly into the device, using USB or a variety of different memory cards.

The device uses apps to provide access to online streaming services. These are simply brilliant, covering a range of UK-specific content from Channel 4 to the BBC iPlayer. You can

either watch through the app or go to the relevant website. Movie-streaming websites are similarly well catered for, as are video sites such as YouTube.

Boxee's strength lies in this well-developed interface. The software, previously used for installing on PCs to turn them into media centres, has been around for some time now and for this reason has had a wealth of testing that's not been available to its rivals. Think of the Boxee Box as a terrific-value media-centre PC (albeit without its own hard disk) and you'll realise that, despite the high price, it's a great purchase.

The D-Link Boxee Box is one of the most expensive devices in our test but it's also the best. The interface comes from Boxee's excellent media-player software and the quality of its heritage shines through. It reliably streams your own files, either from a local disk or across a network, and its apps (and remote with built-in keyboard) make streaming media from the internet a pleasure.



WEB USER AWARDS

Webuser GOLD AWARD

The best product/service in its category

Webuser SILVER AWARD

Good, but just misses out on top billing

Webuser BRONZE AWARD

Pretty good, but with some shortcomings