MEDIA SERVERS
MVIX WDN-2000 MVIXBOX

A very clever

I've been running a pair of Mvix MX-760HD multimedia players in a networked configuration, linked to a PC-based Linux media server, for the best part of two years now, and it's revolutionised the way I watch movies and play music at home.

The MX-760HD has since been replaced by the even more talented MX-780HD, but these little beauts, with their Ethernet and wireless capability, and exceptional video performance, continue to impress on all levels, including ease of use and seamless operation.

Not surprisingly, I was therefore particularly interested in the latest product from Mvix, dubbed the MvixBox. As the name suggests, it is a standalone media server that's compatible with a wide range of platforms, networks, server software and file protocols, and can operate in a RAID configuration for added redundancy.

Extremely compact and nicely finished in mainly black, the MvixBox is a dual-bay design, each of which can accept a SATA hard disc drive. This theoretically allows a maximum storage capacity of up to 2 Terabytes.

If operated in RAID 1 mode, the one disc will continuously mirror the other, effectively halving the real storage capacity. If redundancy is less of an issue, the disc storage can be implemented sequentially in RAID 0 mode, which effectively combines the capacity of the two drives. Disc drives are not included, allowing MvixBox buyers to select and source their own.

Set-up is as simple as linking the MvixBox to the home network (wireless is an option, but Ethernet remains the more stable, more reliable alternative), and using a very user-friendly web-based interface to configure and operate the unit.

Much of the MvixBox's appeal lies in its tremendous versatility, and its resulting wide range of applications. Its most obvious role is that of a media server, acting both as a repository of multimedia audio and video files, and as a UPnP interface for files stored remotely on other devices.

It will stream AVI, Xvid, MPEG and ISO-ripped movies, as well as MP3 music files, to media players like the Mvix MV-760HD and most other similar devices.

Given its NAS status, transferring files to and from the MvixBox is a simple, drag and drop affair, while it will also operate as a Torrent client, a web server, a blog repository and a remote access server with full FTP capabilities.
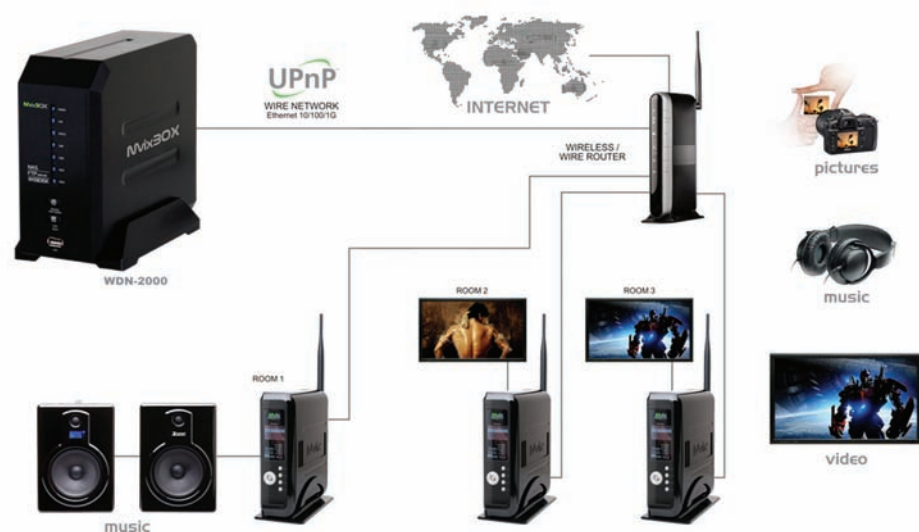
The on-board USB 2.0 ports are useful for adding additional, external hard drives to the unit, which allows further expansion, although data access time will, of course, not be as quick (or potentially as reliable) as the SATA interface of the drives installed in the MvixBox's drive bays.

Given that this is effectively a fancy and versatile portable data storage solution, it stands to reason that the MvixBox can also act as a back-up solution, with the added security of RAID operation. Secure remote access is convenient for those who often work from home, but need access to office-based files, or vice versa

The MvixBox's ease of use makes it particularly attractive for IT-challenged folk: configuration and administration managed easily enough, without the need for too much

box of tricks

specialised knowledge.

In my system, it took the place of my usual PC-based file server. The test unit came with hard drives installed and an extensive array of content, including movies in various formats, and music. Set-up, as mentioned was easy enough and playback seamless.

The MvixBox itself has very little influence on the quality of playback – that's determined in the first instance by the quality of the files, and then by the playback device. Regular readers will know just how high we rate the MX-760HD and MX-780HD, so there were absolutely no complaints on that front!

As far as the MvixBox is concerned, it has to be said that operation was completely trouble-free, with quick file access and reliable streaming: the unit didn't hang once during the review period.

Would I swap it for my PC-based server? That depends on the requirements of the individual. Using a PC allows a greater level of network control (in terms of operating multiple subnets, for instance) which is an aspect IT buffs will probably prefer.

Of course, you'll still need a PC on the network to be able to rip content before transferring it to the MvixBox. But having said that, the versatility of the MvixBox to operate as a portable file server, as a back-up solution,

an FTP server and a Torrent client, means its appeal is equally wide. Redundancy via RAID 1 mode is a further boon.

Ultimately, versatility is really the key of this unit: its combination of user-friendliness, reliable operation and a wide range of applications is quite unique, while the pricing reflects excellent. If, like me, you're already running Mvix players, adding the MvixBox makes perfect sense, too.

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