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DViCO TViX 6500a media streamer

A step ahead of the rest?

by Paul Lester published on 25 August 2008

We're big fans of media streamers here at Pocket-lint but are still waiting for the "streamer to end all streamers" to turn up so that we can put the whole issue to bed.

A range of mainstream companies have tried and failed and while offering quite capable solutions for the most part, there's always an issue or two that leaves the door open for someone to turn up with a comprehensive device that ticks all the boxes.

Step up then DViCO, with the TViX 6500a, a device that already pulls one over most rivals by offering HDMI 1.3, 1080p maximum resolution with built-in video upscaling and a massive degree of media format support that includes MKV, MP4, DVD-ripped VOB (complete with interactive menus) and more.

You can add to this list the option of a digital Freeview tuner to record directly to an internal hard drive, FTP access and the ability to copy content directly across a network.

It's certainly an enviable array of features on paper, but as we've seen in the past this doesn't always translate to a usable device that does what it says on the tin. A quick look at the price tag suggests that it knows how good it is and is happy to aim itself at serious digital media aficionados, and with no direct UK supplier it's possible you'd be wary of a product shipped out of Korea that's potentially aimed at a different market.

Well, all of these would be wise observations, and at the risk of ruining a dramatic concluding statement we're going to say right from the off that the 6500a isn't quite the perfect media streaming solution it's hyped up to be.

Let's start with the negatives. To begin with



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there's no built-in wireless access, you'll have to pick up a separate wireless USB dongle from Linksys or D-Link for this (we used D-Link's DWL-G122), and that'll set you back around £30. You'll also find the manual particularly hard to follow since it's been translated rather poorly into English and that doesn't make the frustrating network set-up process any easier to understand. It only supports 64-bit WEP encryption which may well put some users off altogether and those with a short attention span will no doubt fall at the frustrating hurdle of having to label each of the maximum of four shared folders extremely precisely to enable access. The fact that you're given no indication of exactly what might have gone wrong during this whole process certainly doesn't help, but those of you with a healthy dose of patience are in for a bit of a treat.

Once things are set-up correctly you're rewarded with one of the most impressive media streaming experiences to date. This is in large down to the sheer quality of playback. Thanks mainly to the effective upscaling capabilities of the player we were bowled over by the quality over a wireless connection and in this we're including the speed at which it can access your files and the responsiveness of the playback controls. Even low resolution videos look impressive and you're given a nice degree of additional control that includes customisable subtitle support, aspect ratio adjustment, lyric file display for audio and slideshow control for photos.

The interface is basic but fast and customisable. You can add your own wallpapers and even change the font, provided you've installed an internal hard drive, which is particularly easy thanks to the quick-release SATA bay. Large collections are pretty easy to browse though we would have liked a little more control over audio, such as artist and genre views, though it's worth noting that just about all of the issues we had with the 6500a are resolvable with firmware updates and DVICO has in fact sorted out quite a few early problems already.

At a glance

What is it?

A featured-packed media streamer

Good

Exceptional streaming performance and video quality, compact design, unparalleled format support, wide range of features

Bad

Network set-up can be a right pain, no built-in wireless, expensive

Verdict

If you're prepared to pay the price for the 6500a you'll find the performance and versatility of this streaming solution hard to beat

Price 299 (no HDD)

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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Most of the issues we had with the 6500a are relatively minor and the rewards on offer if you're prepared to put up with them are well worth the trouble. From a performance point of view it's at the top of the tree in today's market and though you're paying a lot for an all-singing, all-dancing set-up, there are very few out there that can touch it in terms of usability, performance and adaptability.

VERDICT

The 6500a sheds some points because of its high price and issues with network set-up and media sharing restrictions, but this aside it is ahead of much of the competition in today's market and provided you're willing to pay the price, is one of the most satisfying solutions around.