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Traxdata MultiMediaDrive media hard drive

Your home media solution?

by Chris Hall published on 3 October 2008

We've seen a continual rise of the "multimedia" hard drive over the past few years as people try to decide what to do with their varied forms of content. Traxdata with their imaginatively MultiMediaDrive think they have the solution of choice. But is it worth looking at?

The device is, as many are, a fairly basic arrangement of a 500GB hard drive in a metal case sitting atop a small stand allowing it to stand vertically and only vertically. From a construction point of view it feels pretty solid - a good weight in the hand. Drive activity is indicated by either a blue or orange LED, but other than that, there are no buttons or controls. Overall it is fairly unremarkable in it's design.

But are the connections any more exciting? Well, you get that HDMI that everyone is clamouring for as well as a 3.5mm route to Component video and a 3.5mm Composite route which also handles the stereo audio stream. There is also coaxial digital audio, but if all else fails you, a dirty great Scart socket. Most TVs should be able to derive a connection from these options. There is also the USB connection for use with your PC.

Power comes in through the supplied mains power block and we found that in our review sample the power supply was dud - which is unfortunately a fairly common experience with external hard drives. Easily overcome with a universal power supply, but you'd not be happy if you'd paid full whack for it. A press switch on the back brings the drive to life, instantly recognised on our XP PC as an external drive.

You are supplied with two software options, but of which are rather basic in their appearance, the first is a playlist manager and the second a private folder manager so your friends don't



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accidentally find themselves watching you straddle the neighbours cat. Ahem, where was I?

Filling the drive is as simple as drag and drop and in this we experienced no problems. Where we did find problems was in the rather lacklustre format support, meaning you either have to convert a load of stuff, or just not bother with it. Movie support includes: DivX, Xvid, VCD and MPEG 1 & 2, music has to be WAV or MP3 and images are catered for by JPG. It does support DVD format though, by copying the Video_TS folders straight into the drive, which perhaps hints at what people might use this drive for. So perhaps rather than "drag and drop" it should read "convert and drop".

Once connected to the TV the skinny remote comes in to play. Whilst the slim-line form factor does allow it to be clipped into the base of the MultiMediaDrive for storage, it suffers in its functionality. Unfortunately it is entirely essential for operation of the drive so when it slips down the back of the sofa, which it will, you'll be left up the creek.

As the drive becomes active there is a glimmer of excitement as the Traxdata wallpaper actually looks decent quality. Then the menu appears and all that goes out the window, as it is basic and blocky. You dump files, you see files, that sort of thing. Navigation is easy enough and it does skip through the folders with consummate ease, but lacks any sort of refined interface. Selecting a folder of images will give you thumbnails, and launching into a slideshow which leaves little to complain about. Ultimately, it is down to your to organise things yourself to optimise the experience.

VERDICT

The supplied manual is fairly good at detailing all the options available to you and in the box you'll also find the Component and Composite 3.5mm cables, but, as normal, no HDMI cable.

At a glance

What is it?

Media hard drive

Good

Metal cover, remote clips into base, easy DVD playback

Bad

Poor file support, no HDMI cable, expensive, not networkable, unexciting user interface

Verdict

It does what it says on the box, but in a rather bland and unexciting way. With poor format support, this looks too expensive for what it is

Price £150

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10

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But critically this is little more than a hard drive with TV connections and a remote - there is no Ethernet connection or Wi-Fi so you can connect the drive up, meaning it is already a step behind some competitors. In reality, with a device like this, you need to think about what files you already have and whether this serves your needs.

For the price, however, wider format support can be had, and for a little more, you can have the ease of a networked rival.