



treamer



Media Player & Streamer

Xtreamer Review
by Hi-Jack

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This review is a BETA version! Xtreamer, a €99 HD Media Player has joined the scene and we are in pole position to check it out and see if the “hype” caused over these last 2 months is actually true. Can a €99 value possibly compete with products costing 3 to 5 times as much and still keep up with the features and abilities we need today while all that it can do is stuffed into a small box? Sit back, relax and see what we have to say about the Xtreamer...

The Xtreamer



Measuring only 18cm height, 3cm width and about 8cm deep, the Xtreamer sure is small but we have seen small players before. I remember the iSTAR Mini for instance. That's how we know small players can be just as capable as any of the "big brothers" out there. It's like they say: "Size doesn't matter" ... ☺

Small units however come with limitations and while we discuss the hardware we'll be coming across a few of those.



The front is clean and sober only having a led for the power status. One might wish for a USB 2 connection in front. Neither write- or network-activity led are integrated so no flashing of led's during these operations. Some will find this a benefit while others will find this a limitation to not have visual confirmation. We are completely neutral about this. The led incorporated is Red (standby) and green (on), not blue as shown online.

The rear is where we will find most of the goodies concerning the Xtreamer hardware although we also find our first limitation that comes with the size of this product. Not all possible connections we

could need are available. For video output we have HDMI 1.3 and composite only. No Component or S-Video could be fitted off course due to the size. A break out box would have been nice though especially for people with beamers (optional extensions are always fun).



For Audio we are limited to the standard L/R Stereo and optical output. The power socket is integrated at the rear bottom, there's 2 USB2 hosts at the top, a mini USB Slave and then a RJ45 (network 10/100).

The unit is mainly made from plastic components held together which for this price was not expected to be anything else however... Xtreamer would have less problems to pass on as a "silent" media player would it have used aluminum and then designed the casing to dissipate heat from the unit. Instead, it added a small fan at the bottom of the unit which in both medium and full mode makes too much noise.

Hot air is being blown out of the unit where the stand is attached at the bottom. ON top of the unit, we can remove a small cabinet to insert a hard drive. The system used is not "guided" as there are no rails so one should be careful when inserting a hard drive as the SATA connector inside is not 100% aligned and can be damaged when pressuring too much due to this misalignment and no rail system. Well, it's not that sensitive, but be careful none the less. Disks are supported up to 500GB.

For an additional €20, an optional USB Wlan Antenna can be acquired for Wireless operation of

the unit. At the time of writing this review, the optional antenna is offered free with any order of the Xtreamer making the product even more attractive.

The power adapter included is tailored for international use and includes by default EU power plug, US and UK. The Xtreamer is thus clearly tailored for both home use and on the road. Further package contents include the remote control, 2 batteries, screws for the hard drive, a USB cable, composite cable and a manual.



The remote control is something we don't feel is the best design where button placement is concerned. The numeric buttons are mixed with options we often use during video playback or operating the unit. Xtreamer obviously tried to make it easier at one point by adding colors to several often used features like "GoTo" is blue, "Delete" is yellow, "Eject"? is green and "Add" is red. These are located at the top.



Other options mixed with the numeric keys include ZOOM, Setup, Return (which we prefer would have been located below the directional keys), a function, menu and TV-Out.

The part for playback and navigating is just below the numeric keys. The default directional keys with right below the skip back and forth button, play and stop button.



The lower half of the remote is then reserved for the other options like previous and next, volume control, audio and subtitle selection, A to B function, shuffle / repeat, mute and then the sync buttons for subtitles.



The remote has decent reception if pointed at the unit directly. Overall the remote is reasonable and obviously kept small due to its character to be a “on the road” player as well, forcing Xtreamer to combine buttons. Not bad at all...

Initial Setup

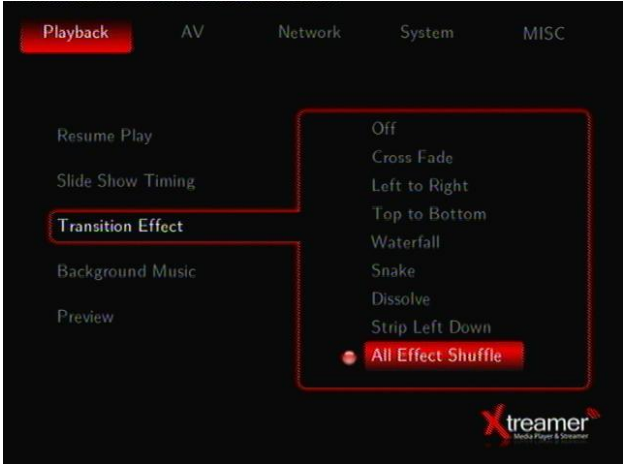
The Xtreamer setup is clean and easy but often that also means limited. Let’s check what the Xtreamer has to offer in setup and convenience to tune the player to your personal needs.

After less than 30 seconds boot time, the initial welcome screen pops up. We go down to Setup and start tuning the player using the different categories at hand. (We made a [video of the full setup](#) section at YouTube)

Playback Section

Here we can set the bookmark on or off, slideshow timing, transition effects. There’s an options for the background music that can be used in folder mode or playlist mode and last but not least, we can enable or disable the preview mode.

There are a total of 7 slideshow transition effects available which can be turned on or off or can be used in a “random” way.

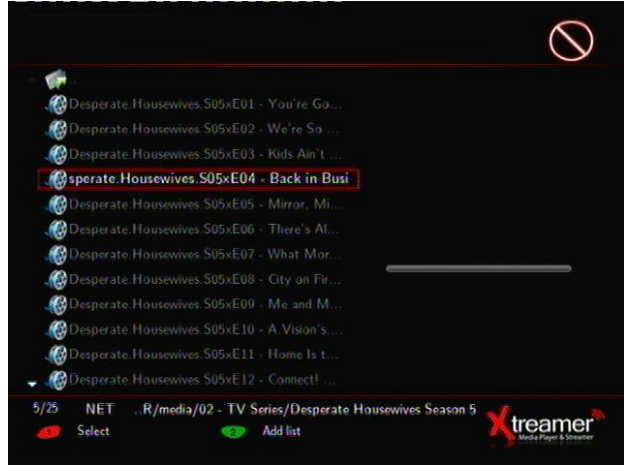


The preview option here actually changes the interface for file browsing. While on, selecting files will show in the preview window. This is somewhat inconvenient, not because we don’t like previews,

but because you can start a file before the preview is actually playing.



When the preview is on but not yet playing, pressing play or enter will show you cannot play the file at this time in the right upper corner. The preview process takes 1 – 2 seconds depending on which kind of file is used and slows down the overall speed of browsing a bit.



Now when using no preview window, the space it occupies become available to the file list extending the characters that are shown on screen.

While the title scrolls and shows the length of the movie below the preview window and the size of the file, disabling the preview window shows the titles and size next to it. I like this option which facilitates playing M2TS files (size tells you which files the actual movie is).

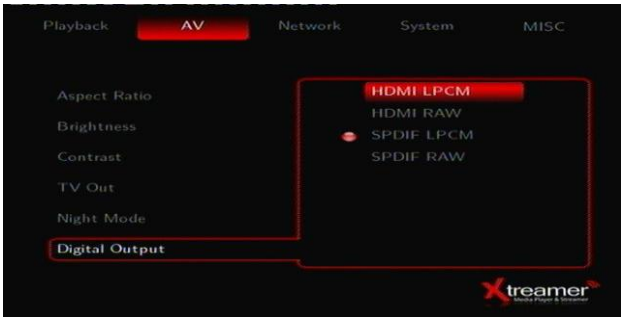


Anyway, back to Setup now...

Audio and Video

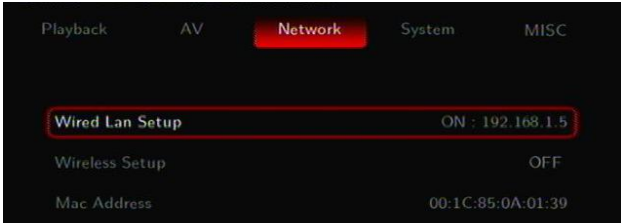
A comment often made and not always added to the players is separate settings for the most used formats like DTS, AC3 and WMA. This facilitates to setup the/ amplifier is capable of rather than have one setting for everything causing you to enter setup whenever changes apply.

People without receiver have less trouble and will like the fact Xtreamer has DTS down mix support. For video the usual aspect ratio settings are there, some quality control with the brightness and contrast option, TV Out selection up to 1080p / 24HZ (if HDMI is connected and your TV supports it), "Night Mode" and Digital audio output.



Network Options

Both Wired and Wireless network are available (optional WLAN Antenna) in DHCP or Manual mode. When connected, the IP address is shown in the setup section. MAC Address is shown here as well. We would like to give you a tip anyway on how to find a MAC ADDRESS by using the IP of a player. ([See this mini guide](#))



Wireless security supported include 64/128 bit WEP and WPA.

System Setup

A huge list of languages is supported and a lot of options for subtitle languages are included as well, including the famous "Hebrew". Xtreamer clearly targets a wide international public with the amount of languages for both the system and the subtitles. Time will tell if browsing files in local languages, subtitles and then proper translations for the interface are achieved.

Misplaced here a bit (should be under networking) are the UPnP and SAMBA servers that can be enabled or disabled. SMBA allows the Xtreamer to be used as a NAS on your network and good to know is attached USB storage will be used as well by this function.

The system can be updated here using USB and HDD only at this time however direct internet upgrade is planned to be added. The HDD formatting happens here (and reboots afterwards due to services implemented) and we can reset the Xtreamer to its default settings.

Misc

The last section in this series is miscellaneous settings which include the screen saver, FAN Speed can be controlled here and the TV System can be set to PAL or NTSC. This last option actually belongs under the AV settings.



And that concludes the setup option available on the Xtreamer. Few tweaks here and there for audio options would be nice but other than that, pretty much all is covered.

As a little extra, we made a small [video of the update process](#) and placed it on YouTube for your viewing. We will seek to create HD Videos soon during our reviews once the hardware is in place...

And a few items that need more detail... The night mode option actually filters out the deep bass tones when playing movies and videos.

Xtreamer is recommended to be used with the fan set to medium for HD playback, especially when a hard drive is inserted. Video playback issues could occur when using the fan in lowest mode due to the chip getting too hot. Work is in progress to implement an automated fan control.

Media Playback

Media players should be capable of quite a bit before they actually please us. We need decent video playback, the core of the media player, but in addition require a balanced picture and audio support. In this section, we will run through the capabilities of the Xtreamer concerning these three options.

Picture playback

Pictures are fun to show to visitors, even more fun when you can add some effects to them and music for some extra fun. This prevents us wasting time to create slideshow movies. It's not that long ago this was necessary and picture support was about one existent besides showing the image.

We prepared a folder containing images and music and properly set the setup of the Xtreamer to use transition effects and background music using files.

We found no issues in playback of files and music at the same time. Zoom reacts fast and the panning of the image works fast too. Unfortunately ZOOM is again not progressive which we kind of expect from the current players, no exception. The old 2X, 4X, 8X and 16 X methods is "passé".



The music placed inside the folder plays fine as well which I expect is the same for playlists if placed inside the directory. Once having used any functions like ZOOM, we are required to press start again to continue the slideshow.

Repeat seems to be missing as the remote button triggers no action on the player. Shuffle can be used to mix the pictures and play randomly. The arrow buttons function as rotating option.



The images are stretched to full screen automatically. There are no settings that respect aspect ratio like zoom settings "Original size, full screen, fit to screen which is the main missing option in this section.

Despite the ZOOM functions being incomplete the picture section is pretty much great including background music, rotation and transition effects.

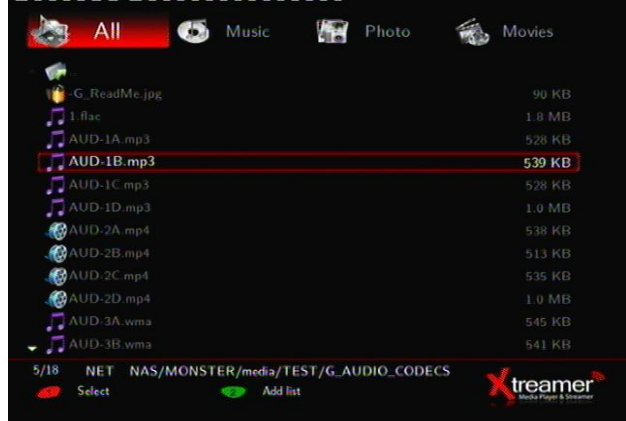
The slideshow can handle big images quite well, so for now, the image section comes out as well featured and balanced. One thing that might spice up the unit a lot is offering some form of thumbnail view of a folder which is missing. It would put the cherry on the cake along with progressive zoom. Supported files include JPEG, GIF, BMP and TIF.

Music playback

Most important is to start with stating FLAC is supported, however these come in two extensions: FLAC and FLA. Only FLAC extension is shown so this is something Xtreamer should add in one of the future updates. Further we can find MP3, MP4, WMA (no WMA Pro) and OGG listed. No AC3 and DTS files are shown as music formats.

I'm not as satisfied with the music section as I am with the picture section and I tell you why that is. When playing music nothing is shown on screen when pressing play, no info on the music or anything is available as far as I can see. Pressing "info" button does not show any tags, no time options and so on... This is, the whole feature of the music section depends on the "preview" setting in setup. It should be different for music or at least, the preview options should become separated between Video and Music.

Without preview options enabled, all you get is the list of files. Nothing else... The browsing of music remains possible but no cover art possibility, time info or ID3Tag information can be called, not even by the info button. Nothing on screen indicates something is playing so visual reference is limited to file title and size of the file.



The true power lies within enabling the preview options on the player which then shows a little file player containing all the goodies.

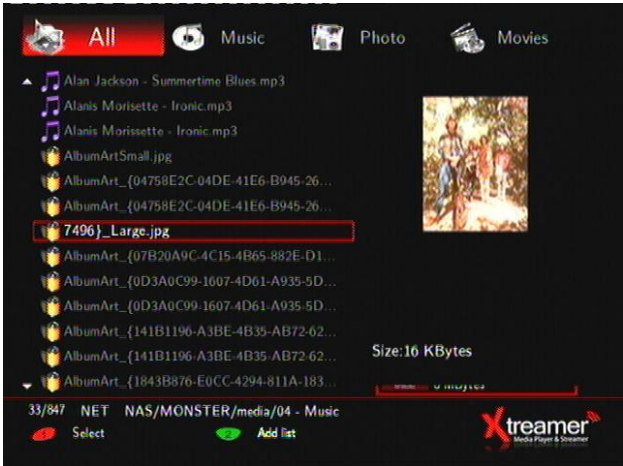


Cover art (album art), ID3Tag information, time info and everything is included here which is great. The interface looks rather nice like this and I'd want to have it but the video preview I do not want personally so avoiding the need to enter setup and toggle it on and off all the time is key to keep a certain level of convenience.

Options for music playback include FF/RW while keeping sound at the first two levels of FF only. Repeat function is active allowing repeating a single song or the whole directory and shuffle is featured on top of that. Pretty good once you get to find how everything works.

Overall very easy music section and well features as far as options are concerned. Format support could be a little better as the Xtreamer sees MP4 music files as video files and is missing AC3 and DTS files support along with the FLA extension (though FLAC is supported). The appealing interface and simplicity of it all is simply well done! One of the better music sections on media players.

Another very annoying part off the Xtreamer is that it shows the album art as files when browsing the music directory which results in a long list of useless files. Xtreamer should address this to not list these files. ([Video showing changing preview on/off and album art listed](#)).



Off course, we can select to filter only the audio files, never the less, showing the album art as files is still wrong.



I'm sure when using these files with album art into a slideshow will cause issues and inconvenience...

Video Playback

We will move on to video testing now starting with Blu-Ray, then DVD and finally the usual HD and Divx content.

Blu-ray



We start off with problems using Blu-Ray backups. Off course, full blu-ray is not supported however we should have the ability to play the main movie in M2TS format.

We have been struggling quite a few times to get the movie started. What happened was selecting the m2ts starts loading however then stops leaving the loading splash animation on screen, locked up.

We have to try and start the M2TS file multiple times before it actually manages to load the movie. Over network, using cabled network, the video played smooth and without interruptions or glitches.

The info button allows calling the details of the movie and shows elapsed time and duration in form of a slider.



The Goto Function works too however is somewhat inconvenient. We have to call the window first, and then select the type

of GoTo, then adjust the time, press enter to jump there and press GoTo again to remove the screen which should automatically disappear here...

ZOOM is as with pictures none progressive and allows up to 8X ZOOM. Repeat and shuffle seem activated here on video in order to randomly play and keep playing in a loop.

There seems no BDLite functions inside the Xstreamer at this time that allows selection of subtitles from the BDMB folder.

DVD

In the DVD section we found A-B working but miss out on the ability to use “step by step” playback and slow playback. Besides play and Pause and FF-RW in addition to the repeat / shuffle and A-B function, there’s nothing extra. Fast forward starts at 1.5X, 2X, 4X, 8X, 16X and 32X, same as the rewind function. Both subtitle and audio selection are working fine.

Comments made in the BD section concerning GoTo are the same here. It works but is inconvenient due to window remaining on screen after the selection has been issued.

We experience similar issues as with Blu-Ray where the Xstreamer needs a few attempts to start the DVD VOB files separately that contain the movie.

Using the IFO files to start, we did not find any issues. Video_TS folders need to be browsed in order to start the movie and an option to start the movie directly with these folders comes recommended.

We can use both raw DVD formats or ISO format. With ISO files, we regularly came across the same issue that loading the file only succeeds after several attempts.

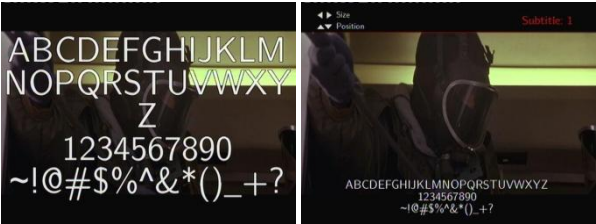
So far for DVD and Blu-Ray. We’ll move on to Divx and HD files now to see what the unit is capable of doing.

HD and SD Video playback

I must start by saying, DVD, HD and Blu-Ray files failed playing miserably over Wireless. This was expected as neither player on the market today I’ve seen can present a working wireless solution for heavier files.

As far as options are concerned, there are a few things to say. Only SMB is supported on the Xstreamer, we found no options to activate or use NFS which is more stable to use.

The subtitles with MKV which are embedded work fine. Options include syncing subs, changing the size and move the subtitles up and down. We can even fill the screen with subtitles only.



We can switch between several subtitles embedded in MKV files but are unable to load external subs when using a file that has subtitles embedded. Using a file without embedded subtitles, the external subtitles work fine. This should be addressed as the combination of both is needed mostly.

We tested quite a few files based on 1.0.1 of which we knew 1.0 firmware was failing, and clearly progress is made as more files ran fine, up to 1080p, not all though. There are so many different files out there that we should expect some to fail, especially those using too many reframes (reference frames) which requires quite some processing power and memory. No need to say

these files are actually intended for HTPC / PC use and not for NMP’s.

As far as 1080p and 702p tests went, we could hardly come up with errors. Only in case of VOBSUB inside MKV’s we seen issues where thing go wrong when changing subtitles.

The added 24Hz feature is buggy the least and seems to stop working after the first file is played in this mode. That and the choppy network streaming are quite severe issues Xstreamer must overcome next.

Syncing subs happen in intervals of 100 milliseconds. The awkward implementation makes you think though it’s wrongly implemented; however some say it is correct. I say it should be simplified.

Pressing the button that should make the subtitles come by faster actually results in “- 400ms” message while slowing down the subtitles results in positive values... We rather see this simplified with + values if pressing up and minus when pressing down. Just so it doesn’t require us to think about it too much.

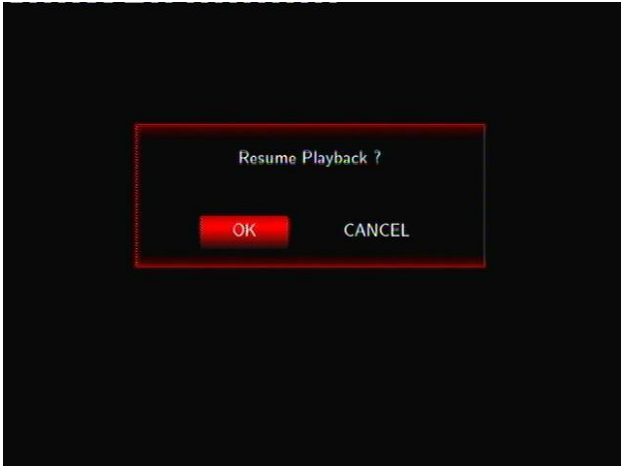


Figure 1: Faster Subtitles



Figure 2: Slower subtitles

The Xtremer keeps track of where you stop watching files and bookmarks automatically. Multiple bookmarks are kept however cannot be called upon other than browsing to the movie and start it again.



It would be nice to have a compilation of bookmarks called upon and restart the playback from there. A golden tip for convenience.

So, that makes 3 sections quite good so far although still immature in several aspects for video. Special note: RMVB is supported too ☺

For the Anime Scene (gesture)

We not usually test this, ASS subtitles are supported embedded into MKV files. We tested files with both single subs and simultaneous subtitles and found out the multi ASS subs do not work.

Copying files / Navigation / Online

We already explained the benefits of the preview window during the setup section and told you about the preview window being a limiting factor for the speed to start playing a movie.

A great option within the Xtremer (and other RealTek media players) is the ability to transfer files from any source accessible to any destination on the player. An image says more than a thousand words... From the main menu we enter the "File Manager" and then see all the available options available being HDD, USB and NET...



The process is simple, selecting the source and destination in the first step. We select to copy files from my NAS (net) to the internal HDD and measure the speed to see how fast (or slow) the file is transferred.

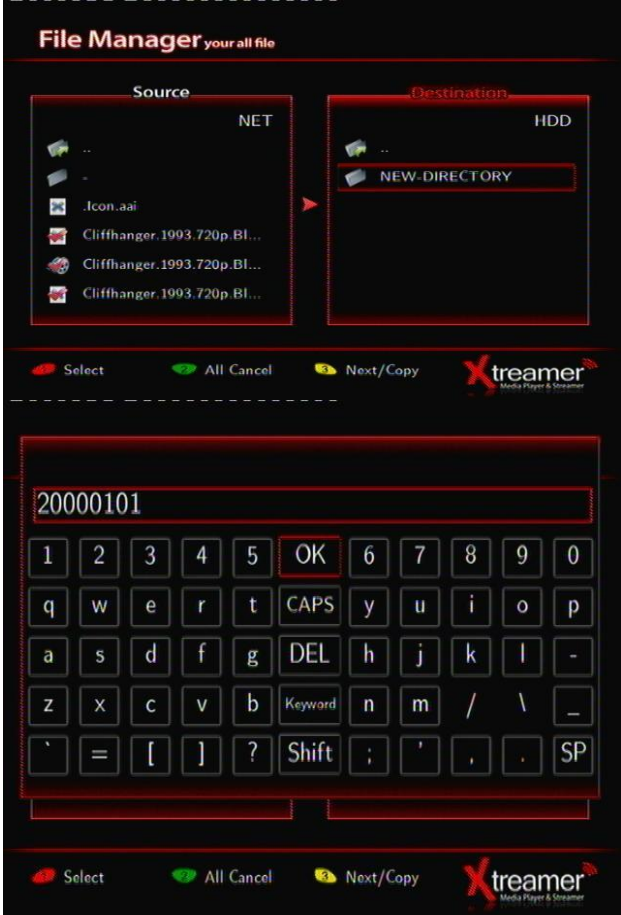


Once selected, we are presented with the available NET sources and HDD folders. Purpose is now to select the files we want to move... We'll pick a few...

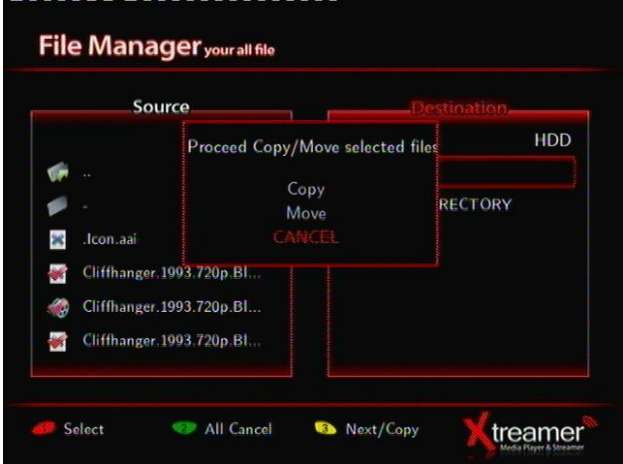


We press "right" on the remote to switch to destination and browse to the folder we want to copy the contents too.

So far things are easy and straight forward using the "hints" at the bottom of the screen using the colored buttons of the remote. We choose to place the files a new folder we create using the online keyboard function and change the default name used which is the date.



Next we simply select if we want to move or copy the files to this folder. During the copying or move process, a progress bar is show online to monitor the progress.



The copy took exactly 13 minutes for a total of 4.36GB so copying files happens at an average speed of 5.5MB/s. Not truly the speed we need to handle HD files in sizes of 10GB and more. This limit in performance also applies to the SAMBA NAS function off course.

Now I'm sure some of you go thinking "this is awesome" and I'm unable to comment on what should be improved on such an easy and well aligned file manager. Wrong! I do have something to say...

It's obvious the Xtreamer team has adjusted the interface all over the place to show more files on screen and I find it said this section has been forgotten to be included. Hopefully it is still planned

in their roadmap of updates to equally enhance this section to show more titles in the lists as 6 is just too few for a HD player.

Except for performance, overall the file manager is an excellent feature, even though I still prefer to use the file transfer attaching the Xtreamer to the PC. It's faster for the big batch of files while this file manager is useful more for the occasional copy of few files. Just so you know, you can actually copy complete folders as well.

Speaking of using the Xtreamer as an external hard drive to the PC, the NTFS format of the hard drive is very convenient and unlike many other players, actually supports read and write. Too bad no other formats can be selected when formatting the hard drive. EXT3 is supported amongst other formats according to the manual but are nowhere to be found in the setup when handling the hard drive.

Before I forget, the main screen where we select our target to play from is quite good too.



An external DVD can be attached (untested) and then used to play content from CD-ROM or DVD. Off course, this excludes playback of commercial

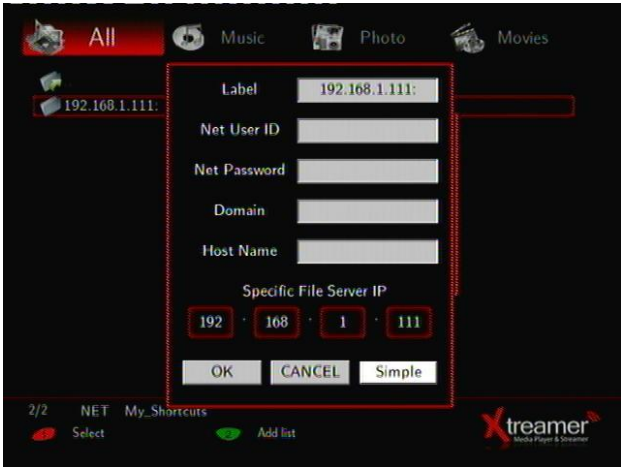
disks considering there is no CSS or Macrovision implemented.

Shortcuts

Shortcuts on the Xtreamer is another version of "fixed mappings" on other players. You can add shortcuts, similar to "favorites" here.



I would have preferred being able to browse to a certain folder and then use the "functions button" to add the selected folder to the shortcuts instead of the current system where we can only enter user, password and the IP address so it's not actually a shortcut or favorites system...



I expected to be able placing shortcuts to share levels or folders... Seems I expected the wrong thing... In addition, the shortcuts are only reachable

via main menu / net / shortcuts and are no benefit for browsing. For instance my NAS...

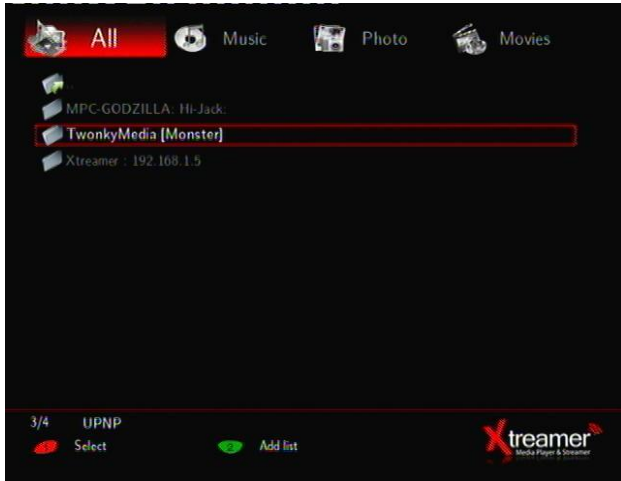


If I add it to the shortcuts I must browse from main to NET to Shortcuts and then see my NAS. When I use direct navigation I browse from

MAIN to NET to NAS. 1 step less... A bit awkward.

Net and Online

Very briefly touching the subjects here. UPnP is supported and online content is quite good including options like Picassa, Flickr and YouTube.



We tested mainly YouTube function and found HD files almost never play. One out of 4 files actually failed loading. The interface is easy to manage with filters and selections applied except for the files itself, we would have liked to see more than 5 on screen again in some sort of thumbnail videos.



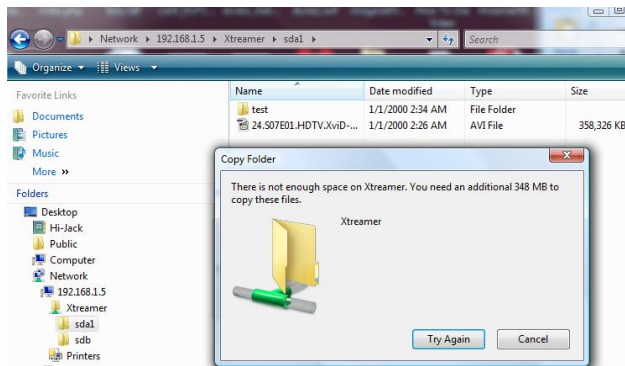
We leave the Internet section for you to discover further. I like it but would have loved some enhancements to YouTube which obviously is the most used online function. When using HD resolution, there's plenty of space to use to manage showing more vids.

Maybe mention one special feature here is the DDNS service integrated. This allows you to access the Xtreamer over the internet using the address xxxxxx.xtreamer.net!

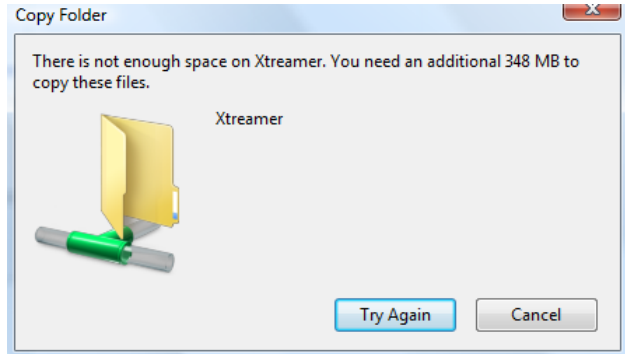
NAS

The NAS function on the Xtreamer is an easy way to approach your files from the network and add files to it directly from the PC without using the internal file manager. We found this function to be broken

as though we could browse the files on both the internal hard drive and attached USB storage, we could not transfer any files to either source...



The Xtreamer complains about “no more free disk being available” which is obviously a bug or the NAS function is not intended to be used this way and is read only?



Glitches and convenience remarks

Small problems we noticed is Xtreamer not going into screensaver mode while in Setup... We can have up to 3 Wireless connections set however not save these...

Conclusion on the Xtreamer



We covered so much and then still not covered it all. That's showing how much is inside this little box. As usual we leave stuff out for you to discover.

A big “well done” to Xtreamer for achieving a €99 player that is more than just a WDTV competition and can even compete with the bigger names on the market at only a fraction of their price however, to convince the true media heavy weights to pick the Xtreamer, several enhancements are necessary, especially in the video section and overall convenience of the player...

Starting with 24p which is buggy, some problems with playback still exist, the few issues with HD playback make up for a nice target to improve. The MKV subtitles, both embedded and external subtitles must be loaded simultaneously as having embedded subs on a scene release does not mean our language is included. Therefore we need the ability to load external subtitles even if embedded subtitles are included. If the MKV has 2 subs and there's one external, the subtitles button should load a virtual list like this and loop through them:

- 1. Subtitles Off
- 2. Embedded sub 1
- 3. Embedded sub 2
- 4. External sub 1

Next, wireless streaming is important to get tuned a bit more as is network streaming for files. We believe the multiple presses we had to make to start a video are related to network. On few files we saw choppy playback and some artifacts but considering the €99 player we saw an amazing performance up for competition vs. NMT and TViX with about 90% of our files played correctly. More worried I am about so many files requiring us to start it twice or more before it actually starts playing from my NAS and then almost half Youtube video's failing to play too. A bit of tweaking can resolve this.

NFS is something Xtreamer should consider adding and then update the shortcut options to actually provide the ability to place shortcuts to shares and folders, NFS and SMB sources as fixed target. I would even recommend adding the shortcuts on the main page to avoid the extra clicks to reach shortcuts. It's called shortcuts for a reason fellas ☺ I also remember Xtreamer told me NFS was supported, but I could not find it.

Add a bookmark overview from which we can resume playback and update the options a little like adding progressive zoom, default image sizes like actual size, stretch, full screen and when done, update the GoTo function to disappear when we press enter to apply our selection. Every click counts...

For setup, we would like the Brightness and Contrast to be available during movie playback without returning to setup section maybe even including HUE and Saturation. Also present a screen including all options so we don't have to set each one separately, that saves time. More options to set Audio separately from the global variables would be nice too. It's all about convenience and maximizing options today...

Music and picture sections are truly good. Few updates are necessary which mainly are directed towards adding .FLA extension, support for DTS and AC3 files and separate the music preview option from the video preview option as they purpose a total different thing. In video they are annoying, in music they are superb. Let's avoid switching this on and off every time we like to switch media types. In addition, the album art files should not be shown separately as it makes browsing more difficult unless we apply the audio filter. Even then, it might still be an issue when using music files in slideshow if they cause an image to be injected into our slideshow.

I probably overlook some additional comments like the fan noise and other stuff I could come up with as a conclusion, fact is, for €99 this is a superb value and the firmware at this level in many ways is more mature than most players released before. Xtreamer obviously made a decent attempt at tuning the interface to an easy and appealing one, even though it overloaded it with its own logos on every page, too much for me. Other than the copy section, the interface was convenient and fine. I would like to see the file manager be enhanced to have more files listed.

Now with a few updates maturing the video section, we sure get an affordable alternative to even bigger names on the market than WDTV and not necessarily mean we get less. RealTek is ready to compete obviously with Sigma enabling brands like Xtreamer who add a decent amount of effort into redesigning, to compete with TViX, NMT and HDI and this first attempt to catch up is simply amazing and should warn other brands to stop overcharging.

This player should at least be in your home as a second player or for the less demanding users as a

main player. With a few well targeted updates, even advanced users can find their needs in the Xtreamer and that for only €99. Right now, the video section is more than good and a few targeted updates will make it even better. This is one "xtreme" value for money.

It will be interesting to see the other new players come to market and compare these against the Xtreamer... Very interesting...

Extra note on the Xtreamer

Certainly to an extend we agree this product is more than just a WDTV competitor... It competes with much more than that and has plenty of potential yet unused to grow further. Let's concentrate on that part...

Simply amazing, yet needs additional work. Kudos to Xtreamer as I never felt I was handling an "only €99" player. It's actually worth more but just so you know, me saying so is no reason to raise the price, ok? 😊

Enjoy
Hi-Jack

Confirmed updates 2 come

MKV subs will be updated to include both internal and external subtitles for selection. Right now, only one of both can be used.

Wireless and streaming is severely enhanced in the next firmware to come.

A wide range of remarks made in this review have been discussed and planned with R&D to fix.

We are fully confident Xtreamer will find its way in the near future to both advanced and novice users. The plans we are presented with are promising, improving the unit drastically and adding features I'm sure no one expects from the Xtreamer... so stay tuned as there's a lot more to come...