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technology.guardian.co.uk/weekly**Technophile****Digital media players are the way forward, and the Solwise 1120W works well if you ignore the manual**

The DLNA may sound like one of those splinter terrorist organisations – the sort that wants to end the oppression of peoples and the bourgeois insertion of nutty clusters in chocolate boxes – but its initials actually stand for “Digital Living Network Alliance” (dlna.org), whose dozens of member companies want you to listen and watch things stored on one piece of equipment in your home in another part of your home via your network. It's all very home of the fut-chah, white heat of technology, etc.

DLNA members offer media “streamers” and digital media players (DMPs), which use DLNA-approved software to link to any other DLNA-approved products with the minimum of fuss; it's intended to be plug-and-play. (About the only thing they can't play back is DRM-protected music or video from Apple's iTunes Store.)

Enter Solwise, which is keen on the home network field, with its own DMP – the book-sized 1120W, costing £83.30 (inc VAT). This comes in the now-standard white plastic that Chinese factories must use by the tonne. No doubt by next year they'll all switch to black, apeing the iPhone and iPod Touch.

Here's the weakness of an ecosystem, though: the race to the bottom on price.



DLNA products all use Linux (yay!), but the user interface engineers get paid nothing, meaning the menus and navigation on your TV are clunky and the typefaces ugly (boo!). Comparing, say, the Nintendo Wii's beautiful, restful typography with that on the Solwise menus, you realise that fonts affect the entire user experience. The remote control, too, is so light it feels cheap; pricey things need heft. And ignore the manual, some of which is written in Babelfish.

But, you ask, how well does it work? Really well, mostly. The wireless networking is flawless. My media server (a hard drive attached to my router)

Pros: easy setup; small and stylish; neat media previewing
Cons: cheap-looking typefaces; clunky navigation; limited web content
solwise.co.uk »

turned up at once. AAC and MP3 audio files, and DVD .vob, AVI and MPEG-2 files, plus photo albums, all played and previewed without problem. And unlike many media streamers, the Solwise has slots for CF and other storage cards, which are read directly.

There's only a disappointing range of web sources, though: only Flickr and Radiotime, and I couldn't make the latter work. Given a browser, why not give us the whole web?

The only real problem I had was that some video files wouldn't fast-forward or rewind, though this might though be a quirk of my disk and server, rather than Solwise's product. That's the other problem with the DLNA: it hasn't quite got all its members in line, so there's still some disagreement in the ranks. No matter. DMPs are the way forward; get one and you'll wonder why you ever used your computer as a TV or music centre. **Charles Arthur**

Letters and blogs**New reader, old model**

Despite some interesting features

Luckily this is not the case. The Science Museum holds world-class collections in the history of computing, including

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