

PixelMagic MB100 **£300**

The MB100 is as happy with hi-def material as it is with its impressive DVD upscaling – a low cost, versatile MediaBox

The MB100 HD MediaBox is a simple, low-cost video-cum-audio server, with particular relevance to hi-def addicts. It will handle video from a wide variety of sources, and prepare it using its internal scaler and deinterlacer for display on a TV, monitor or an HD ready display, all the way through 720p and 1080p.

If you're stuck with standard-def DVD, the PixelMagic box does a very nice number in tweaking the video to fit the capabilities of your screen, and provides other processing, notably deinterlacing of interlaced (off air TV, for example) sources.

Fit as a fiddle

Conversely, if you happen to have access to HD video material, for example, from your computer, the MB100 HD adapts it to fit the characteristics of your video display. The unit only develops its full capabilities when equipped internally with its own hard disk, not supplied as standard. You can use any IDE drive up to 500MB internally – even 5400rpm models are suitable, and two additional drives can be handled externally via USB2.

The MB100 can also talk to your computer network via USB. Although the link lacks the bandwidth to handle HD material, footage can be transferred via USB to the MB100 first, which it can then play.

THE MB100'S AGILITY WITH TEST 720p MATERIAL WAS QUITE SOME REVELATION

The usual connectivity suspects are here, but the MB100 is also fully compatible with the HDMI standard.

The PixelMagic box does an excellent job of scaling its output. Although motion sometimes looks a little stilted, it still has little difficulty in outstripping normal DVD players or low rent scalers and deinterlacers usually specified for projectors and TV displays.

The MB100 was set up with a number of DVD movies, which

retained all their usual screen navigation options.

But the most impressive capabilities are those associated with HD video. Our test 720p material was a revelation, which through a compatible InFocus projector looked much like peering through an open window, apart from some residual jerkiness.

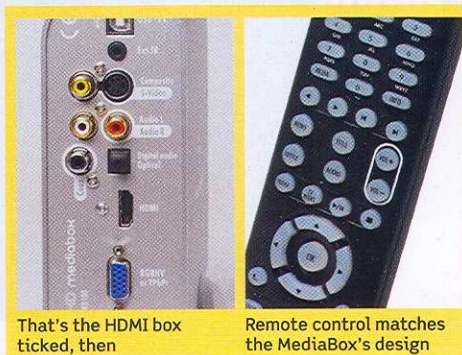
Packing a punch

The picture was punchy, with deep blacks and excellent shadow and highlight detail, and showed real subtlety with difficult material.

Standard DVDs stored, and replayed from the internal hard disk, acquired a new vitality which has not been previously noted

from anything but the most costly DVD-Video players.

All in all the PixelMagic MB100 is some multi-tasking slab of AV wizardry, keeping one eye on the high definition prize and the other on an affordable price. Pretty much the best of both worlds ■



That's the HDMI box ticked, then

Remote control matches the MediaBox's design



Hard disk not supplied as standard

The MB100 can talk to your computer network via USB



87% **WHAT HOME CINEMA**

| RATINGS | |
|-------------|-------|
| STYLE | ★★★★☆ |
| EASE OF USE | ★★★★☆ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★☆ |
| SOUND | ★★★★☆ |
| PICTURE | ★★★★★ |
| VALUE | ★★★★★ |
| OVERALL | ★★★★★ |

TEST SCENE

>Once upon a time in America



An authentically gritty feel will blow you away thanks to detailed, transparent video scaling and processing play

AT A GLANCE

FEATURES

HDD slot (internal) 1x IDE up to 500GB optional), NTFS or FAT 32
 Supports MPEG 1, MPEDG 2, MPEG 4, WMV9, DivX, XviD
 DVD file formats
 Supports audio standards MP3, WMA, AAC (not DRM files), PCM
 Output resolutions 480p, 576p, 720p, 1080i/p
 PC resolutions 640 x 480, 800 x 600, 1024 x 768, 1280 x 1024 pixels
 Weight 2.5kg (without hard disk)
 Proprietary scaler/deinterlacer
 Noiseless fanless convection cooling
 Burr Brown opamps
 Analog Devices DAC

CONNECTIONS

Two USB 2.0 hosts
 USB 2.0 target
 LAN 10/100Mbps
 HDMI
 VGA
 S-video
 Composite video
 Audio coaxial digital S/PDIF
 Audio Optical digital TOSLINK
 Audio analogue stereo (phono)

www.pixelmagic.com