Spreading the net far and wide

Serious about home media servers? Then go large. **Martin Pipe** has...

A speedy and convenient means of backing up data and distributing multimedia files, the well-built DS410 can accommodate an impressive total of 8TB in its four drive bays. You install the drives, and thus have total control over capacity and upgrades. Both 2.5 and 3.5in SATA drives are supported, as are various implementations of RAID technology.

Highs
● The onboard DLNA media server works well with a variety of media players. It dovetails with Windows, while Apple applications (like iTunes and TimeMachine) are supported. Various embedded 'station' applications are also available for downloads (eg BitTorrent), and multimedia streaming.
● Setup is straightforward, thanks to a powerful and flexible web interface that also enables you to manage disks and multiple users/privileges,

backup from PCs or to external eSATA/USB storage devices.

Lows
● Some firmware is stored in non-volatile memory. This can cause problems, though we're told you'll still be able to boot up in the event of a system-partition crash.

Cutely compact: The DS410 is small but powerful

● Energy consumption is going to be high when fully-loaded, even with 4 x 2.5in drives. However, the DS410 does boast nifty power management facilities such as auto drive-spindown, fan control, LAN wake-up and scheduled uptime. In any case, it runs surprisingly quietly.
● Although the DS410 will accommodate those low-consumption and quieter-running 2.5in drives (and even comes with all the necessary screws), Synology doesn't include the brackets that allow them to be fitted into the 3.5in bays, so you must remember to buy them yourself when ordering the drives.

HCC VERDICT
Synology DS410
£40 Approx (no drives)
Overall: 1 2 3 **4** 5

Rock it in the socket...

Wi-Fi not reliable enough? **Martin Pipe** networks via his mains

Powerline networking is a convenient way of bridging the network 'gaps' in your house without recourse to hard-to-hide CAT-5 cable or undependable Wi-Fi. The Livewire packs two powerline adapters; plug one into the mains sockets at the network gear end, the other in the remote location for which access is required; connect the Ethernet cables, press the 'sync' button on one of the Livewires, and it will seek out

and then pair itself to the other. Easy!

Highs
● Works very well indeed. We streamed 1.4Mbps uncompressed audio, 5Mbps MPEG-2 SD video and 7Mbps 720p hi-def (x264 codec) without any unwanted hiccups. Western Digital claims speeds of up to 200Mbps (provided that the conditions are ideal).
● A four-port hub on each device simplifies connection to multiple devices. This could be very useful if the remote room hosts a Blu-ray player, games console and network-enabled TV, for example.
● 28-bit encryption, which ensures that your data traffic is

secure from eavesdropping, is automatically applied. No need to configure or remember passwords.

Lows
● Like all other powerline communications systems, both adapters need to be on the same mains circuit, otherwise they may fail to find each other.
● 'Dirty' mains supplies and the use of filters/conditioners, or even extension cables, can affect performance, so best to plug the adapters directly into wall sockets. The integrated hubs are a great idea, but multiple 'active' devices will be competing for bandwidth.
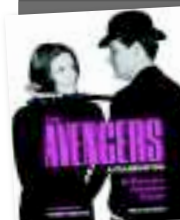
HCC VERDICT
WD Livewire
£85 Approx
Overall: 1 2 3 4 **5**