

2010

Hyundai M-Box Light – HMB-L110

“Anything you can do, I can do Smaller”

The Hyundai M-Box Light has surely taken the crown as one of the smallest Full HD media players on the market. Hosting the latest Realtek chip, its dimensions are pocket sized - well a large pocket anyway. But does its size restrict its functionality and can it compete with its larger competitors?



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Introduction

It seems like things keep getting smaller each day and it appears that media players are no exception. Now this may seem weird and I am still trying to understand the concept behind it, but Ellion, who we have reviewed players for previously (Ellion HMR-660H, HMB-Movie Palace), are now supplying devices produced by Hyundai, don't they make cars?

The Hyundai Mbox-Light is certainly the smallest Full HD player that I have seen, it is able to accomplish the small form factor by having no capability of housing a drive. Based on the Realtek 1283 SoC the player joins the ever growing Realtek club of players.

The Mbox-Light Player

The player measures a meagre 115x126x28(mm) and as can be seen from the image below is quite small when set beside an Apple iPhone. The body is all shiny plastic which picks up smudges and fine surface scratches very easily. The unit is fanless making for silent running, and as there is no internal HDD the only heat created is by the Realtek chip that has an aluminium heat sink in place.

The player comes in three colours, black, white and silver.

In the box are the following:

- ✚ Mbox Light Player
- ✚ Power adapter
- ✚ Player stand
- ✚ HDMI cable
- ✚ Remote control
- ✚ Manual

All cables are of a decent quality, but I am unsure whether they have missed a cable out. On the rear of the player is an AV out socket which suggests that it would have an AV breakout cable

of some sort to offer component or composite video. However, the manual neither mentions it nor is one supplied...Curious.



The Front Fascia

The front fascia is sparse. On the left is a small hole illuminating with a cool blue light when the player is on, to its right is a small circular IR window which is unobtrusive and blends well with the fascia - unless it is in white or silver. And that's it besides the usual 1080p, HDMI logos in white type to the right.



I personally prefer this player in black though if you are of the Apple persuasion you may be taken by the white version. The player is simplistic in view, but housed in its stand it does look quite fetching stood on its side.

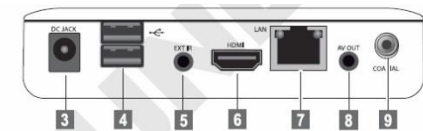
On the right hand side of the player there is a memory card slot which can accept SD,MS and MMC formats.



To the left of the card slot is a very small hole which is the system reset.

The Rear Panel

The rear panel is well laid out and caters only for HD mode as the only video output is via HDMI, and sound is via digital coaxial or HDMI. This is another reason why I question the missing breakout cable as can be seen from the image below a socket exists for such a cable. With the breakout cable there would be more flexibility for the player opening up the market to consumers with a panel or TV that can only cater for component or composite inputs.



- 1 Power LED
- 2 IR receiving part
To receive IR signal from remote control
- 3 DC IN (12V)
To Connect Power Adapter cable
- 4 USB HOST
Digital Input jack for USB Storage (USB external HDD or USB memory) It can be used for Wireless Option.
- 5 EXTERNAL IR
To connect external IR receiver
- 6 HDMI OUT
To Connect to HDMI input of TV
- 7 LAN
To Connect to LAN cable
- 8 AV OUT
To Connect to Audio Video Input of TV
- 9 COAXIAL
To Connect to Coaxial Input of Digital Amplifier
- 10 F/W Upgrade Button
To press this hole with a sharp tool
- 11 SD/MMC/MS Reader
To connect Memory Card (SD/MS/MMC)

From left to right we have the power input, two USB host ports, and a port for extending the IR for

you remote control freaks☺.To its right we have the HDMI 1.3 port and then the 10/100 Ethernet port. Next to the Ethernet port is the breakout AV output port that I have in question, and finally to its right is the digital coaxial port.

If you have a new TV panel then everything is catered for in one small box, what more could you ask for.

AV breakout cable.....

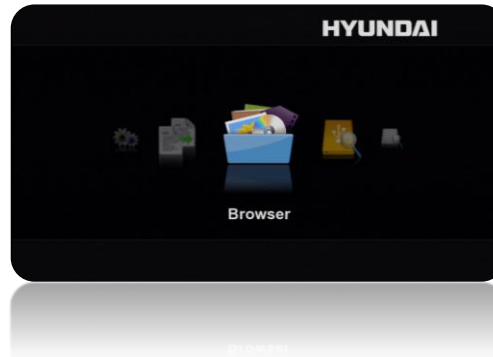
Player Conclusion

On the whole the player is built well - although it feels a little plastic and lightweight. Certainly Hyundai have built the smallest Full HD media player on the market, but you know what..... I prefer a media player to have a little substance about it. YES if the player was a mobile one like the BolloNMP-MOB I would say it's a real winner, but this player is not presented as such. When stood upright in its stand I found it would topple backwards due to the lack of weight to counter balance the weight of the cables being fed into it. However, in a horizontal position this is not an issue. I still feel that for a home media player it's not about the size but about the build and aesthetic quality - that speaks bounds. This player would be ideal to stick on the back of a panel out of the way and utilise the IR extender port to control it. If this is what Hyundai (Ellion) intended then they have achieved this,they have also managed to cram a lot of flexibility into such a small form factor.

Setup and Menus

The Mbox-Light is based on a Realtek SoCthough Ellion have deviated away from using the usual generic User Interface (UI) and have developed one of their own, which as they describe it is a HD interface. On initial impressions the UI looks a lot like theRaidsonic MP305a's interface, the initial

Home screen rotates in a carousel manor displaying five menu icons:



Movement of the icons as they rotate is not completely smooth and suffers from a very slight stutter. This is purely cosmetic and is not a reflection on the player's playback capability.

Test Setup.

The test setup is as follows:
Mbox-Light plugged into my Onkyo 906 receiver via HDMI. From here it is outputted to: 1.Full 1080p Projector and 2.Pioneer 508D Panel. Media is fed via my Gigabit LAN connected to a Windows 2003 fileserver and a Promise NS4600 NAS. Sound outputted via HDMI from the Onkyo receiver into a 7.1 Q-Acoustics 2000 speaker setup.

First stop is the Setup menu and the player's firmware upgrade. Looking through the Setup options I could see no option for firmware upgrade a quick look on the Hyundai website however, revealed a new firmware and the process for upgrading the player. Remember that small little 'Reset' hole? Well, after copying the firmware to the root of a USB stick and inserting it into the USB port on the player, you can then

power the player on whilst holding in the 'Reset' button and voila! It starts the upgrade.....Simple isn't it?

With the Firmware upgraded to the latest public release, it was time to crack on with the setup of this small player.

First up in the settings menu is the **Audio** setup.



There are five choices to choose from, but if you are playing mostly MKV formats then there are only really four as MKV doesn't properly support multichannel LPCM- this is mainly used for .M2TS formats (BD).

Next up is the **Video** Settings.



All the usual suspects are here, including 1080p/24, which is to be expected from a player with a Realtek processor.

What is absent from this line up are any VESA settings, this is not surprising as the player does not have any SD or VGA outputs.

Network Setup is next in the list; there are five options in here:

- Wired LAN Setup

From here you can either choose to utilise DHCP or set a static IP for your player.

- Wireless Setup

I tested four 11n USB wireless adapters with this unit, only 1 out of 4 worked - the Xtreamer 11n, which is no surprise as the Xtreamer is based on the Realtek processor as well.



- Samba Server

For some unknown reason I could not get the Samba server option to work, maybe because the player cannot have an internal HDD, something I will list as a bug with Hyundai (Ellion).

- FTP Server

Worked OK, but of little use unless you have an external HDD attached.

- BitTorrent

As with the FTP server, it worked OK, but was again of little use unless you have an external HDD attached.

Next up is the **System** Menu.



From here you can set the following:

- Menu Language

There are 10 languages to choose from.

- Text Encoding

You set the default Text Encoding language here.

- System Time

This at present can only be set manually, there is no NTP setting.

- HDD Format

This I believe is an oversight and should have been taken out of this model's firmware. Hyundai (Ellion) appear to have used the same firmware for Hyundai HMB-P500k which I will be reviewing next.

- Restore Default

Go figure.

And finally we have the '**Misc**' (Miscellaneous.) menu.

Six options can be set in here:

- Resume Play
- Slide Show Timing

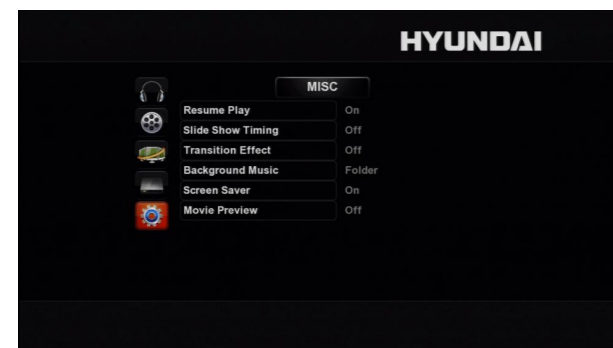
This can be set between 2 seconds up to 2 minutes; it really depends on how much you want to bore your guest with your holiday or family pics. ☺

- Transition Effects

There are eight different settings to choose from, the eighth one allowing you to shuffle through the previous seven effects to try and breathe some life into a boring slide show.

- Background Music

From here you can set what music you would like to accompany your slide show, it allows you to browse to a playlist or other music file.



- Screen Saver

It could save your faithful plasma panel from screen burn.

- Movie Preview

This option, when enabled, allows you to view a movie from within the menus before selecting it.

Setup and Menu Conclusion

The HD user interface works well and is certainly a change from the drab Realtek generic menus. Hyundai (Ellion) have done well to create a user friendly layout to the menus and their fluidity works well. A little bit more detail could have been offered when selecting a movie or picture, but this is minor and can be addressed in future firmware updates. Additionally, it would be nice if the firmware upgrade was a bit simpler, meaning if it was driven from within the menus rather than having to hold the reset button in whilst rebooting to affect the process.

Also Hyundai (Ellion) need to tailor the firmware to the player rather than having a one-size-fits-all. The Samba Server, FTP Server and BitTorrent options appear not to be relevant to this player unless you have a USB HDD plugged in. It is more geared towards the Hyundai HMB-P500k.

On the whole the menu system is good and is heading in the right direction for a Realtek based player.

Video Playback

The player is stated as capable of playing the following formats:

H.264, MKV, WMV9, MPEG2 HD(ts,tp), HD AVI, RMV, MPEG1/2 Video (mpg, ifo,vob,iso), what is missing from the line-up is M2TS.

I will be testing out the MKV, H264, vob and ISO formats. What is not mentioned here is whether it has the ability to playback BD ISO and BDMV.

Also, is the player capable of DTS downmixing?

Can it do external and internal subtitling?

These are just a few of the questions that we will run through during our tests.

Accessing your media is done through the **Browser** icon which when entered offers three options:

- NET

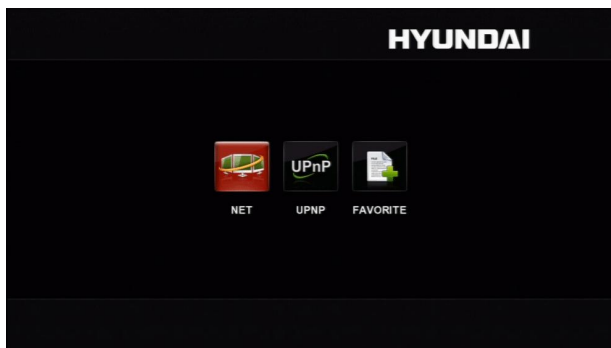
For browsing any Samba shares on your network

- UPnP

This finds any UPnP device setup on your network - like my Promise DS4600 NAS.

- Favorite

From here you can store your favourite media location.



First up I chose to browse my NAS device via UPnP, this was a breeze and the player found

three devices on my network which were UPnP compliant.

- MKV Playback

The movie I chose to demonstrate the player's capabilities of MKV playback is Gladiator. This movie has some good action scenes in it that will expose any weakness in the processor or firmware programming. It will also test out the definition of the DTS playback and sound field.

Upon starting the movie I instantly found an issue with the sound. For some unknown reason the sound was only being recorded as Stereo on the Onkyo receiver, I changed the settings from HDMI LPCM to HDMI RAW, but the issue still persisted. I then inserted a Digital Coaxial lead from the player into my receiver and changed the output to SDIF LPCM. Straight away I noticed a difference and the Onkyo displayed the correct DTS symbol including all speaker lights. It appears that the player or firmware has some issues with HDMI handshaking when it comes to audio output. One for the bug list, and hopefully a fix will be sorted sooner rather than later.

This also hinted to issues that would become more apparent further on in the review when testing BD ISO and BDMV playback.

After sorting out this initial issue it was back to the movie.

Playback appeared smooth and the colours appeared well balanced and natural. I did however need to make adjustments to the contrast and brightness levels as they appeared slightly greyish. This was the same on the projector as well as the panel (both of which have been ISF calibrated).

As the camera panned over the hordes waiting to attack I could see no stutter or any jaggies. The

scene panned well from one side of the battlefield to the other. Characters were detailed and sharp and the undertones of the murky atmosphere were well represented.



It was time to test an MKV with internal and external subtitles. I chose another classic for this trial. Kingdom of Heaven has three internal subtitles: English, Spanish and French. I also dumped a Dutch (well I believe it is Dutch.☺) SRT file into the movie directory, the player is stated to handle the following subtitle formats: smi,ssa, sub and srt. After play had commenced I tested out the subtitling option. I was able to choose the SRT file from within the popup menu window and the external subs then played fine. Initially the type size was quite big but this was easily remedied by altering the size from the popup window.



It's a thumb- up here then for Hyundai (Ellion).

- M2TS (BDMV)

Next up it was time to test if the player could play M2TS files. Initially the test is to ascertain if the player can play an M2TS files and then we will find out if it is compatible with BDMV functionality (BD chaptering, BD Audio etc.)

Well, the diva Beyoncé soon started strutting her booty across the stage in Full HD, but unfortunately this could not be matched with True-HD sound.



M2TS files ran fine, but unfortunately there were no BD options at all. I am sure that this is something that Ellion will work on and rectify in future firmware.

- BD ISO

Well with the lack of BD options in BDMV mode I didn't hold my breath on the player being able to support BD ISO. The player recognised the file format as an .ISO but could not play it and displayed an error 'Invalid File Format'.

...Another bug for Ellion to sort in a future firmware.

- TS Files

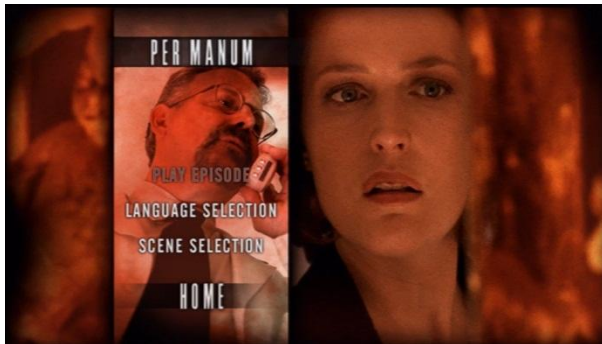
TS files played fine and smoothly. I tried various different movies and TV episodes one of them being my 1080i HD dump of Lord of the Rings.

The picture was detailed and the colour saturation was deep and rich without any need for adjustments.



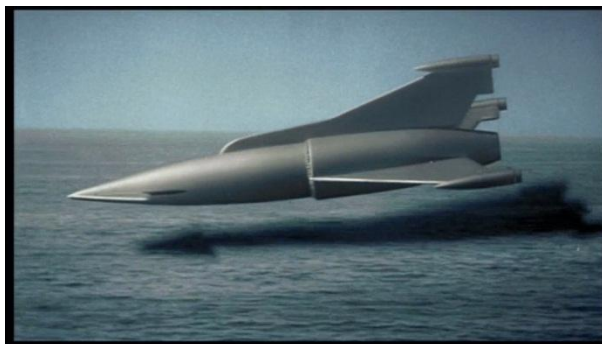
- DVD ISO/VOB

DVD ISO/VOB played well with full chaptering and trick play. The upscaling of the picture was also good and certainly improved on the SD DVD picture of X-Files Mythology.



- AVI, MPEG 1&2 and DivX.

All the formats worked well without any issues and as always my ancient AVI Sci-Fi classics looked almost space aged with the upscaling.



Name that film....answers on a postcard. ☺

Movie Playback Options

The fast forward and rewind work OK. but as with all players I have tested so far, once above 4X the picture skips forward rather than FFWD in a smooth action. RRW however was painfully slow and would stick making it unusable.

Zoom option within movies worked well and I was able to PAN across the image with only micro judders.



The GoTo function also worked OK and offered Title, Chapter, and Time based searching.



Movie Playback Conclusion

Movie playback was on a par with the rest of the Realtek group of players, which at present I find a bit disheartening. I don't believe that the Realtek SoC has offered anything above what the old Sigma processors were already doing. If anything there has been a step backwards while the

manufacturers and firmware programmers get to grips with how to utilise the Realtek processor. BD ISO and BDMV need to be addressed as they are seen more as a default requirement from a new generation player. I can see nothing to write home about with this player over the rest of the Realtek crop when it comes to movie playback.

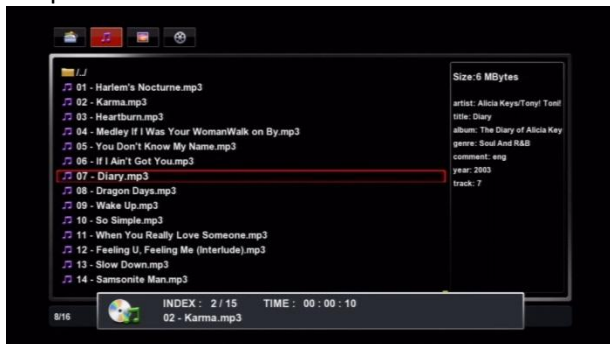
Audio Music Playback

It was time to tests out the players capability at playing all those golden oldies that you may have saved somewhere on your network.

The manufacturer states that the player is capable of supporting MP3/OGG/Flac/WMA and WAV. I tested the player with MP3/OGG and WMA files.

Firstly the player does not have any independent music player and tracks are selected by browsing to the area where you have your music files stored. Once in the music directory you simply select the track that you want to play and a very small window appears at the base to indicate that it is playing your chosen MP3 etc.

Simple isn't it?



A little bit too simple for my liking. There is a FFW and RRW via the remote control, but there is no visual indication of what is happening on screen!The minimum that you would expect to see is a slider bar. The Player does seem to support pre-created playlists like .m3u files but has no ability to create its own. When you do select a playlist it orders the tracks sequentially but does no play them. The tracks that I did try played OK,

OGG/WMA and WAV files were also supported and played though there was a lack of dynamics and clarity, which is surprising as audio in movie tracks sounded fine.

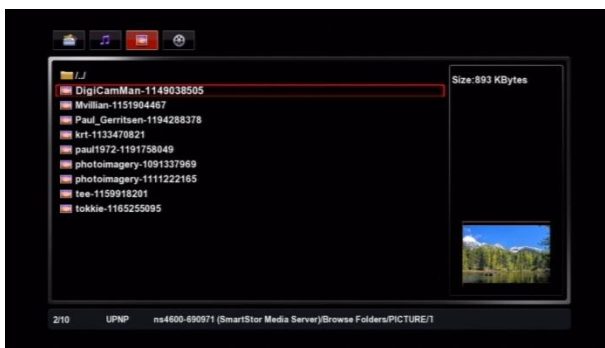
The player also appeared to have issues with any kind of album art, Elion have informed me that this is something that they are working on.

Music Playback Conclusion

A lot of work needs to be done in this area, at present I cannot see the benefit of having the feature at all as it lacks inspiration and is very simplistic to the point of offering nothing for the user.

Photo Playback

Photo playback is as uninspiring as music playback and only offers the user the very basics of displaying their treasured pictures. Selection of your pictures is carried out in the same manner as playing music files. There is no way of selecting files from multiple folders so the user would have to preselect their slide show and place them into a single directory. Once this is done, the slideshow timings need to be set in the setup menu covered earlier in the review. Also the user may wish to set a transitional effect that the player will use when changing the photo. Load times are very fast which is a feature of the Realtek processor.



Transition effects work well,the Zoom feature works at 2x, 4x, 8, and 16x. Whilst in zoom I was able to pan around the image with little lag.



Photo Playback Conclusion

Image load times are quick and the transition effects work well. What is unfortunate however is the lack of detail to this section of the player. Yes you can select to have background music playing when showing your pictures, but the lack lustre interface would soon wear you down and the inflexibility of the UI is one of its failings.

Miscellaneous

This is one issue that I found frustrating when using the player and I believe that this applies to all Realtek based players. When I browse My Promise NS4600 NAS via UNC over the network using hostnames,and I browse the default VIDEO folder of the NAS it prompts for authentication. When I enter the username and password for access to the NAS VIDEO folder I choose OK and SAVE to Shortcuts option. However it does not save the username and password that I have entered! So after watching a film and coming out of the NAS, and browsing another share on my windows 2003 file server on my network, and then going back into the NAS it then requests the username and password again as it defaults to the REALTEK_GUEST account.

