

MPC Reviews

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Reviewed by Hi-Jack, webmaster of www.mpcclub.com, this review is intended to be your first and best introduction for the TViX M-5100SH as most consumers will experience it, executed from a consumer’s perspective instead of being based only on technical details and specifications, which are easy to manipulate and always look good without in-depth review. Through our reviews we strive to provide valuable feedback to the brands making electronics equipment, in order to improve and tune the user’s experience with the latest state of the art players.

Notice: MPC is a consumer oriented Media Portal analyzing products and offering a first impression in their reviews so that you have an idea of what you are about to purchase. In light of our efforts to provide reviews quickly to leading-edge consumers, these reviews are not always able to be fully complete or 100% accurate and can become outdated over time.

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Ellion HMR-700A

Ever since digital recorders came to market, people have been interested in these devices. We can understand that as it brings out the “Quentin Tarantino’s” in people. Never the less, there are many flavors and methods in what can be called a recorder.

Most people I know looking out for the Ellion HMR-700A are customers of the famous KiSS series recorder DP-558 and VR-558. We can kill the idea that the Ellion is a competitor right away since it does not work with analog tuners unlike the previous mentioned. It’s a recorder that allows input from SCART to be recorded so especially suited for Satellite, DVBT and Cable TV.

Initializing Hard Drive

The setup is easier than expected. We knew up front we had to create 4 partitions and all use a different format but the wizard makes things straightforward enough to avoid problems. We do see limitations for actually using this setup as now one is forced to decide on the size of the Time shift, Recording, Media container and Copy partition from the start and there's no option to change further down the road unless starting over and removing all partitions. I'm for one, not sure why FAT32 has been chosen and the Copy Partition and media container are not one and the same. I also consider the lack of EXT2/Ext3 support a miss for MAC and Linux users.

About the HMR-700A player

Often when unpacking a new player we get excited and hungry for finding out how it performs and kind of hope we end up with a positive note in a couple days. With the Ellion HMR-700A this is the case even more as it has potential to shed a different light on how a media player can be used as recorder. It is using a new chip we have not tested before (Cirrus), it is cheap for a media player / recorder and it looks ok. That's already a few ingredients which are positive.

Hardware wise, we consider it low end, matching its price. Everything is plastic and this includes the internal room for the hard drive, the lock mechanism (breakable but screwless) and the hard drive rests on 2 spiral metallic springs. Combine that with every button being plastic on the player, a hardly attractive remote which equally feels cheap (and is cheap)

and no display (VFD) that at least shows you information on elapsed/remaining time, a clock or some functionality that helps you find your way thru music files and folders without TV turned on. That concludes a cheap build status for all components but does not mean yet the player is not capable of delivering a great performance.

Inputs and Outputs

At least, you won't be shy for ways to hook up the unit to TV's, beamers or whatever else one has in mind except when your ideas include S-Video, as there is no connection provided. In the front is the DV IN and USB2 connection while in the rear you find just about everything you need including HDMI, Component, Composite OUT/IN, LAN, USB2 (2) and USB host, Audio OUT/IN, Optical, Coaxial, Ext.IR and both the SCART IN/OUT. Too bad I must bitch about S-Video (for my review screenshot needs).



HMR-700A: The Remote

A lot of convenience comes from the way a unit interprets commands and how the player handles files and commands sent by the user, sitting lazy in his/her's couch but there is this one thing that is the most important, the most brilliant thing for everything... a remote control. Well, here's the one that comes with the Ellion HMR-700A.

It's plastic and "full of gum" as the buttons are all gummy materials. As long as looking at the top only, things look rather normal but once you pass by the numerical buttons, the strange organization of the remote buttons start to kick in.

For instance, look at how the video buttons are integrated for play, instant replay, CM Skip and skip right at the same height of the text you are reading now. → → → → → → → → → →

Some would say there's a learning curve to using the remote, and while that's true, there is a learning curve, I'd call this a jungle of buttons that could have been much better arranged to be convenient or simply, a mistake in layout.

You might not see it from the beginning, but the buttons in this area are all for playback and recording. Instant replay would jump back 10 seconds while CM skip jumps ahead 30 seconds (where is the logic in that?), recording and selecting sources are here as well (source button shifts between SCART and S-Video in AV mode or if from Setup selected to record from TV, it will shift between SCART, S-Video and TV. Not complicated yet, is it?)

The lower section is filled with the arrow buttons and the usual options for selecting audio and subtitles. Further you can find the buttons used for actions during recording (Time Shift), editing (Edit) and selecting the TV System. This is actually where you can select PAL and NTSC and ... resolutions. We found it. The TV Button will shift in the following cycle: NTSS → PAL → NTSC progr. Scan 408p → PAL progr. Scan 576p → 720p → 1080i → NTSC.

So this would mean you can hook up Component and HDMI and then change TV System into the proper resolution. A little different than usual but hey, it's here...

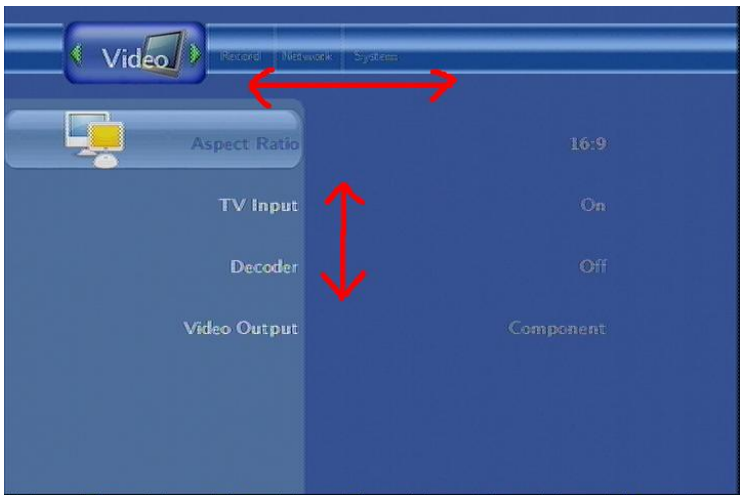


HMR-700A Video Setup

Once inserted a hard drive and completing the initial setup, the HMR-700A is connected to our TV and the real fun begins. From the main page, you can directly start using the player for browsing, see the list of recordings made, copying files, show you digital files on your cam (A/V in) or complete the custom setup which is what I’m going to do right now.



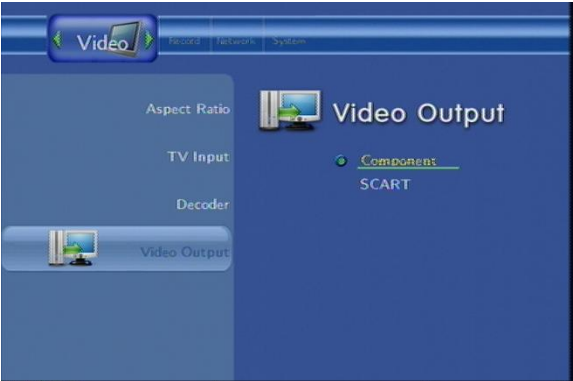
The setup menu offers 4 sections to complete being Video, Record, Network and System. Navigating these menus is done by the arrow keys and enter button. Pressing up and down will select between list on the left and left and right presses will result in the menu’s being navigated on top.



In video setup we can already say there are not enough options to select from. Mainly we miss abilities to select output and resolutions for HDMI and Component which is strange to say the least, as if everything outputs at the same time.

Aspect ratio can be set to widescreen, Pan Scan and Letter Box. TV Input is either on/off and if turned on, decoder can be set to on/off as well. Last is video output which offers selection for Component and SCART only. I’m not sure what to think of that yet, so we might find out things later I’m missing right now. Maybe I should RTFM but I always try to

avoid that to give players a change getting maximum score on convenience.



At least for video output we would have expected more options like NTSC, PAL and as mentioned before the

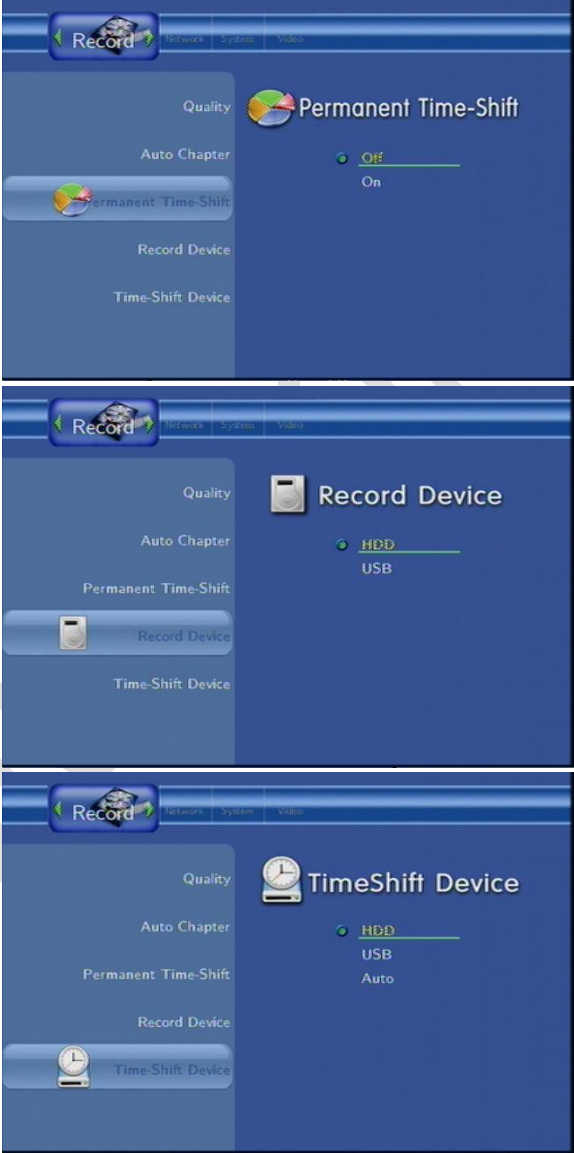
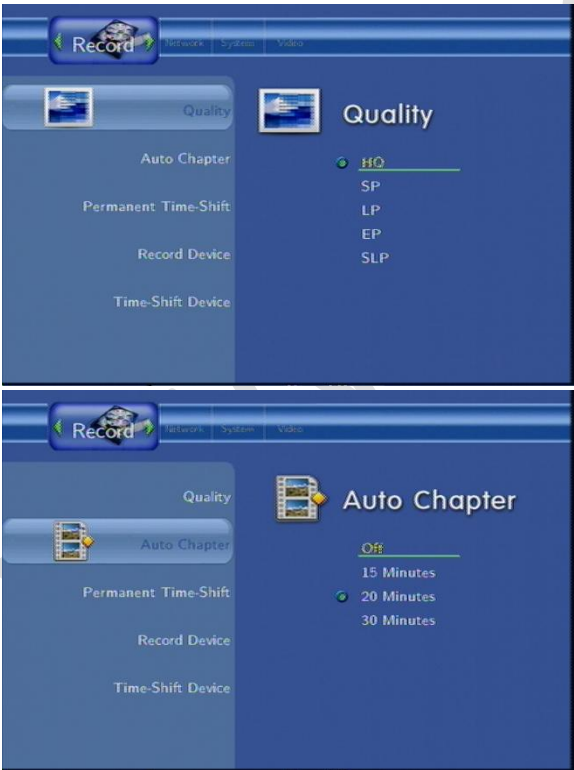
resolutions up to 1080i and different outputs like HDMI. Second, I do miss sound options as well selecting PCM or Digital, Stereo etc... This is about the only section it could be in as Record, Network and System don't sound like having these. Let's find out.

HMR-700A Record Setup

Recording setup is better offering multiple sections you can tune to your needs. We suspect Ellion having concentrated on recording more than on the media player capacity, at least as far as setup is concerned.

Options to begin with are the Quality settings with HQ, SP, LP, EP and SLP. At least more info could have been offered in the setup to offer the customer an idea how many MB a /minute would be consumed by these profiles for recording.

Next option is Auto Chapter which during your recordings creates chapters. You can select to have one each 15 minutes, 20 or 30 minutes. You can further select continuous time shift to be on or off, select to record on the internal HDD or external USB and even select your Time shift storage space between HDD / USB or Automatic.



HMR-700A Network Setup



Not much to look for here beside the choice between DHCP and Fixed IP settings. Selecting fixed IP settings allows me to set all network addresses manually.



Well, after these three parts (where I'm wondering about the missing Video options) we pretty much had everything concerning the use of the player. One item remains to be uncovered, the system setup. Would we find anything there we missed so far?

HMR-700A System Setup

Well, surprise. We would not have expected many languages to be supported but the Ellion supports quite a few amongst the readable ones are English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French and German. Well done except some are missing for areas where players are popular like Poland for example.



Time settings are limited. Even with network connection there is no sync for time with atomic clocks or NTP servers online so manual is the only method available.

HDD Format speaks for itself, you can cancel it or confirm once pressed and finally there's an option for restoring defaults from factory. That concludes the setup. What do you think?

Here's what I think.

Conclusion Player and Setup

Setup is too limited without options to select resolutions for Component and HDMI from the setup interface. It's faster and easier than select it from the remote and purpose to have a default on startup and ability to change for a moment much easier. Same counts for audio settings. These should be set from setup menus. What else is missing? Slideshow timer or other options concerning images, parental control,

password protected directory, FTP and so on... The cheaper price comes with its limitations.

Now there's one thing that bugs me about the Ellion that I can't overcome. If I finished setting up the hard drive and after a month decides my recording partition is too small and my media partition is too big, I'm in trouble as reformatting will cause all data lost and requires a backup first. You can't live with that without a NAS server on the network. There is no resizing available and in a system using 4 partitions, I would expect that.

Info that could be useful during selection of quality for recordings can be found in the manual but nowhere on the player itself though it is useful information. In general I would say the setup is easy but incomplete, limited, and I do have some question marks placed for convenience as far as formatting and reformatting goes in the future.

We also missed the DIVX key for Video on Demand as shown in the manual which should be under the video setup section. I suppose it's listed but not added yet. On the other hand, players had been having this for years now and still not DivX content is available to profit from it so it's not an issue at all.

We hope to find some audio settings along the way for which we can conclude setup is a little awkward and simple, yet most expected features are available after all, be it under different methods than we are used too and that's not always bad.



HMR-700A Video playback

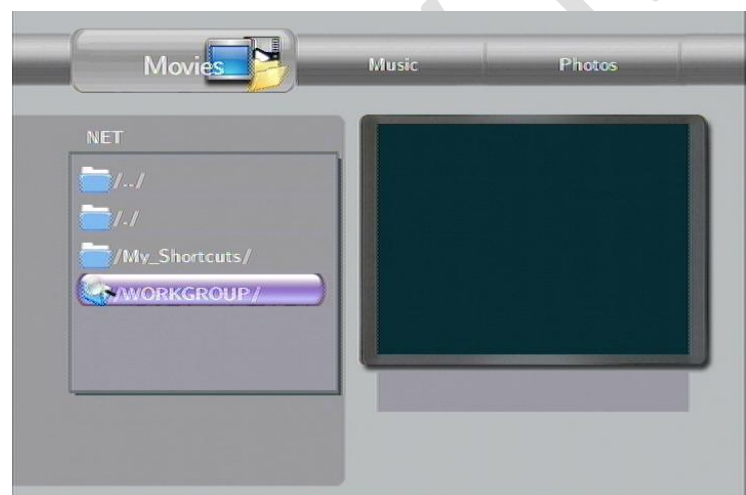
From Network resources

The Ellion HMR-700A supports SMB so you can access network shares to get content from. The way this works is by detection of shares so no limitations of devices applies. I do have some remarks though as the way it is implemented is really cool but also somewhat slow and limiting. I'll show my points using a folder containing a complete series in DivX files.

We start from the home page and select "browser" to browse available sources including internal HD, USB and Network resources.



So far I'm down with the Ellion HMR-700A until I select network where I can clearly see title length is going to be very limited. From here I can select my workgroup if I'd like to play from the NAS or PC.



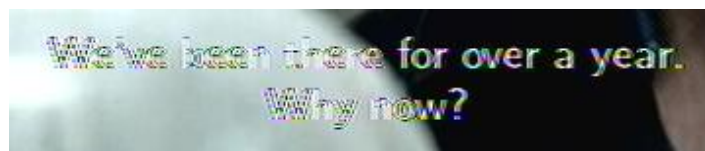
So I browse further down and as long as I'm browsing folders, the list is shown in the left panel. Once I reach the files, the

list disappears and I get a load of icons presenting the content of the folder, in this case, video episodes.



We are shown a preview on the right which can be filed under "cool" but recognizing titles is another thing. Notice under the video window that the title length is better but there's another thing that bugs me with this setup. You have to skip through the list of videos shown by icons only to reach for example episode 8. I need to be pressing fast to make it not load another preview of a file I don't want to see. The slightest pause between selections will cause a preview to load and delays a few seconds. Well, at least you have previews available and this is the first having it. Well done!

Subtitles are supported and outlined but nevertheless making them unreadable on lighter scenes. Somehow they become dotted with black points and smear. I also don't see any options to sync ahead or backward nor to shift subtitles up/down/left/right.



You do have zoom options (1X to 8X) but none progressive zoom. Zoom options are limited to magnification and further, there's no option to "Fit Screen" and such.



Pause the movie and press pause repeatedly offers frame by frame which is cool. Even better is the SLOW function allowing you to slow down playback from $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{16}^{\text{th}}$ of the normal playback speed and this and frame by frame works even on none DVD files like DivX and XViD. Too bad FF/RW is skipping ahead and not fluent as that would complete the picture completely. Well, maybe progressive zoom too then. You can fast forward or rewind from 1.5X up to 32X.

GoTo function is available as well off course but in the case of Ellion HMR-700A it's different. You can select chapters, Titles and Time as your GoTo destination. (see image). After selecting GoTo the message box does not disappear so I have to use the goTo button once more to remove the pop-up window.

A repeat function allows to continuously play the same video file(s) and then there's one more option to be explored, A to B function, which does not work on DivX files. If there's a few things to remember about the options available on the HMR-700A than it would be "preview of videos", "good functions like STEP, SLOW and a few others as pros. Cons would be subtitles quality and missing out on progressive zoom, no

fluent FF/RW and having a full screen option. Albeit quite some functionality.

HMR-700A playing DVD Backups

Now, Video backups are supported but in the same way as normal files. Loading from VIDEO_TS folder will show equally icons to be selected from where it should detect video files inside and simply start playback. The preview is however again a plus.



I can't seem to find any button on the remote that takes me to the main menu of the DVD playing though as "Guide" returns to the main menu of the player (the player keeps track of where you where browsing and returns there so you don't have to browse down the whole path again). Using the GoTo functions to browse chapters would block the player a few times so it's not really stable and requires some update to avoid the inconvenience.

Also ISO files are supported. To see the ISO files you have to select the directory folder so they show below as icons. You can't browse to them from the list like VIDEO_TS.



Again, its fun to have the previews but selection is made harder and so is reading titles as it only shows the complete title when selected and that causes the preview to start.

Selection of Audio and Subtitles work correctly as do the options we discussed before like Step, Frame by Frame and Slow playback. Unlike the DiVX section, also A-B is supported here which pretty much offers decent DVD playback.

Zoom is again magnification style and not progressive. I also miss the option to select original size and stretch options to full screen but even without these, one should be pretty satisfied finding so many good features as they are often missing.

Maybe one thing to mention on navigating is the use of the back button. Beside that the options are to be used from the browser panel (left) showing /../ to go up one directory or ././ reloading the current directory.

We also notice, updating the network list requires you to start from the main menu as it does not refresh by just reloading deeper down the path. I assume the list of sources is created when the “browser” is selected.

If anything not to be liked, it probably will be the browsing in general offering just below the abilities you would expect to have like reading titles while browsing and maybe see more than 6 items in a list which seems rather big on HD TV’s.

HMR-700A and Pictures

Now to see the images, one must first select “photos” from the top bar which I can do using the left/right arrow buttons. After that, I can select the folder which contains my images



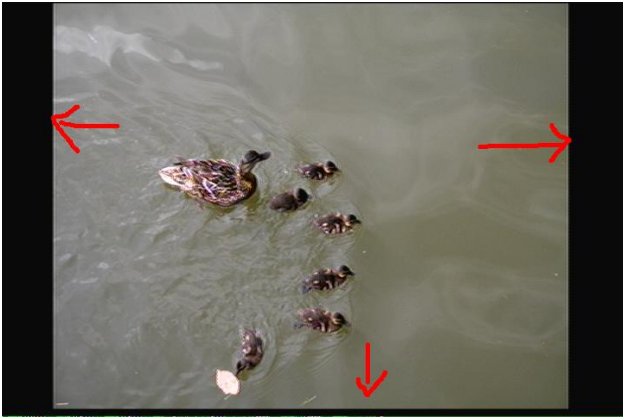
Preview yes, but again the icon browsing below. I would have liked a different background images and just fill the screen with thumbnails 4 by 4 but I guess memory is insufficient for that wish.

Browsing images, I must first select the “Photos” option by using the left/right arrow buttons and browsing files can be done after selecting the folder with again pretty much the same revelations as before with preview and selecting icons from the lower region.



Again, I’m surprised by finding the functionality inside the HMR-700A. Rotations can be executed with the arrow keys; ZOOM levels go from 2X to 8X and slideshow abilities with smooth transition. Only thing missing (or I could not find) is the option to set the slideshow timer.

As with the picture section, I miss the option to stretch full screen, fill the TV as even though it might break the aspect ratio of the pictures, the black borders in the side are just as annoying. Further, the icons are unnumbered as well so you have no idea where you are at when selecting files unless you let the preview load and show the title...



After all, considering it supports rotation, smooth transition and zoom levels, I'm ok with it. Add slideshow timer though (if not there yet) and maybe some extra transition effects.

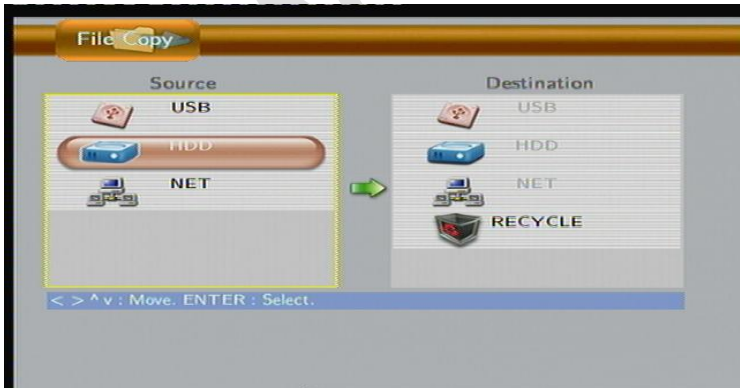
HMR-700A and Music

Pretty much the same counts for music where interface is concerned except for the preview window are now used to display info on the music file. I don't see a method for creating play lists on the fly within the interface and which formats are supported will be checked later on. I'm not sure navigating with music is the easiest way possible by using icons in this way as again, one can see the title only by selecting the file from the preview / info pane.

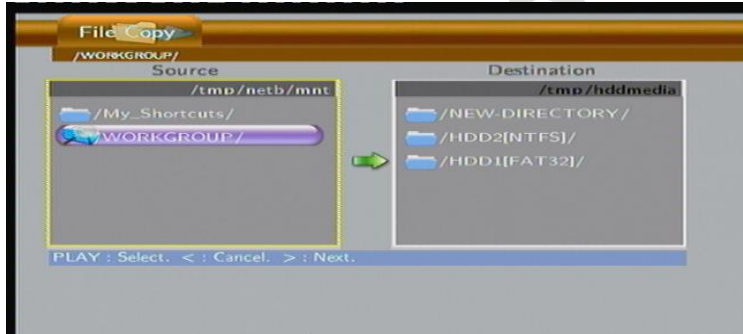


HMR-700A: Copy, record and edit!

One of the features that I can really appreciate is the copy functions the unit has to offer. You can copy data from USB, Network or internal HDD to USB, HDD, and network resources. There's even a recycle bin available but why is unknown. There is no delete function.



The interface not always fits the screen size well. There's always some black bars to be noticed somewhere except on the main interface. I decide to copy some files from my NAS server to the internal HDD. You are presented with the selection of source and destination.



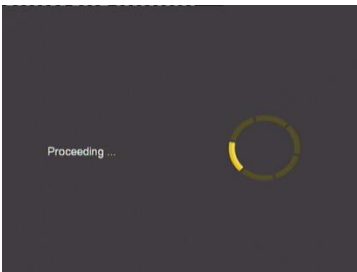
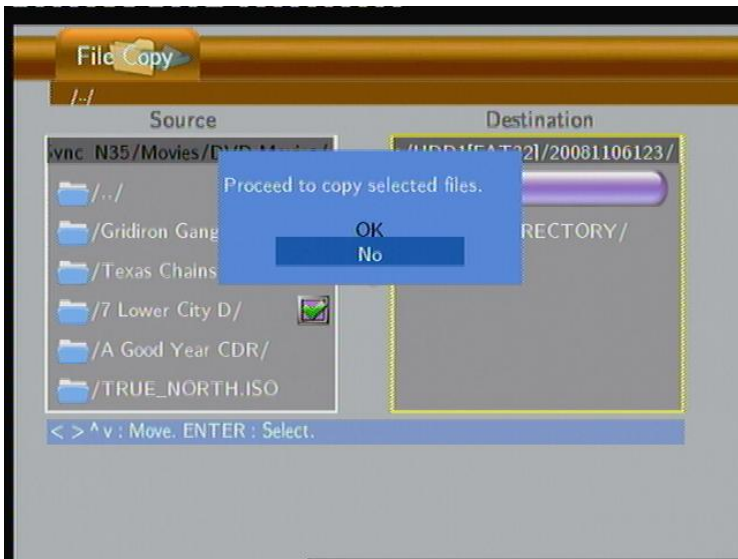
I must be careful as pressing "return" will cause the whole copy process selection to start over where I would expect it to return to the previous step. Marking files to copy is done by pressing "play".



If I want to create a new folder, an OSD keyboard helps to name the folder. Default is the current date. You can leave it or change it to any name you like. In the NTFS partition, I thus

decided to create a folder but it's not showing up so I'm afraid the NTFS is read only and I have to revert to FAT32 which for the obvious reasons is not convenient for use with media files. Second, I would expect the player to give me a warning it can't create the folder (due to read only) as customers will think there's something wrong.

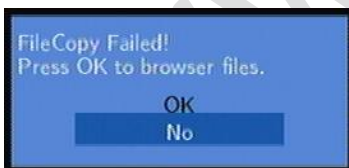
In FAT32, there is no issue creating the folder. It shows up immediately after creation and can then be selected as destination. You have to enter the folder and then press "Right Arrow key" (next) to select and start the copy process.



Pressing OK will start the copy now. During copy mode you can't use the player. A screen is shown during the copy of the files but no info about status and pending time is shown. Maybe that's too

much for a standalone player, but the least that could be done here is showing the file it currently copying or a little progress bar... This way, considering the slow performance of network players (caused by the chips used) can take long without knowing where you are and cancelling is not available...

The least we can say again is that feature wise thing are more than just ok, convenience, due to remote and implementation steps are only half the level they should be and the speed is kind of a limiting factor as well where I and most with me, would prefer copying over USB2 for the speed.



The copy will fail to FAT32 partition if using files exceeding 4GB. We tried to measure the speed of network file transfer and

needed a total or 18 minutes to get the job done, resulting in failure (4GB+). That's an average of only 3.5 to 4MBps.

About recording with HMR-700A

So we expect the Ellion to be bought mainly for recording options and we can offer you some more screenshots and text that explains the recording process and editing functions.



Recording starts from the main AV in menu. From here, one can choose the source where to record from using the remote source button. Once done, you can press the record button. I did not see functions as scheduling available so possibly it's not available. I can images it's necessary to have it because it would offer the ability to record something while you are out. Is this not the whole purpose of a recorder in any way?

So after manual recording you can press the record button again to expand the time it needs to record starting from 30 minutes, 60, 90, 120, 180 and 240. You can also select "off" where the recording will keep running until stop is pressed.



During recordings you can pause and press again to continue recording though you might just as easily rework the recording afterwards and keep it running. You can record on the internal HDD and also on the external HDD (USB, untested)).

Time-Shift seems to work pretty well also where you can pause during watching TV over the HMr-700A. Recording from TV and using Time-Shift at the same time is not possible.

The recording keeps going and so will whatever you are watching not be paused while you grab a bag of chips.

The interface for editing is all green and offers the list of recordings and the info attached to the recording. From here you can edit, move, and delete all recordings as you wish.



The options available for editing are all under “Title Edit”. I would have expected these under tools but there I can only find “return” and “erase” unlike under Title Edit, we find all the nasty tools at our aid to cut, erase parts, split and merge.



Quality of the recordings is good. You can see a little quality los against the original source being recorded but that’s

usually the case. Again, overall, for a recorder it’s surprisingly again offering features that we not expected (in the edit tools section) and misses some we would have expected, like a scheduler.

HMR-700A short about File support

What files can or cannot be used. For one, mkv and H.264 is not supported as mentioned in the “remarks” section of the Ellion HMR-700A. The remarks section means that it can be trans-coded to a compatible format while playing on the Ellion HMR-700A with the software (untested).

Images supported are limited to JPG and BMP. No GIF support or PNG and PCX formats are available but most used is JPG anyway.

In Music files it does list MP3, MP4 (claims invalid file probably because it sees this one as video instead of music), WMA (plays fine, no WMA pro supported as again says invalid file), OGG (only 2.0 supported). One notice here is that you can browse your list of files while playback is initiated limited to the current folder!

In video support the Ellion does not break any records but in general it did deliver satisfactory results. Considering the navigation pain, we not tested the 1100 tests we usually conduct but limited ourselves to the general files which played fine including DivX, Xvid, HD TS and TP files and MPEG-2.

Main issue in video section is concerning subtitle quality. For the rest, the Ellion HMr-700A performs just as one can expect for a general media player in this price range. More discussions and feedback on performance can be found on the forums when the player start hitting people’s home and that counts for Video recording as well. Quality is good, functions are ok but as with everything, the whole browsing and copy experience is not helpful at all. It’s kind of the thing that bugs me most with the unit.

It’s more than the “OK player” I expected to get. It’s good! It will need some updates though as some limitations because the overall convenience to drop, subtitles for instance.

Conclusion



The least we can say that stashing so many things in a player of such low cost price is worth an award. It's not the best or most versatile quality player in any way, but it does offer the best value for that money in the segment of media players offering

recording abilities and therefore earns the recognition of being good Value 4 Money and even Best Buy depending on your recording and playback needs.

Writing conclusions is a difficult task after reviewing any product as one is challenged to find a balance between the pros and cons. Manufacturers send you their products for review and introduction so kind of put their possible success into the hands of critics that see so many players that any new player should at least be competitive in versatility and be equally good as the top 5 players out there. Luckily for the Ellion it does have something to show for that makes us forget the overall cheap materials and feel the unit delivers.

It is performing quite well in Video, Music and Picture section where mainly the navigation is causing things to be a bit harder than they should be. Recording, although untested deeply, works well enough to offer pleasure to the ones needing that functionality. The downside again is however that no HD support is available in recording or playback (H.264, VC-1). That can only be achieved by using transcoding software available from their web site.

There's a good balance in features, options and pricing overall which makes the Ellion HMR-700A worth its money but it neither a sophisticated video player nor a sophisticated recorder. Some limitations apply everywhere making the HMR-700A maybe not the right choice for the advanced users searching for convenience, but for standard use without getting scared of some testing and finding your way around, the player does deliver, be it with its own quirks here and there.

This player is reasonable fun with some funny, rough and awkward edges. The best description I can make on the Ellion HMR-700A is that it does deliver its price value not only for recording but also playback.

Pros

- SMB Auto Detect
- Preview Videos
- Trick options (Frame, Step)
- Basic recording (external sources)
- Basic editing functions
- General file options
- Copy Functions
- DVD (ISO/video_TS) playback
- Price Tag

Cons

- Subtitle Quality
- Hard Drive partitioning
- Re-Format / Resize options
- Music browse limitations
- Read Only NTFS
- DivX VOD missing
- DVD ISO handling
- Audio options missing
- File Navigation general
- Interface quirks