



“播乐” (Bollo NMP-SE) 高清播放机

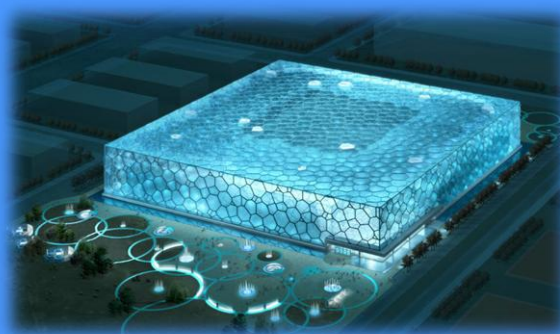
Horizon Bollo NMP-SE Full HD 1080p Media Player

Advocate86

It seems like the season for oddly shaped and curiously designed media players. I'd just finished reviewing one oddly shaped player, when along comes this little number, (which raised an eyebrow of curiosity as to exactly what the designers had in mind when they conceived the shroud of this player.)

A quick bit of research soon revealed that the player was modelled after the now famous Natatorium, or "Water Cube", from the Beijing Olympics. The manufacturer wished to honour the memory of the event and rightly they should, for the Chinese Olympics was a sight to be seen and was arguably the most spectacular show on Earth. So this little player as you can imagine has a lot to live up to...

Is it worth the bestowed honour? We put it to the test and discover if this player has anything new to offer.



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Introduction:

The History:

Remember to take notes as a short history test will be given at the end.

HD-Horizon was established in November 2008 compiled out of the design team from HD Media, which was part of Jasmine Audio Co, hence the Jasmine link. Jasmine Audio is a manufacturer of HiFi products and was established in 2001. The CEO, Michael Yu, had been following the trends of the HD media player market and participated in several product designs like the LinHD200i, Tomacro and the EG-M31A from Egreat. When Sigma announced the SMP8635 processor, Michael felt that the HD media player technology had come of age and decided to found HD-Horizon. Unlike his friends in the industry he was against making cheap, low quality products and wanted to make high quality players based on the HiFi philosophy he had learnt from Jasmine.

During 2008 Michael and other investors founded and began running HD-Horizon, announcing in early 2009 their first media player – Bollo NMP-SE. He still intends to run Jasmine audio, but through HD-Horizon has created a separation between the HiFi and AV media.

And now the test.....

Just kidding.

The Player:

The Bollo NMP-SE media player is packaged in a two tone black and yellow carton which has the player in full colour displayed in the centre. Across the back of the carton is another full colour display with a plethora of logos depicting the players capabilities spread across the length. Now don't get me wrong, I'm all for "the more the better", but in certain cases the opposite is true as well. After taking in the sights of the packaging the other thing you notice is the weight of the carton. Upon opening the carton all is explained...



In The Box:

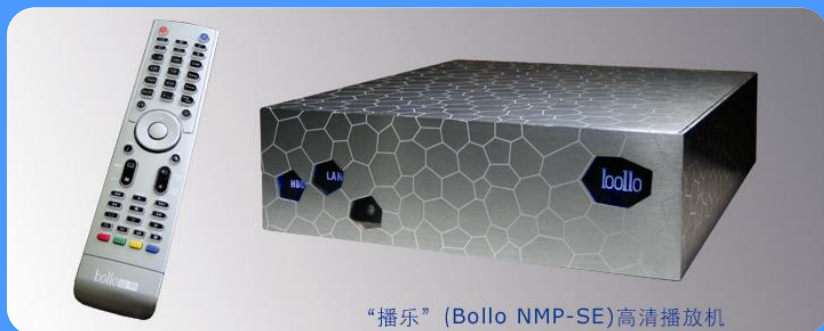
The contents of the box are as follows:

- Remote Control x 1PCS
- Power adapter 12V/4A x 1PCS
- AC cable X 1
- CD-R X 1
- USB2.0 Cable x 1PCS
- HDMI Cable x 1PCS

The content of the box is sparse, but there are the usual offerings that you get with most media players these days.

The Bollo NMP-SE Unit:

The first thing you notice when removing the player from its box is the intricate, and what I can only describe as honeycombed, pattern that appears to be silk screened across the entire surface of the quality brushed aluminum housing. It has a reptilian feel to it and would certainly raise the curiosity level of any guests visiting your home. As stated earlier HD-Horizon has based the design of the casing on the Beijing Natatorium and, as can be seen from the photo on the first page, it resembles the "Water Cube" very well.



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More importantly the next noticeable aspect of the player is the sheer weight of the unit. It feels substantial and well built. The main body of the player is cast from one piece of 4mm aluminum which does away with those unsightly side screws. The top of the player is seated flush within the cast sides and only a slither of a gap can be seen which suggests a precise and good engineering process. The base has four rubber feet which cushion the unit and prevent the old Chippendale from getting scratched! Also on the underneath is where the internal HDD is mounted and exposed to the outside world, which is quite clever as it allows heat generated by the HDD to dissipate allowing the player to be fanless. The HDD is retained by a thin metal plate and a single thumbscrew, removing the HDD (which is effortless), exposes two metal pins which sit in the drives bottom

screw holes. These help position the drive within its home and stop it from moving about.



The unit's dimensions are 200 (L) x 200 (W) x 60mm (H), it weighs 3KG.

The player is driven by a Sigma 8635LF processor, so is capable of full HD1080p playback. DTS-HD and TrueHD audio is supported via HDMI 1.3a.

Exposing the internals, Horizon has used the top cover as a heatsink and heat is transferred from the processor via a conductive rubber cushion. I have run the player for hours and experienced no uncomfortable temperature from the top of the unit.

The Front Panel:

The front has no buttons, no ports, no slots, in fact it hasn't much of anything besides printed honeycomb shapes and four honeycomb windows cut out of the aluminium fascia. Three windows on the left-hand side are for HDD activity, LAN activity and the final one



is the IR window.

On the right-hand side is the largest of the four windows and displays the player's logo, "Bollo".



All windows light up a dull blue when the player is switched on

The Rear Panel:

The rear of the player is where everything is hidden and Horizon has certainly not skimped on I/O at all, well done to them in this area. It really feels like this is a company that has listened to end users' concerns and wish lists trying as far as possible to fulfil our every need.

Just look at that lot!!



eSata (slave) eSata (host), digital coaxial, digital optical, component video, composite video, shall I go on? HDMI, VGA, USB Slave, 2 X USB Hosts, 10/100 Ethernet, and last but not least, the all important On/Off switch. I can't think of another single I/O that I would

need. Maybe...SVHS but, if you are still using this then you deserve to be shot.

Well blewdy done Horizon and thank you for reviving the term 'VERSATILITY'. The only negative side of having all those lovely I/Os is that your leads need to be on a slimming diet as space is at a premium, and fitting multiple leads in at once can be hard work. For instance having the HDMI cable inserted whilst utilising the neighbouring USB slave port can prove troublesome if the end has excess plastic moulded around its connector.

Setup and Play

The setup of the player was extremely straight forward. I connected the device to my usual test environment with a slight change; instead of using a separate Optical lead for the audio I decided to feed everything through the HDMI lead from the player into the HDMI port of my Onkyo 875 receiver. This then feeds my Pioneer 508D plasma via the Pioneer PDA-V100HD switch allowing me to test the HD audio side of things as well, something that is not possible using the optical jack which is only capable of sending compressed 5.1 Dolby Digital/DTS.

The network was fed via my gigabit LAN connected to a Windows 2003 file server and other NAS devices.

Switching on, firstly by the On/Off switch at the rear and then the standby button on the Backlit'.....yes

Backlit remote (more on that later), causes 3 of the 4 honeycomb windows to light up in blue. The LAN and HDD lights do flicker which unfortunately cannot be turned off via the firmware and can be annoying when watching a movie in total darkness.

After the initial HD-Horizon/Bollo boot screen, you are then taken to the

business as usual Syabas environment which is much the same as all other NMT players. I am not much of a fan of the Syabas environment as I believe it is just a quick and easy way for the manufacturer to bring the player to market without developing their own firmware. Speaking with the CEO Michael and other techies at HD-Horizon camp, they are developing their own firmware, but unfortunately it is reserved for their new upcoming player the Bollo NMP-MOB. They have stated that they are at "Beta 2 phase" of the firmware. They promise that their own firmware will be more responsive when a remote command is issued, the boot up process will be quicker, and their menu system will have a shorter path than that delivered by Syabas. For instance they will have an icon list when video browsing and not just text. They are waiting on licensing approvals for DTS etc, so it's a case of watch this space.

Movie Playback

Movie playback was smooth at all resolutions, but as mentioned earlier I don't plan to spend too much time on the software side of the player as it uses the much previously covered NMT Syabas firmware. (To read up more on Syabas NMT firmware check out the NMT clash file:

<http://www.mpcclub.com/modules/Reviews/reviews/NMT-CLASH.pdf>

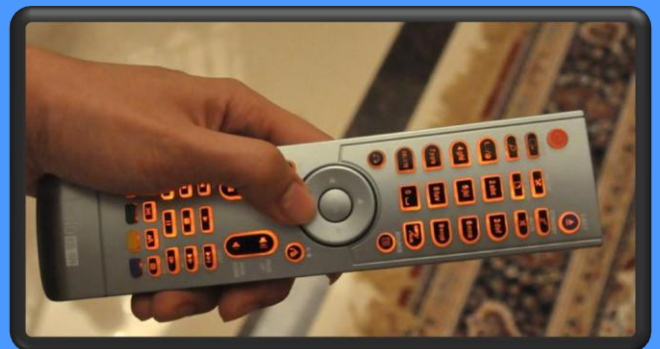
I did check out a few movies with the player running high bitrate full 1080p MKV's and .m2ts files, it handled all of them well with no lag or stutter. I ran the player for 10 hours to ascertain if heat would be an issue with playback, but it played fine without any hiccups.

The playback of the Quantum of Solace blu-ray dump to disk in its original format was impressive; it played just like the original disc. The colours were true and rich without any noticeable bleed,

contrast was good especially in the opening sequence to this movie where it shifts from dark to light, and picture detail was impressive. I could see no jagged edges or blocking, the audio playback was defined and clean.

The Remote:

The remote was certainly a big surprise for me. Once again it seems that HD-Horizon is a company that has been listening to consumers' wishes. This is the first media player I have reviewed that comes with a backlit remote control! This is something about which I have muted time and again in my reviews as being an integral feature for the remote that needs to be grasped by the manufacturers. It enables ease of use in a Home Cinema when the lights are off and all is dark, what more can be said?



The Bollo remote is similar in appearance to other NMT remotes and has a familiar line up of buttons. It is functional and response to button presses is good, but has that slight delay which all Syabas firmware based NMT's suffer from.

The remote has an orange back light and remains on for approximately 5 seconds after a button has been pressed, in a dark room each button can be seen well and all icons on the buttons are easily distinguished.

The remote is of plastic construction with a bluish grey front, which gives it a feel of being metallic.

A negative point on the remote is the button labelling. Unfortunately, it is printed in white making it hard to see the labelling at certain angles. It would have been better to have used black type on this bluish grey surface.



The picture above shows the backlight on the remote and the diagram left illustrates the layout of the remote and positioning of the various buttons.

The remote feels good in the hand, but is a touch on the long side which makes the upper most keys hard to reach even with my large hands.

On the whole the remote is a welcome change; certainly it's a move in the right direction and a pointer for other manufacturers. Well done HD-Horizon for giving us one of the items on our wish list.

Conclusion

HD-Horizon has entered the world of HD Media players with all guns blazing. They have built a solid, professional player that has been well designed and executed. The Bollo's skin may not be to everyone's taste, and initially I was

quite apprehensive about it myself, but it grows on you and after a while it's quite pleasing. Still there are lessons to be learnt for HD-Horizon, though these are only minor. For instance, the two flickering lights (LAN, HDD) are quite distracting in a dark room, the use of the Syabas firmware restricts the player and places it in the NMT class of players for functionality (this is something that HD-Horizon are aware of). These are points that I am sure HD-Horizon can overcome.

I am not a fan of the NMT FW platform from Syabas. I believe that the NMT firmware is dated, sluggish, buggy and has never worked well from day one.

Previously I have found the YouTube application to be useless and often crashes causing a reboot of the player. I find the SHOUTcast and Internet radio applets also suffer from the same sluggish behaviour making them unbearable to use at times.

For a good example of how to achieve the same type of apps but without the sluggishness and bugs that the Syabas FW suffers from, just take a look at the CFULLHDMAi player, all the internet applications on this player, YouTube, SHOUTcast, Internet radio etc flow and were a pleasure to use. Then again it is based on their own firmware.

I think the NMT Syabas firmware is well overrated and Yes it is regularly updated but do the updates actually fix any of the main problems that it suffers from?

I believe that manufacturers need to move away from using a unified platform like Syabas as it causes complacency and does not allow for development over what is already offered on so many other NMT players.

Well that's my rant over with, and my soap box kicked aside, now on with the positives of the player. ☺

The Bollo NMP-SE however has so many positive points, the layout of the internal components and the use of the body as a large heatsink, the Hard Drive compartment, the versatility of the rear panel and the amount of I/O ports that are on offer, the all important On/Off switch, the 4mm all aluminium body which has been engineered well, are to list but a few; and not forgetting my wish list stocking filler - a backlit remote. The Bollo NMP-SE is a good player and I place it at the top of the NMT class of players for its quality, value and hardware versatility.

But, and there's always a but hiding somewhere, it could have been an even greater media player if they had only held back and developed their own firmware before releasing it. It would have been a player to slap so many of the current manufacturers on their complacent cheeks and shouted, "This is how you are supposed to do it!" Still, as it is, the Bollo NMP-SE is a good player and an example of how and what to offer to the end consumer. If you are in the market of a Full 1080p HD media player and are looking at the PCH or other NMT then I would recommend this player over those units, yes it is more expensive, but it's worth the extra.

Player pricing is a bit sketchy at the moment as it is a new product, but you can expect to pay in the region of: USD399.

Hi-Jack's Comments

While there are already so many NMT's out there, I'm not convinced we need another NMT player on the market being so close to the next generation coming up but, as far as efforts go from HD-Horizon, we are pleased with the outcome of the player.

Despite the good outcome of this review, it is "yet another NMT" which is close to the ones we already have which might

lead to resellers not bringing the Bollo to European stores as is the case with several other NMT's already. That might limit the chance for HD-Horizon to grow in Europe and take a piece of the pie in NMT world.

As far as NMT firmware being placed on the cons list (freedom of writing), I'm not sure it should be as the firmware is the best supported at this time and just "thinking" own firmware would do better does not justify placing the NMT firmware on this list.

Off course there are cons to the NMT firmware like sluggish menus, complexity in NMT apps, it is still the most featured firmware out there.

Player Specifications

Hardware Specifications:

- CPU:SIGMA DESIGNS SMP8635
- MIPS 300MHz
- DDR-1 DRAM support:64-bit 256MB
- External NOR Flash Support:16-bit 256MB
- Audio DSPs:300MHz

Media Containers:

Video [extension(s)] :

- ASF/WMV [.asf, .wmv]
- MOV/MP4 [.mov, .mp4]
- MPEG2PS [.ps]
- MPEG2TS [.ts]
- AVI [.avi, divx]
- MPG [.mpg, .mpe, .mpeg, .m2v, .vob, .vro]
- Matroska (.mkv)
- H.264 MP/HP @L4.1
- VC-1/WMV9 MP@HL, AP@L3
- MPEG-4 ASP @L5 1
- MPEG-2 MP@HL and MP@ML

Audio [extension(s)]:

- WAV [.wav, .pcm]
- ADIF, ADTS [.aac]
- M4A [.m4a]
- OGG. [.ogg]
- ASF/WMA [.asf, .wma]
- FLAC [.flac]

Subtitle [extension(s)]:

- MicroDVD [.sub]
- SubRip [.srt]
- Sub Station Alpha [.ssa]
- Sami [.smi]

Snapshot Points

Pros

- Good build quality
- Great I/O versatility
- Fanless Design
- Good HDD compartment design
- Backlit Remote
- Smooth Playback

Cons

- Blue flashing front fascia LEDs
- Poor Manual
- NMT based Syabas Firmware

Company Web Site:

<http://www.hdhorizon.com/en/index.php>