

# Multi-room hi-fi hero

For better or worse, **Rik Henderson** pipes Take That throughout his house



Sonos has been supplying music streaming boxes for a few years now, and in the interim a number of rivals have sprung up, testing the company's resolve with cheaper alternatives. But there's something about the American company's technical and aesthetic proficiency that sets its systems apart. And the new Bundle 150 is of no exception.

For £700, you get a ZonePlayer 90 music streamer, a ZonePlayer 120 that also contains a 55W-per-channel stereo amplifier for hooking up to non-powered speakers, and a full-colour-screened remote control – all of which are beautifully designed and apparently Apple-inspired (in a good way). They all communicate with each other wirelessly, too. So, essentially, for one price, you can serve PC-located music files and internet radio stations into two separate rooms from the one package.

However, that's not the main story. Playing your own locally-stored MP3s (or WMAs) is one thing, but it's the company's alliance with Napster that provides the Bundle 150 with its own particular X-factor. If you take out a subscription to the internet music download and jukebox service, which costs £9.95 a month after an initial free 30-day trial, you have instant access to over five million music tracks – a constantly-updated mega-playlist which you can dip into any time you choose. For example, should you have the sudden urge to dance to the hits of Jive Bunny, you can search for the artist (in a large

number of easy ways), choose the tracks you'd like to bop along to, play them instantly (with full colour album art) and shuffle all the way to the loony bin.

And the best news? To use the Napster service, you don't even need to be connected to a PC.

## Get in the zone

One of the ZonePlayers needs to be connected to your home network (unless you invest a further £70 in an additional ZoneBridge), and the others communicate through the company's proprietary SonosNet 2.0, a high-speed and glitch-free wireless mesh. This updated version offers better signals over greater distances than with previous Sonos products; in use **I had perfect stream strength no matter where each player was stationed.**

Of course, the audio quality is dependent on the source material, and streamed MP3s are not exactly lossless (although it is capable of playing other non-compressed files). In comparison to other streamers, though, and, even, high-end iPod docks, when rendering standard audio formats, this system has a tight and clean control over its playback.

The only quibbles I have with the package are minor: when connected to a PC or Mac, it can't stream DRM-laden iTunes downloads and all other accessories – speakers, control cradle, etc – come at a premium. However, this well-served jukebox effectively eliminates the need to buy another album ever again ●

## AV/CV

**Product:** Multiroom, networkable music streamer

**Position:** The company's flagship iteration of its wireless jukebox technology

**Peers:** Logitech Squeezebox Duet; Pinnacle Soundbridge HomeMusic

## → Specifications

**Sonos ZonePlayer 120, Sonos ZonePlayer 90, Sonos Controller 100**

**Amplification:** (ZonePlayer 120) 55W per-channel

**Audio formats:** MP3, WMA, AAC, Ogg Vorbis, Audible, Apple Lossless, Flac music files, WAV, AIFF

**Dimensions (ZonePlayer 120):** 89(h) x 185(w) x 207(d)mm

**Dimensions (ZonePlayer 90):** 74(h) x 136(w) x 139(d)mm

**Dimensions (Controller 100):** 24.5(h) x 165(w) x 97(d)mm

**Weight (ZonePlayer 120):** 2.3kg

**Weight (ZonePlayer 90):** 0.69kg

**Weight (Controller 100):** 0.36kg

**Connections (ZonePlayer 120):** Ethernet in/out, 2x speaker outputs, analogue stereo audio inputs, subwoofer output

**Connections (ZonePlayer 90):** Ethernet in/out, analogue stereo audio inputs, analogue stereo audio outputs, optical digital audio output, coaxial digital audio output



## HCC VERDICT

Sonos BU150  
£700 approx (plus optional  
£10 subs)

**Price check:** [www.techradar.com/](http://www.techradar.com/)

**Highs:** Five millions songs at your finger tips; great audio delivery; easy to set up and use

**Lows:** No iTunes DRM support; extras don't come cheap

**Performance:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Design:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Features:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Overall:** 1 2 3 4 5