

Get smart

The MPL allows you to bring Mosaic functionality to your hi-fi, but **Ed Selley** thinks there's a little more to it than that

One area that smart multi-room audio systems can find challenging is talking to existing electronics that you already own. It's all very well having slick speakers in another room, but if your smart device won't connect to the equipment that's already in place, it can leave you with two very separate systems. Mosaic has shown a knack for multi-room speakers with the MP5 and MP10 (HFC 407) and recently launched the MPL, designed to handle integration with other hi-fi components.

The premise of the MPL is simplicity itself. Built around an ESS Sabre DAC, it offers the same UPnP, internet radio and streaming services that the standalone speakers can access, but makes this output available via either an RCA analogue output or coaxial digital and Toslink outputs. Like other Mosaic products, the unique feature of the MPL is that it is compatible with the IFTTT (If This Then That) protocol, which means that other suitably equipped devices will respond in a given and consistent way with it when specific functions are selected.

Mosaic has equipped the MPL with an IR emitter that can be used to send instructions to a suitably equipped

amplifier. If the amplifier isn't fitted with such a connection, you can hook up a flood emitter to the front panel. As the name suggests, this delivers a burst of IR information to send commands and communicate with the receiver of the other unit.

Externally, the MPL is solid rather than spectacular. The styling and finish is in keeping with Mosaic's speakers and the build feels solid considering the small size. The only detractor is a tendency to 'rear up' depending on the weight of the interconnect you use with it. As the main point of interaction with a device of this nature is always going to be the control app, here the news is pretty good. Mosaic has worked hard to create a logically laid out piece of software that responds consistently across functionality and makes it easy to identify which component you happen to be controlling at the time.

Sound quality

Having completed the set-up process – something that should take no more than a few minutes – I connect the MPL via analogue connections to an Audiolab M-ONE amp/DAC (HFC 416) and Mission LX-2 standmount speakers. Listening to the 44.1

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Mosaic MPL

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
Music streamer

WEIGHT
0.2 kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
149 x 33 x 90mm

FEATURES

- Wi-fi and Ethernet streaming up to 24/192
- Outputs: 1x coaxial; 1x optical; 1x RCA
- Streaming services supported: Spotify; Tidal; Qobuz; Napster; internet radio
- Support for IFTTT protocol

DISTRIBUTOR
Mosaic

TELEPHONE
0207 5588984

WEBSITE
mosaic.com



Small and solidly built, the MPL is an effective way to add streaming services to a hi-fi

download of UNKLE and The Heritage Orchestra Presents *Variation On A Theme*, the MPL captures the space of the venue and handles the mixed instrumentation extremely well. Gavin Clark's vocals on *Heaven* are well presented and the slight echo is beautifully captured.

Hi-res material is also dealt with effectively. The 24/88.2 version of Dead Can Dance's *Toward The Within* has wonderful tonal balance and shows no shortage of grunt when called upon to deliver the considerable bass. At times, slightly more attack and immediacy might be welcome, but the counter to this is the way it handles poorer recordings, ensuring compressed music is very convincing. In fact, you have to choose very poor material before it becomes overly harsh or aggressive. It walks a very neat line between digging out detail from recordings without showing up too many of the flaws and is also easy to listen to for extended periods.

The party piece of the MPL is the digital output. Switching to the coaxial connection, first on the Audiolab and then a rather pricier Chord Electronics CPM 2800 MkII integrated reveals the MPL to be completely transparent. It sounds exactly like the digital source you use with it. This might not sound terribly exciting, but it makes a great addition to any amp and thanks to the IR control you can integrate volume and power commands into the Mosaic's app, tying control into a single point rather than multiple remotes.

Conclusion

The ability to add a well implemented selection of features with a good app without imparting any of its own personality means the MPL has appeal well beyond the bounds of a normal Mosaic system. This is a very clever and well integrated piece of equipment that can add a welcome dose of 'smart' to almost any setup ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Useful features; refined and accurate sound; unobtrusiveness

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Look and feel isn't particularly special

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: A clever little box that has some innovative features and boasts quite considerable appeal

FEATURES



OVERALL

