



Still game

Elipson updates its long-running all-in-one with its Connect streaming interface and **Ed Selley** is impressed at the results

A grizzled veteran of the all-in-one streaming category, it has been nearly a decade since the original Music Centre hit the market and during this time Elipson has been rather resourceful in augmenting the specification to keep it competitive. Until recently, this had not extended to any form of streaming beyond Bluetooth and the inclusion of Chromecast Audio on some models. The Connect HD changes that.

As the name suggests, the Music Centre Connect HD is a combination of the existing Music Centre and Elipson's Connect streaming software. This allows you to access your existing library, augment it with streaming services (Tidal, Qobuz, Spotify and Deezer are all supported), internet radio and AirPlay.

None of the existing functionality of the Music Centre has been shed in adding Connect. It still plays CDs, has a DAB and FM radio, Bluetooth and a combination of analogue and a single optical input. This means it can do

more than most rival all-in-ones, even those costing a fair bit more.

The Elipson makes use of an ICEPower Class D amplifier that delivers 120W into 4ohm. It retains a conventional remote handset and also allows for a crossover to be set on its subwoofer output; both of which could potentially be useful. In keeping with previous versions, it is well made and finished. The feature stickers that adorn the product out of the box are unpleasant, though, and would be best not affixed in the first place.

Sound quality

As the decoding hardware and amplification are unchanged in this instance, the performance of the Connect HD version is largely (but intriguingly, not entirely) in keeping with previous versions. The M20 is a fluent and forgiving performer that manages to sound rich and civilised with a wide selection of material, even when the recording quality is not that good. The quoted power output feels entirely believable in use with the

Spendor A1 (HFC 460) and Focal Kanta No1 (HFC 454) and it doesn't struggle with either speaker.

There's a slight curiosity in that the Connect section feels slightly less potent than the CD player. A rip of Arcade Fire's *Funeral* doesn't quite match the low-end weight of the CD it was ripped from when the latter is played in the Music Centre's own mechanism. It's not a huge difference and the bass still has plenty of detail and control to it, ensuring that even energetic material like the bombastic *Mr. Ed* by Mammoth WVH manages to get the head nodding.

The overall balance seems set to ensure that nothing is rendered utterly unlistenable. You have to choose the most abysmal internet radio stations that the library possesses before this becomes the case and compressed audio from Spotify and Deezer is very enjoyable. The slight caveat to this is that really good quality hi-res content from your library or Qobuz doesn't demonstrate the same improvement over lossless that some streaming platforms can achieve, but the benefit to that is that few of them can stay as listenable over as wide a selection of material. Something else that helps the convenience argument of the Elipson is that buried in the setup menu is a selection of tone controls. These might not be the most approved audiophile fitment going, but they do ensure you can augment that slightly lean low end when streaming and further ensure that the M20 works in the space you put it in.

Conclusion

The Music Centre has been around for a while now, but the addition of the Connect software and the competitive price point that Elipson is offering it at means that it still has plenty to offer. This is a well-specified and capable all-in-one that looks set to keep the Music Centre competitive for a few more years to come yet ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Elipson Music Centre Connect HD

ORIGIN
France/China

TYPE
Network streaming all-in-one system

WEIGHT
3.2kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
330 x 73 x 330mm

FEATURES

- 24-bit/96kHz-capable streamer
- Inputs; RCA; optical
- CD mechanism
- DAB/FM radio

DISTRIBUTOR
Avoke Ltd.

TELEPHONE
01628 857958

WEBSITE
en.elipson.com



Connectivity includes RCA in and outputs, an optical in and a subwoofer out

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Refined, forgiving performance; decent spec; solid build

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Can sound a little lightweight

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: A solid update to a long-standing all-in-one that keeps it competitive and should win it a number of new converts

EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL

