

Celebrating 10 Years of StreamMagic

StreamMagic is the clever combination of hardware and software that sits at the heart of Cambridge Audio's network players and allows you to play digital music from anywhere. This year, StreamMagic celebrated its 10th anniversary. It's also surpassed 100,000 users. We're quite proud of that, so to honour StreamMagic and the hard-working team of engineers behind it, we spoke to Software Manager, Chris Saunders. Below, he explains the development process behind StreamMagic, his favourite thing it can do and how it'll always be ready for the future of music.



For anyone that's new to StreamMagic - what does it do & how does it make the listening experience more enjoyable?

StreamMagic is the brain of our network players; by acting like a junction box that you can control from your smartphone, it allows you to listen to music from nearly every conceivable source. Despite this, our ultimate goal is to be invisible, to make sure that as little as possible gets between you and listening to your favourite music.

Where did the original idea for StreamMagic come from?

Over ten years ago we realised that streaming digital music from multiple different sources was going to be a growing problem. Back then we only really had internet radio, a few 'services' and music stored on a PC or network drive to contend with, but we knew the streaming landscape would thrive and grow, and sources would become

more diverse. Now we aim to support as many different technologies in a single box as possible, so that you don't need complicated setups or multiple products to listen to your music, wherever it comes from.

Our original NP30 product allowed you to add digital streaming to your existing hi-fi. We then realised that for a better experience you needed more control over your whole system and, with the Stream Magic 6 and Minx Xi products, we started to realise the power of the smart phone and how our players could be the heart of a system rather than a bolt-on. From there, 8 series, CX series and Edge saw us apply digital streaming to higher spec'd systems before we truly recreated a 'system in a box' with our latest Evo products.

There's been a few variations over the past 10 years, how do you and your team prepare to launch a new version?

Our development team are all in-house (well, mostly, their own houses these days!) and so it really is a team effort. New features, updates and bug fixes are spec'd by the team with input from all over the business including customer support, sales, developers and our quality assurance team. The software for each item is then developed, passed to other engineers for review then tested in isolation by our QA team, and they'll work on getting things perfect with the developers. Once they're happy, the update will be shared with the rest of our internal test team (most of us have multiple products at home) for further testing. Finally, a version is released to our beta testers (visit <https://www.cambridgeaudio.com/beta-testing> to find out how to sign-up) for final checking before it's released into the wild.

Are there any interesting trends you've noticed with the use of StreamMagic over the past decade?

It's fair to say the smartphone has grown in importance as part of our customers' streaming experience. Originally, our app was a handy remote control that you could live without. It now provides all the functionality you need to set up your product, tailor it's performance and functionality and choose music from various sources. However, with the dawn of technologies like Spotify Connect and AirPlay the part smartphones now play in our system has changed too, with our players often connecting directly to the streaming service app, further allowing you to be immersed in their listening experience.

What's your favourite thing that StreamMagic can do?

Disappear! As nice as our products are to look at, with services like Chromecast built-in they can easily and seamlessly become totally transparent to the process of listening to music. Sure, you need a voice-enabled product like a Nest Mini to hear you say, "*play BBC Radio 6 Music in the living room*", but you can set your network player to be the default music device in that room and there you go, great sounding music without lifting a finger!

Any tips or tricks for users?

Save our weekly Spotify playlist as a preset on your player, it'll get automatically updated and you'll always be in touch with what the team has been listening to while they're working on updates and new products! Also, we encourage users to get in touch with us via the in-app feedback section and to keep an eye out for polls in the carousel. If there are any features you'd like to see in StreamMagic, that's where you can tell us!

Any big plans for StreamMagic moving forward?

Consumption of media is constantly evolving and as music, technology, and our living and working situations change, new opportunities for progress will be revealed. We're all music lovers first and foremost, but we're also problem solvers. We keep our eyes and ears open, looking for that moment where a different product or feature will allow us to make all of our listening experiences that much better.

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Thanks, Chris!