The ~$100 Music Server/Streamer

Vanatoo's mission is to serve the budget-minded music lover with the best products, service, and ideas. We have been on a quest to come-up with the perfect budget friendly music server/streamer, whether it makes us money or not. We're not there quite yet, but the system described here has most of the features and ability that we have defined as necessary in a perfect server/streamer:

- Lossless playback ability
- Plays your local library of music, regardless of format
- Streams music from the web, regardless of the site or format
- Allows full remote control from across the room

The system described below can do the first three of the above. True remote control of the system from a phone or tablet is possible, but we cannot recommend the applications we have tried to date as none of them are seamless.

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The heart of the system is a Windows tablet. Microsoft and Intel are busy establishing a foothold in mobile computing and are literally, in the case of Microsoft, giving things away. Their efforts are paying-off, as there is a new generation of very capable devices on the market at unbelievable prices.

WinBook TW802 with Anker tablet stand and Vanatoo Transparent One powered speakers

The WinBook line of Windows tablets feature Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, a touch screen, a full-sized USB port, a quad-core Intel processor, and a full copy of Windows 8.1. This allows them to run the full range of music programs available, while drawing under 10 watts of power, max. Pretty sweet! So, what can you do with one of these as a music streamer/server?

<u>Web-Based Streaming Services:</u> There is an ever-growing list of music available online. A lot of it is (legally) free, some is subscription based, and some even offers lossless CD quality.

<u>Play Your Own:</u> Music that is stored locally on the tablet, on a tethered hard drive, or that is anywhere on your network (or cloud!) can be served-up for your enjoyment. The tablet's USB output allows digitally connecting to the Transparent One powered speakers for an end-to-end digital playback chain.

<u>The Basic System:</u> You can take this idea and run, but the basic system we have tested includes the following items (all available on Amazon, check www.microcenter.com for the latest tablet price).

WinBook TW802 Tablet - $119
Anker Multi-Angle Stand - $10
Amazon Basics USB Cable - $5
JRiver Media Center - $50
Windows Media Player – Free
iTunes Software – Free

The WinBook TW700 7 inch tablet can be had for as little as $69, keeping the total well under $100. The TW802 8 inch tablet is easier to use due to its greater screen area, which comes in handy when you're using the tablet's touch screen to control streaming sites. If you are an iTunes user you can stream your whole library and control it from your iOS device with Apple's Remote app. JRiver Media Center is one of the standards for serving and streaming lossless audio, and has terrific remote controls for both iOS and Android. We live in a great time for music lovers! Happy Listening!!