Voco V-Spot

I hadn't come across the Voco brand until I saw a unit at Sky Audio's offices in Centurion, and with my interest piqued, asked for a review sample. The device under discussion here is the Voco V-Spot, and while it's an excellent standalone media player, it can also form part of a much bigger multiroom entertainment system that includes various other streaming devices.

The V-Spot's attraction, however, is that it's an all-in-one solution, at least in audio terms, that includes its own amplification and integrated speakers, while sourcing the material it plays back from a wide variety of sources, both wireless and wired.

Relatively compact, it's easily located on shelves, desks, table tops or counters, and is attractively styled in a functional, clean-cut kind of way. The enclosure's dimensions are to some extent determined by its driver complement — a substantial mid/bass driver, and two tweeters — which are hidden behind a cloth grille.

A set of four operation status indicator lights and a USB input are located just below the grille, while the slim top panel has soft-touch playback switchgear, including play/pause, forward/reverse and volume up/down controls.

The rear panel provides some indication of the Voco V-Spot's versatility. On offer are analogue stereo RCA input and output sets, as well as coaxial and Toslink optical digital outputs. In its roles as a multimedia streamer, the V-Spot also makes provision for video output via HDMI, composite or component outputs. A second USB input is also included.

Both the front and rear USB sockets will accommodate flash drives, USB hard drives and devices such iPhones/iPads/iPods. In addition, an Ethernet port provides direct, DHCP-configured network access. Alternatively, the V-Spot can also link up to Wi-Fi access points,

The result is a device that can bring music to almost every nook and cranny of a home, either via an array of Internet music services (TuneIn, last.fm, iTunes, Sky Radio, Digitally Imported and JazzRadio are all supported), or from network devices such as a NAS, from PCs or Macs linked to the network, and of course from USB flash drives or USB HDDs. You can even hook up a legacy external source using the analogue RCA input set.

Another nifty feature is the ability to use the V-Spot as a Wi-Fi hotspot, which will allow many users to use the V-Spot not only as a source of entertainment, but also to deliver Internet connectivity.

Voco offers a free downloadable app, which makes controlling the V-Spot easy, and even adds voice control to the equation. It allow source selection, volume control and set-up adjustment, and is offered for both iOS and Android platforms.

I linked up the V-Spot to my office network via LAN, and it was up and running in only a few minutes, having first identified the availability of a firmware upgrade, and subsequently downloaded and installed it. The iOS app works well, too, and makes operating the V-Spot much more intuitive.

In functional terms, the V-Spot delivered on its every promise, easily connecting to the network (via DHCP), and accessing Internet music sources, as well as USB flash drives, with ease. I didn't try the video streaming, but it has YouTube built in.

However, the sound was by far the most impressive aspect. The integrated speaker system created an uncannily powerful, full-ranged sound, with an unexpectedly authoritative bass response, a smooth and slightly warm midrange, and trebles that were clean and unequivocal, but certainly not bright.

The V-Spot's excellent, room-filling sound, combined with its vast array of wired and Wi-Fi connectivity options, and plenty of scope for future expansion, makes this device one of the most entertaining of its kind. From background music to room-filling party sound — this box of tricks does it all!

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Power output	100 watts total
Drive units	2x tweeters, 1x mid/bass driver
Connectivity	Ethernet, Wi-Fi (802.11 b/g/n), 2x USB
Audio inputs	Analogue stereo RCA
Audio output	Analogue stereo RCA
Digital outputs	Coaxial digital, Toslink optical
Video outputs	HDMI, component, composite
Supported audio formats	MP3, FLAC, AAC, M4A, OGG
Dimensions (WxHxD)	432 x 210 x 143 mm
Weight	4,3 kg
Price	R7 990

Verdict
Fantastic, room-filling sound quite at odds with its size. Extensive source and connectivity options ensure excellent versatility. Intuitive operation adds further appeal.

Supplied by	Sky Audio 012-665-2932
e-Mail	isabel@skyaudio.co.za
Website	www.skyaudio.co.za

OUR RATING: 79 / 100