Player that reaches into a hard drive and pulls out media

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For years now, electronics makers have been chasing the chimera of a storage device that can easily — the operative word here — retrieve music, videos and photos from a hard drive and send them to a television as well as a PC.

Seagate, the hard drive maker, thinks it has found a way to make it work with its FreeAgent Theater HD media player. The device taps into a portable hard drive — one of the most popular PC peripherals these days — to put video, photos, music and more on a television set.

With the Seagate system, an external drive is slipped into the Theater HD dock, much as an iPod is plugged into a speaker dock. It can be upgraded to larger drives as an entertainment collection grows.

Connected to a television with component cables, the device will display video at 1080i — not at the full high-definition display of 1080p — and supports lots of audio formats.

The $130 FreeAgent Theater comes as a stand-alone unit with a remote control or bundled with one of the company's Go external drives.

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