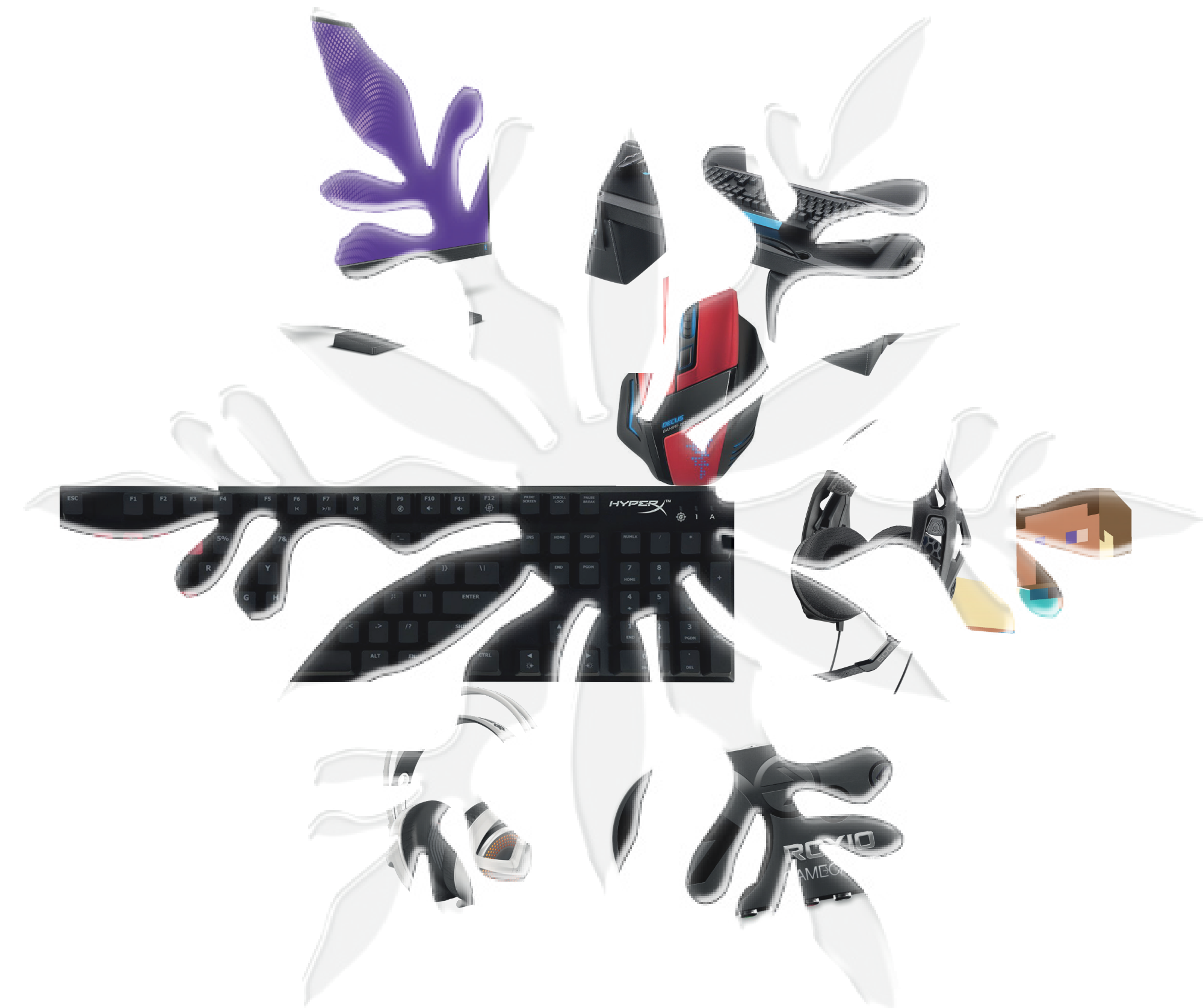


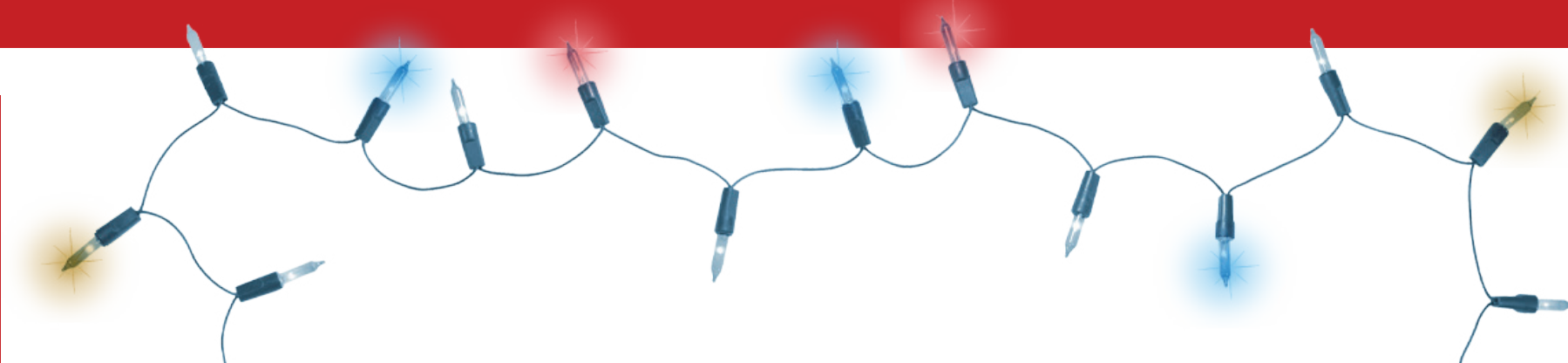
GameOn

GAMEONMAG.COM - 3RD EDITION
CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE





Welcome



Welcome to The GameOn Christmas Gift Guide! We hope you'll find something to enjoy, whether it's for yourself, a friend, a co-worker, a lover or a Secret Santa, there is plenty of choice.

Having curated some of the hottest peripherals that have crossed our desks over the past 12 months from mice to monitors and beyond, these were rigorously tested and reviewed. Hopefully our reviews will let you get a feel for how these things work in a real-world setting, rather than some kind of lab.

We've put in the recommended retail price (RRP) next to each item, to give you a guide

on their pricing. Be sure to shop around to get the best deal for you, as with any purchase, especially with the "sale season" upon us.

Ultimately, we hope this magazine goes a little way towards making that hectic festive time of year somewhat more manageable. Whatever you might be celebrating - Happy Holidays!

If you want to make sure you have the latest issue (updated regularly!) you can check at the following address: <http://www.gameonmag.com/url/giftupdatev3>

- THE EDITOR

Contributors

Editor-in-Chief - Steve Greenfield
Editor - Andrew Duncan

Magazine Design by Jessica Greenfield
Magazine Creation - Andrew Duncan

Critic - Andrew Duncan
Critic - Anna Duncan
Critic - Calum Parry
Critic - Dom D'Angelillo
Critic - Luke Greenfield
Critic - Ryan Munro
Critic - Simon Brown
Critic - Steven Dawson



Cover image courtesy of Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau





HYPERX CLOUD STINGER GAMING HEADSET

I've had a HyperX headset for a while now, and it has never let me down. Kingston really know how to assemble a robust bit of equipment -- and that shows with the Cloud Stinger. Despite being priced for the mid-tier user, they haven't skimped on the build quality.

The Stinger comes in a simple box with plenty of foam padding, and it's a one-piece unit with attached microphone and two-part cable. It ends in a standard (unless your phone is an iPhone 7) 3.5mm headphone jack, to attach to the second part of the cable or compatible devices. The end of the second part has two 3.5mm jacks -- one for plugging into the speaker port on your computer, the other for the microphone port.

The headset is solidly constructed from plastic, with memory foam earcups. When not in use, the earcups turn 90 degrees so that it can be

easily stored away. The attached microphone is bendable, though I found that it usually went straight after I had moved it up to either mute it, or to take the headset off. There is a volume slider on the underneath of the right earcup - so if your volume is too low, adjust it! Also if it's too high...

The sound quality is excellent for either games or music, though I would refrain from buying these if you're primarily looking to listen to music on them. It lacks the features you probably need to enjoy music at its best.

The microphone is pretty clear, though obviously it isn't as good as a separate dedicated microphone. The box says that it is Discord certified, and it certainly does work well on Discord. I spend most of my the day with it open, so I have some experience with the program.



When I first went to put the Stinger on, I thought it would be tight even after adjusting it. I was happy to find this wasn't the case, and it was pretty comfortable even for extended periods. The padding on the earcups was comfortable, and they blocked out most of the noise from the house around me.

The quick start guide says that it is fully compatible with PlayStation 4 and Xbox One controllers, so I also tested it out on my PS4. It detects the microphone instantly, and enables communication with other players. However, it makes it hard to hear the in-game audio, because you've got a headset on... So you can go into the settings and switch the audio coming through the headphones to be all audio!

RRP: £49.99 / \$49.99



Suitable for:



Handhelds

Smartphones



Tablets



PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





HYPERX CLOUDX PRO GAMING HEADSET

The HyperX CloudX is the latest in Kingston's Cloud series of headsets, the CloudX is their Xbox-focused entry and as such is Microsoft certified and designed for use with the Xbox One and PC. Xbox green flourishes are present on both packaging and the alternative padded ear cushions to remind you of this.

The Cloud series of headsets are generally regarded as high quality, decent sounding headsets at a reasonable cost and the CloudX is no exception. They are clearly based on the existing Cloud design but given a bit of tweaking for Xbox use.

In the box you get a 2m extension/breakout cable that splits into separate 3.5mm microphone and stereo audio plugs for connecting to a PC, the detachable microphone, a hard-shell carrying case and a set of velour padded ear cushions that swap with the leatherette ones applied out of the box.

The build quality is exceptionally solid, the aluminium frame feels really sturdy and the padding over the frame is really comfortable. It has a nice sewn trim with HyperX branding across the top giving a really premium feel and finish. The in-line volume and mic control is a nice



distance from the headset, easily reachable without needing to look away from the action should you need to make adjustments.

So how does it sound? First of all, this headset is designed to work with the Xbox Elite Wireless Controller along with newer standard Xbox One controllers that have the 3.5mm stereo headset jack (most controllers since the middle of 2015 will be this newer type), if your controller is an older variety you can purchase Microsoft's Xbox One Stereo Headset Adapter to enable you to use headsets with a 3.5mm plug.

Actually using the headset is completely plug and play, connect it into the controller and you'll immediately be able to throw commands at Cortana. The microphone quality is fine for voice and does a good job of cancelling out

ambient noise. Cortana had no issues figuring out what words I was saying and testing it out in a session of Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare actually had the party I was in comment on the clarity of voice compared to the regular Microsoft Xbox One Chat Headset.

The headset itself has a good range and doesn't clip even at high volume, and at max volume these are loud. The out of the box leatherette ear cushions are snug and with the circumaural, closed back design do a great job of passive noise reduction. They can cause your ears to get quite hot after a long session however. Replacing these with the velour padded ones gives the headset a lighter feel, they do increase the amount of outside noise you can hear but they also let your ears 'breathe' a bit. It's nice you have the option of differing cushions though.





HEADSETS



In general the headset is extremely comfortable, when I saw the metal frame I had fears that it would ‘push’ into your head over time but it’s surprisingly light and stays comfortable for extremely long periods. Combined with the choice of ear cushions you should never really be in a situation where you need to take them off and give your ears a rest.

The CloudX are a stereo headset rather than a surround set and whilst that initially sounds disappointing the separation for both ears is exceptionally good and I felt very aware of enemy positions and gunfire in Advanced Warfare, footstep clarity and just general positional audio was really clean and definitely helped me play better (or at least stopped me getting shot so frequently).

The audio quality is generally very high, the balance is definitely set up more for gaming then general audio but it is more than okay for that too. The bass levels are great and really give impacts some feeling, gunshots and explosions have a

good kick to them. Overall levels are good and give a rich sound to almost anything that comes through them.

The headset retails for £79.99 and honestly is well worth that, the build quality, overall comfort and attention to detail is great all around. From the padding and stitching detail on the headset through to the sturdy carry case (that

has a large fabric loop for holding or attaching to something) and polished packaging design it’s a very well thought through product.

As well as the Xbox One (which is the primary platform of use) it can be also be used on PC and other devices with a CTIA compatible jack meaning most phones/tablets etc. I’ve been using it on the PC alongside the Xbox One (which is really simple thanks to the included breakout/extension cable meaning I can just disconnect from the PC, plug into the Xbox and back again at will) and it works exactly as you’d expect. It’s certified for use with Teamspeak and has been tested across Skype, Discord, Ventrilo, Mumble and Raidcall.

The only negative I have is regarding the microphone port on the headset, out of the box the microphone isn’t attached and simply pops into the port no problem, however initially there’s a tiny rubber stopper filling the gap which isn’t attached at all and will simply get lost over time. Whilst that port being exposed isn’t a problem

at all (as it is partly sunken) it’s a shame the stopper wasn’t a permanent fixture on the headset itself, especially after the attention to detail shown throughout the rest of the product.

All in all I’d heartily recommend this headset whether you have an Xbox Elite Wireless controller or a compatible regular controller, it sounds great, it’s comfortable and it’s well put together. You can’t really ask for much more.

RRP: £79.99 / \$79.99

Suitable for:






Handhelds Smartphones




Tablets PC




PlayStation 4 Xbox One





PLANTRONICS RIG 500E HEADPHONES

The test was simple. Put the headphones on, pull down the microphone and speak into it. The only difference being that the guys from Plantronics would be playing the sound of multiple passing aircraft in the background to show me how background noise could be filtered out. Imagining myself stood on the apron of any of the world's airports, I spoke, doubting that what I was spewing out could actually be heard over the roar of jet engines. I was wrong. Very wrong. Playing the recorded audio back, there was nothing, just the droning voice of an enthusiastic gamer...me.

This is one of the many features that make the brand new line of Plantronics headphones, the RIG 500 series, a must have for any gamer.

Launching in October, the series will consist of three sets, designed from the ground-up for, and with the help of, the elite gaming community: the RIG 500, 500HD and the 500E, with two pairs, one licensed for Xbox One and one for PlayStation 4, also heading onto the shelves.



developing for the e-Sports market, something Plantronics have been part of since 2000. There's no baggage or excess on them, and as I was told "everything is there for a reason" and it shows. Essentially there are three components to the set. The frame, the headband and the ear cups. But they aren't just thrown together, each component has been carefully thought out and Plantronics' history of producing head wear for military aircraft shines through.

The frame is made from a durable, ultra-light, ultra-flexible plastic, which you can twist, stretch and bend in any which way without any sign of weakness or stress, coming with three size slots for your ear cups. The headband is comfortable and soft, after long hours with it

on, you won't get that painful digging sensation on your crown. And with the two sets of ear cups, you get a choice of how you want to compose yourself; with Vented or Isolating.

The Isolated cups offer a more 'concentrated' experience and eliminate the background noise while the Vented cups, as you would think, are vented to allow for both heat dissipation and to allow background sounds in. These have since become my 'go to' pair, while you don't lose any of the sound quality, you can still get those all important phone calls and yells that 'dinner is ready' into your head. In fact, with the blue and black honeycomb design, I also found them to be the more stylish of the two provided pairs of cups.

RRP: £ 99.99/ \$149.50

Suitable for:



PlayStation 4



Xbox One



PC

The mic, as previously mentioned, is perhaps the most impressive of the features offered by the RIG 500E. Easily moved across the pairs of ear cups provided, the mic, I am told, can eliminate noises of up to 80dB and with a simple 'flip-to-mute' switch, you can happily avoid any awkward conversations you don't want to be broadcast to your clan.

Certified by both TeamSpeak and ESL, the RIG 500 series is laying a huge foundation for the next generation of headphones. What's more, they are fully customisable, whether you want something personal, or team colours, everything can be changed. Fluorescent frame, team logo, patterns, camo design, whatever you fancy you can get and with the easily dismantled headphones changing can't be any easier.

For the price of £99.99, it seems like an offer you can't really refuse. With what you get in the box, you're getting an incredible deal for your money. Two sets of ear cups, cables to swap between Dolby 7.1 surround sound USB and analog connections, and even the jack to fit into your laptop or smartphones. Whatever you need, it's more than likely going to be included.





STEELSERIES SIBERIA 350

I'll admit, this was my first time testing out headphones. When I placed the box on the table and opened it, I was presented with the Siberia 350 headset and some information to download the software. Plugging the USB in automatically started installing.

The headset is a wired headset and on the wire itself is the volume scroll wheel allowing you to adjust it without having to hunt down the volume control on your computer. Just behind your left ear there is a little switch which you can use to mute and unmute your microphone.

I then went to the site that the information told me about and downloaded the software which allows you to customise the colours on the ear cups. They were orange, but now I have them flashing purple, red and black. Its Prism RGB Illumination allows users to easily customise their headset with 16.8 million colour illuminations.

When I put them on I expected the headset to feel tight like my old Sony headphones, but the Siberia 350 felt light and fits very comfortably especially as I have, in my opinion, a tiny head and ears. Adjusting the headband isn't quite like any other I have had. It has what feels like an elastic band that, when taking it off, will retract back to normal size. I was also surprised to have the ear cups actually fit my ears inside the cups, without being squished. There is also a retractable

microphone which gamers can pull out during a game or hide it behind the earcup for safety.

Now the headset is designed to perfectly reproduce the best in-game audio experience, such as DTS Headphone: X 7.1 surround sound, so I decided to boot up a game to test them out. While playing Just Cause 2 the explosions and gunshots really stood out clearly, which is ideal to let you know if an enemy is trying to kill you. I also tried listening to a little music while writing this - I like my music loud - and these make you feel like you're in a club.

Moving on to the microphone, I joined a voice room in Discord to speak to someone. When you are connected to another person you can hear them nice and clear. While talking through the mic the other person didn't identify any faults although it isn't noise canceling it sounds nice and clear.

It is a very good headset; I like the fact that it fits my tiny ears and head as I do have problems finding the right headset that is perfect for me. I would definitely recommend it to anyone that hates having to change the size of the headband when lending it to anyone else.

RRP: £99.99 / \$119.99

Suitable for:



PlayStation 4



Xbox One



PC





ASTRO A40 HEADSET

I've never really cared about expensive gaming headphones. So long as it projects sound I've never really been bothered. The most fancy thing I've ever wanted from a pair of headphones was a microphone attachment, so I approached the Astro A40 with a level of uncertainty. Being unsure of what to expect, what I found made me realise what I was actually missing.

The first thing I noticed upon opening the box was the sheer amount of addons this thing had. The ear-covers, headband, speaker-tags and microphone could all be changed around and replaced, and the microphone could even be plugged in on either side, for those who prefer their microphone on the left/right side only. The covers themselves offered very good noise reduction; it was very difficult to hear anything else outside of my game/music, even when it was quiet or when nothing was being played at all. The feeling of the headphones is strange when you first put them on, but after it while it becomes

natural and doesn't feel restraining. It's not too tight around your head and overall is very comfortable to wear, even for extended periods of time.

The primary selling point is the MixAmp, a small device which can be placed wherever you want, so long as it's plugged into your computer. It's logical to have it within reaching distance, as you're going to use this thing while you're on the computer. It is connected via a USB Micro cord, and the 3.5mm jack is on the other end of the MixAmp, allowing it to easily connect the headphones to your computer. I had some problems getting it to work on my device for some reason. After some fiddling and, turning it off and back on again and plugging it into different ports, it finally worked. Once it did, there was no need to install drives or software; it worked immediately.

The MixAmp allows you to adjust the volume and sound with extreme ease. The dial allows for volume change that is independent from the computer's volume. Not only this, but it allows different audio modes at the press of a button. The button has four quadrants around it and they lit up one indicates which mode you're on. Starting top-left and going clockwise, the first setting is made for pro gaming, and it amplifies a lot of background sounds, such as footsteps and players changing weapon, something that greatly helpful in games such as Counter Strike: Global Offensive, where listening to every sound could be the difference between life and death. The second profile is default; the sounds are the way the developers intended them, with no

amplifications or balancing. The third setting is the Media setting, intended for listening to music and watching movies, amplifying vocals and bass. (The difference when listening to music between this and the Pro setting is very noticeable) The final profile is the same as the Pro setting, but it also balances the microphone to work better in very loud environments, such as esports or other gaming events.

On the subject of the microphone and sound, the quality of both of these was amazing. Even without the appropriate settings (I spent most of my time playing on the first profile), I was able to pick up sounds I never knew before. A very helpful example of this was in The Binding of Isaac: Rebirth, I could never dodge the Brimstone attack of The Adversary, until I realised he does a low growl before firing it, something I never heard before using these headphones. The microphone quality was also remarkable. I was playing a tournament match with a few friends and

my housemate decided to be a funny guy and yell obscenities such as 'Penis' and 'I love c*ck' from the other side of my desk. Thankfully my microphone never picked up any of it and my friends were free to carry on the match without his frequent call-outs.

Overall, the Astro A40 is a very pleasant experience of what investing in more expensive hardware can do. The sound quality, the different sound profiles, the customisation, the reduction, the MixAmp, the microphone quality and noise reduction. Everything about these headphones are, simply put, bloody amazing. While they are a bit on the expensive side, the quality is definitely worth the price.

RRP: £130.00 / \$150.00

Suitable for:



PlayStation 4



Xbox One



PC





SPEEDLINK PARTHICA CORE GAMING KEYBOARD

I was eager to try out the Parthica, because it looks good, and has a load of quick-keys. As a very gadgety-person, I wanted a keyboard with gadgety things. Taking the Parthica out of the box, I became much less enamoured by it.

It's solidly built, and I still think it looks nice, but the coating of the plastic gives it a strangely unsmooth feeling. My old Logitech was plastic, so I've nothing against that part, but there is something about this plastic that feels strange, like they were trying to replicate the smoothness of velour, or something. The cable is thin, but 1.8 meters long and braided.

Right out of the gate, I should point out that the keyboard I was sent for review had the QWERTZ configuration, which is the German way. This also meant that Ctrl was Strg, symbols were in strange places, and the Prnt Scrn key said Druck S-Abf. Once you get used to the layout of the keys, it no longer throws you -- in my time with it, I only took about half an hour before I got used to it. I've always found that I adapt well to new controllers or, in this case, keyboards.

The keys are responsive, and almost as high as on a mechanical keyboard. They don't give the loud clack of one, which means that you won't

disturb others in the room, but they do feel pretty satisfying for your fingers to dance across.

Along the left side are programmable keys, and a profile change key. Each profile makes the colours of the keyboard change, so you can tell which of the five you are on at any one time. Due to their placement, I found myself constantly hitting M5 when I'm trying to hit control, which caused my tab to switch. The five keys by default will change your browser tab, unless you have more than five tabs -- then they will just swap between the first five.

Along the top you have ten media buttons, the first five of which will bring up the File Explorer, browser and email, with one programmable as a Favourite, and the other bringing up Windows search -- unless you have Cortana enabled in Windows 10. In that case, it will bring up Cortana! In the middle is the name of the keyboard, lit in a different colour, depending on the profile chosen. To the right of that are the other five media buttons; Play/Pause, Stop, Mute, volume down, volume up. I couldn't get the first two to work at all, but the others were fine. They are nice and chunky buttons, though pressing them feels very squidgy.

One feature that I haven't encountered before is the ability to disable the Windows key. It's easy to activate, but not enough that you will accidentally activate it.

If you're looking for a multicoloured keyboard, possibly one that can have the Windows key


disabled, then this is a decent keyboard. It's not amazing, and I already mentioned the feel of it, but anyone who would benefit from having multiple profiles for gaming, this is worth a look. So long as you can grab a QWERTY version, which are also available.



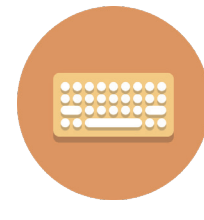
RRP: £39.99 / \$102.00



Suitable for:



PC



HYPERX ALLOY

FPS KEYBOARD

When I got asked to review the HyperX Alloy I thought that I should review it, since my own keyboard was just a cheap one that came in a set when I bought my PC. It was alright, and honestly I didn't like the sound of the mechanical HyperX with all the clicking noises. But I used it quite a lot playing Second Life and typing to friends, a few who have told me that my typing has gotten a lot better with less typos when I'm roleplaying.

When I opened the box inside was the Hyper Alloy FPS Keyboard and I thought it looked smaller than the current keyboard. It's the same size, except

the keys on the old one are half the size! The cable to power the keyboard is separate with two USB plugs to go into your PC - this is because the keyboard has a USB port itself for you to charge your phone. One which powers up the keyboard, the other to power up the spare charger port. The box also contained a quick start guide, red-coloured textured keys to swap your WASD and 1234 keys, and a easy-to-carry travel pouch which is handy for any gamer on the go. There is also a little hook thing to use to pry off the keys if you do decide to change them, although I didn't.



When taking all that I needed out of the box it was pretty easy to set up. All you basically needed to do was plug the cables into the right ports and away you go.

As I am typing this out the keys are very easy to press. Mechanical keyboards come with different types of switches - this one has blue which is just about right for me but I haven't really tried any of the other switches to know what really is the right feel. Other keyboards have different coloured switches, and these are down to how

firm you would like your keys to feel when pressing them - I find the blue ones nice and firm.

I do like that when it gets dark in my house, and we don't always turn the lights on, that the keys do light up a bright red, which is very helpful for when you are typing in the dark.

RRP: £99.99 / \$99.99



Suitable for:



PC



SPEEDLINK ULTOR MECHANICAL KEYBOARD

Speedlink have been around for sometime: they're big on making console and PC peripherals from headsets, controllers and keyboards. So it comes to no surprise that they would continue their foray into the market and create something much more premium for all the PC gamers out there. That's why Speedlink have developed not one but two mechanical keyboards, and I've had the pleasure of using their top-model: the Ultor.

As you do with the arrival of any keyboard I took it out of the box. The Ultor's packaging isn't anything special, It isn't sleek or minimalistic coming in a black box with red lining across covered in logos showing its features as well as a very handy logo signifying it being a British layout keyboard. Once the Ultor was out of the box all that was left were quickstart and info papers. But we're not here to talk about the included booklets, it's all about the keyboard.

Popular among other manufacturers and of course gamers, the Ultor uses Red mechanical switches. The ones used here are not Cherry MX but instead are Kaihua Kailh, which aren't as favoured as the Cherry's, but are still of a high quality and offer excellent feedback.

Now for the keyboard itself. The Ultor is a compact keyboard, that's not to say it's got smaller keys absolutely not, it means it lacks a numpad. I'm personally not a fan of this as I prefer a numpad, but as I will explain, there is good intention for why Speedlink decided not to have one. For you see the Ultor's body is designed for portability with very little compromise. It's a keyboard for the gamer and many other manufacturers do the same as a player would rarely use the numpad in normal gaming. As for the design, the Ultor is very nice, with a frameless design and an entirely red aluminium top. When I first saw the press images I was rather put off by the entirely red frame, but as soon as I plugged it in and the glow the blue backlight of the keys came on I was surprised how pleasing it looked. And while it may not feature of any fancy RGB colours as seen on other keyboards, the blue glow was pleasant enough.

Using the keyboard took some getting used to, I love mechanical keyboards, but I'm used to a



fully sized keyboard including a numpad. So this certainly took some time for my hands to adjust, but surprisingly after a short while and getting my hands positioned the typing experiencing was very comfortable and the feedback from mechanical keys was very responsive and smooth - this backed by the anti-ghosting and up to 1,000hz poll rate.

All the keys glow blue, except for W,A,S,D, the arrow keys and the dedicated Game (Print Screen) key, which glow white. Beside these, there are a number of function keys included. With the right Windows key replaced, you can use this to access a number of media controllers including: volume, next/previous track and mute. One real nice feature is the inclusion of macros - although you'll first need to install the Speedlink drivers to use. Once installed, you'll be able to create up to six macros as well

as five profiles (switchable using the F keys) for said macros. It wasn't something I took an advantage of, but certainly for someone who enjoy their MMO's will be able to make full use.

I was very surprised how much I've enjoyed using this keyboard and I will continue to do so. Although during my time, it didn't make me want to ditch my other mechanical keyboard, which is full-sized and has dedicated media controls. What I will say is the Speedlink Ultor is a perfect travel / LAN gaming keyboard. Due to it's compact size, macro support and durable build it will make an excellent complement to anyone's portable rig. Even if that's not your thing and you're someone looking for a unique keyboard for their gaming rig at home and your favourite colour is red, then definitely check this one out.



RRP: £94.99 / \$139.00

Suitable for:



PC





LOGITECH G610 KEYBOARD

By now I'm becoming a dab hand at all of this mechanical keyboard stuff, having this as my third one. I've only just realised, however, that the colour of the switches is probably one of the most important things I should have spoken about. Incidentally, the G610 has red ones.

Red switches are the hair-trigger ones -- which explains why I've made so many typos recently. However, I've quickly gotten used to the red switches, and enjoy the keyboard much more than going back to my wireless Logitech keyboard.

Getting the G610 out of the box, it was accompanied by a manual and nothing else. That was pretty surprising, as I don't think I've opened a box recently without a couple of books, a warranty and a quick start guide popping out.

The keyboard is quite hefty with a great solid design, none of the keys feeling loose and no gaps in the panels. As well as the full QWERTY keyboard, it has buttons for Gaming Mode, Brightness, Mute, Media (play, stop, fast forward, rewind), and a volume wheel. The wheel is quite long and very sensitive, and due to the position of my mouse I can easily reach it without letting go if needs be. My mouse actually has volume controls on it, but that's neither here nor there.

Due to the black colour of the keyboard, the literal worst colour you could choose to print under the Caps Lock light et al, would be black. So although you can see they keys very well in a dark room, due to the white backlight which pulses across the keys, you can't actually see what each of the three Lock lights is indicating unless you shine a light directly on the keyboard.

Apart from that, and the very light key switches, I've enjoyed the Logitech G610. It remains firmly in place due to its weight, and the rubber feet underneath. The keys are responsive and don't feel spongy whilst typing, and none of the extra buttons are in the way whilst typing. The media keys are a bonus, though I've always liked having them on keyboards -- if you don't like them, you don't have to use them.

If you're looking for a mechanical keyboard, the G610 is a good one. It doesn't have some of the issues I've come across with other makes, such as the keys feeling too tall. You can adjust the brightness of the backlight easily, so even if you don't like it there's an option for you. A few more colours wouldn't have gone amiss, but the white is fine. In all a good, responsive keyboard.

RRP: £104.99 / \$119.99



Suitable for:



PC



SPEEDLINK DECUS GAMING MOUSE

I've been eager to try a gaming mouse for absolutely ages, but they've either been too expensive or looked too cheap. So I was a little excited to finally get to experience one.

My last mouse was wireless through necessity -- I didn't have straightforward access to my PC tower. When I opened the box, I didn't know how to feel about the cord coming out of the top end of the red & black multi-buttoned piece of plastic. Almost two metres long and reinforced, but I'll admit it looks strange to see a cable running along my desk. That's just me, though.

Compared to my old mouse, the Decus looks like a beast. It's huge! That's because it's got an apparently ergonomic design. There is a groove or cranny for all five fingers (or four and a thumb, you pedant), and it does feel comfortable to hold, but my wife doesn't agree due to her hand being smaller. I haven't found any of the buttons difficult to reach from a resting position.

As well as the left and right buttons, it has a scroll wheel which acts as a middle mouse button. There are two buttons perfectly positioned for your thumb, which are Back and Forward by default -- and as there were similar buttons

on my old mouse, I kept them as such. Behind the scroll wheel is a button to change the DPI, which on a basic level makes the mouse move faster or slower. The final button is next to the left mouse button, and it clicks the left mouse over 100 times. I haven't managed to get it to work in a game, though it works as expected in a browser or Windows itself

All of the buttons are, of course, customisable using the bundled software, which can also program five profiles. These can switch automatically depending on the program you're using, so your Diablo configuration will swap to your Counter-Strike one without any hassle.

My only issue with the mouse, however, happens to be with the software. It allows you to choose the colour of the lights -- yet I tried multiple times to get it to stay a solid purple, and it insisted on remaining as "breathing" colour rotation. Perhaps it's an issue with Windows 10, the fact it's not a USB 3.0 port -- I have no idea. It's a minor gripe, but I would have liked to be able to choose the colour properly.




Functionally it is great, the build quality is perfect and it has easily become my favourite peripheral. It's big without being unwieldy, the button clicks aren't too loud and even the button to swap profiles is positioned well -- I've never hit it by accident.

If you're after a gaming mouse, definitely put this high up the shortlist.

RRP: £34.99 / \$54.00

Suitable for:



PC



SPEEDLINK KUDOS Z-9 GAMING MOUSE

In my review for Speedlink’s Decus Gaming Mouse, I mentioned that my wife found it large and unwieldy in her grasp. Well, right off the bat I can confirm that Speedlink’s Kudos Z-9 Gaming Mouse is smaller, and more suitable for her hands. They both look similar, with the same black and red colour job, and a braided cable, but the buttons are different.

The Kudos mouse wheel can be moved sideways, which is a feature I like in a mouse, and will glow red whilst plugged into an active PC. The left and right buttons are sloped and flat, whereas the Decus had grooves for your fingers to sit in. There are two side buttons, which by default go forwards and backwards on a web browser, and sitting in the middle are two buttons, one for changing the mouse profile, the other for changing the sensitivity. On either side of the profile button are two which control the computer’s volume.

In the box, you get a quick install guide and a CD with the drivers on. Installation is painless, and the program it installs is much easier to use than the one which came with the Decus. You can set up macros and change what the buttons do for each profile, as well as a colour. It’s not as pretty as the pulsing from the Decus, but at least it changes to whatever colour you choose, instead of not switching from the rainbow setting.

Although I did like the hefty size of the Decus, the Kudos feels fine in my hand. It’s large, without filling my palm as the other did. The design is curved so that it fits your right hand very well, though you will regret it if you don’t have a mousepad, as your wrist will be left on the table. It works pretty well on woodgrain, though I imagine extended use will cause the pads on the underneath to become scratched.

The Kudos responds very well in-game, and the addition of the volume controls is great. I use them quite a bit, even though my keyboard also has them -- though they are more of a stretch than moving my index finger an inch or two.

I wasn’t quite sure what to expect when I plugged the Kudos in. I expected it to be, or at least feel, cheaper than the Decus, but they’re actually about the same price and have the same excellent build quality. It is a little smaller and the buttons are different, so you should definitely consider which one suits your needs best from a button standpoint, as the Kudos is another excellent gaming mouse.



RRP: £54.99 / \$64.99

Suitable for:



PC





PENCLIC MOUSE R3

A mouse that you hold like a pen, the description for the Penclic Mouse R3 couldn't be more apt. The main body is shaped like a pen, with the two mouse buttons and scroll wheel on it, and with the base holding the infra red sensor and rechargeable battery.

The case that the R3 comes in is pretty awesome, with an orange base and clear top. I was a little curious why the nano USB receiver was loose in it, however. Inside the base is a carry bag, which contains the battery and extendable USB cable. I had a bit of trouble opening the battery compartment to be honest, but the battery fit in perfectly.

It took about an hour to get used to it, but that was mainly because the left button does the right click, and visa versa. It sounds unintuitive, but as the right button is on your index finger, and the other one is on the thumb, it's actually a really good idea. The fiddly bit is the scroll wheel, as I'm used to having three fingers on a mouse's three buttons and yet here you have to move your index finger across to it.

One of the R3's selling points is the fact that your arm remains relatively motionless, and you move it with just your wrist. I've found that is indeed what I'm doing -- and can actually stop using the mouse matt and just

rest it on my leg. It's resulted in much less stretching, and more leaning back relaxing.

Of course, that's well and good for minor, slow movements with word processing and web surfing. The real test was taking it into a game! I've been using Speedlink's Kudos Z-9 for about three months now, and as a gaming mouse it's obviously better suited to gaming. Except, not necessarily...

See, I've never played a Call of Duty and I'll likely never play DOOM. I don't go for twitch-paced gaming, and the variety of first-person shooters I play isn't huge. Most of my third-person gaming is done with a controller, omitting a mouse completely. Therefore the type of game I was going to try with the R3 was never going to require quick movements -- so your mileage may vary!

I played an absolute ton of Marvel Heroes, the Marvel-based free-to-play MMO, with no control issues. That was mainly mouse-based control, so gave me plenty of time to find problems. I also played half an hour of LA Cops, which is mouse and keyboard controlled. The mouse is used for aiming and shooting, and the keyboard for moving, and once again I had no issues with controlling it.

The battery life in the R3 is really quite amazing, to be perfectly honest. It goes into standby

mode if left untouched for about 10 minutes, which helps it last longer, and the power switch on the underside can of course be used. But from a full charge to needing a charge is a long time. I used it for three days and it still didn't need charging -- and that's pretty much from 10am to 10pm each day with breaks.

Being styled like a pen, it makes writing your signature digitally much easier, as well as making other tasks more accurate. When I swapped back to the Kudos for a bit, I noticed myself clicking on things slightly to the side of things a lot more than when using the R3. If you're looking for an alternative to a regular mouse, this is actually fantastic. It really does lessen the strain on your arm, though make sure you use it with a mouse mat.

RRP: £59.99 / \$79.00



Suitable for:



PC



BENQ EW2775ZH

First off, let's get out of the way that this 27 inch monitor is absolutely huge, though it doesn't detract from looking good at the same time. It's a large, AMVA+ panel locked inside that frame, with a thin bezel around the edge. It's hard to see it when it's turned off, but when the monitor is on, it becomes clear that there's a black area around the image where the rest of the bezel on a different monitor would cover.

In terms of stats, this is a full HD monitor, with a native resolution of 1920 x 1080. A contrast ratio of

3000:1 and a refresh rate of 60hz. The panel is an 8bit AMVA+, with a response time of 12ms (4ms GtG) and comes with some neat features, such as "Brightness Intelligence Technology" and "Low Blue Light Plus" mode, which is much the same feature as software like f.lux aims to provide.

Brightness Intelligence Technology, as the name somewhat implies, which brightens up the darker areas of the screen, allowing detail to be seen in those darkened areas. Great for assisting the hunt for enemies hiding in the shadows when playing

games, but also quite useful when watching video, especially on scenes that are particularly dark.

However, Low Blue Light Plus is the feature that's really on offer here. Late at night, or in a darkened room, blue-light causes eye strain, and can also have an adverse affect your ability to sleep. Programs like f.lux appeared and reduced the amount of blue light from your screen in time with the sunset for your regionality. Now, BenQ are adding this as a feature of the monitor itself meaning you can also apply this to your games consoles too, without having to rely on software.

There's two HDMI inputs on the back, allowing you to connect multiple devices, such as your PC and a games console at the same time along with a standard D-Sub connector, which should cover a myriad of older devices that don't have HDMI connectivity. There's also a 3.5mm line-in audio jack, so that you can connect

audio to it when using the D-Sub connector, otherwise, audio will come over HDMI. The speakers on this unit are at the back, alongside the connectors - a positioning I find odd, at worst, your audio will sound deadened as it's projected into the room behind the monitor, though - if you position this against a wall, you'll at least have the sound reverberated to you.

Sadly, BenQ have changed their stand design with this monitor, which no longer allows for the great range of positioning from previous line-ups. You also can't twist this one into portrait mode on the stand, which is another great feature lost. You might be thinking "no problem, I'll just use an aftermarket stand". Alas, no. There's no VESA mounting points on this unit - so that's out of the question too. You'll have to use the included stand - or find another monitor instead.



RRP: £201.00 / \$277.00





BENQ BL2420Z

The BenQ BL2420Z is an 8-bit, 24 inch full-HD monitor supporting resolutions up to 1920x1080 with a contrast ratio of 3000:1 and a response time of 7ms. But how does this translate to everyday usage for work and gaming?

In the box, you have the monitor, a beefy stand (more on that in a minute) and the cables needed to hook it up to your PC. It's no more difficult than any other monitor to get connected, only with the addition of a USB cable that allows the monitor to converse with the BenQ software, which is supplied on the included CD-ROM, however, you're likely better off getting a newer version from the BenQ website.

With it all connected, I started with some standard tasks like file organisation and some word processing which didn't really task this monitor all too much. Being the "BL" series of monitors, this is part of BenQ's "Business Line", so tasks like these are par for the course. However, it wasn't till I started viewing some photographs that I noticed visible banding in darker areas. This was due to the monitor being in its "CAD/CAM" mode, which brightens things up, but wasn't much cop for usual desktop viewing. A quick change to "Standard" mode and things are much more as to be expected.

What is apparent though is the depth of this monitor. Having used quite thin monitors for some time now, the depth that this monitor takes up is a good 3/4 cm (just the panel, not including the stand) which makes it feel, overall, a bit chunky. Not something you'd likely notice in your office, but on your desk at home, it might be a bit too imposing. The stand, however, is one of the best stands that I've had adorn my desk. It's both solidly built and weighty, so you don't get that 'wobble' that affects the smaller flimsy stands that you get with many other monitors. Not only that, but it allows the monitor to be placed exactly where you want it - in terms of height and angle. You can even rotate the monitor on its stand into a portrait view, which is excellent for reading long documents or web pages, or viewing and editing source code.

So, the monitor works great for office tasks, but what about gaming? Well, the BL2420Z isn't particularly a slouch in this department, working more than adequately enough for a few rounds of Rocket League and some CS: GO, but there was some ghosting that was more apparent in dark to light sections, though never enough that it would have affected gameplay in any serious way.

A nice touch is the addition of a "Low Blue-light" mode, which reduces the amount of blue light that the monitor produces. If you use your computer in low-light or late in the day often, then a feature like this will be a godsend for your eyes - as well as your sleep pattern.

RRP: £169.99 / \$302.00





BENQ GW2270H

Ah, BenQ -- probably the only monitor manufacturer I can name without a thought. We've covered a lot of them recently, probably because their range is ever-growing, with a monitor for pretty much anyone. The GW2270H 21.5-inch monitor takes things down a notch, though that's not a bad thing.

The GW2270H seems more designed for everyday users, rather than being aimed at gamers, and that much is obvious from when you take a look at the ports it has open on the back. A standard VGA port, a headphone socket and two HDMI ports are the only things there apart from the power socket. The maximum resolution is 1920x1080 pixels, so it is clearly not designed for those wanting a 4K experience.

The build quality of the monitor is excellent, and the stand is very easy to clip together. I hate stands that require you to break out a screwdriver, so was more than happy that this didn't need one. The stand allows the monitor to tilt quite far back compared to most monitors I've encountered. The box also contains a power cable, VGA cable and an HDMI cable.

Amongst the features it boasts are a flicker-free backlight, a low blue light mode and

3000:1 Native Contrast Ratio. What those basically boil down to are: it goes easy on your eyes. The brightness can be set to four presets, depending on what you're doing, or can be set manually. It also has a 178°/178° viewing angle, which meant that my wife could comfortably view what I was playing even when she was looking from the side of the screen.

As it didn't seem suited for a gaming PC, I decided to forgo testing it with my computer. The HDMI slot on my graphics card still has a little plastic shield on it, and I wasn't about to remove it... I plugged it into my PlayStation 4 and gave it a whirl instead.

I usually use a 37 inch HD TV for playing console games on, but despite the drastic size reduction the games I tried out still popped. Of course, I had to use a headset for audio, as monitors don't have speakers, but I'd have used headphones if I had it hooked up to the PC anyway.

If you're looking for a smaller sized monitor that will run you under £100, then it's perfectly adequate, and has a range of display options.



RRP: £96.99 / \$N/A

BENQ BL2711U UHD DESIGNER MONITOR

This was my first experience with 4K. I spent a good month with this monitor, a 27" BenQ BL2711U, and I'm still disappointed to be back to a 1080p display—the difference is immediately noticeable.

The BL2711U is designed for artists and creators. It boasts features like "100% sRGB and REC 709 color space with 10bits IPS technology", and if you have any idea what that means, you're a better nerd than I.

As someone who has only recently transitioned from laptops to desktop computers, the size of the screen was almost intimidating—both in terms of how much it displays at one time, and the actual physical presence of the thing. Thankfully, the BL2711U comes with an easily adjustable mount that gave it the height I needed to not knock everything else off my tightly organised desk. You can also alter the orientation from horizontal and vertical with ease (and automatically, with some software), the angle of the screen's tilt, and the rotational pivot. Being in games media, I primarily used the BL2711U for gaming. My initial issue was the colour display. Everything was either way too bright or way too blue, and I struggled for hours to find a balance. In the end, I did have to leave it at a higher brightness than I would like, but what it did for the colours was quite stunning. Intended for the designer more so than the consumer, the technical features of the monitor brought far more

depth out of the colours than I could see before.

A word of warning though, for someone with little technical knowledge like myself: use a DisplayPort cable, not a DVI. I used the same DVI cable I use for my own monitor, and immediately noticed a stuttering in every movement, in-game and during other tasks. Through a DVI, this monitor will only display at 30Hz, rather than 60Hz. Get a DisplayPort cable.

Another issue I had was the menu interface. For a short while, I had no idea how to alter any settings. Rather than using standard buttons, the BL2711U uses a touch-sensitive alternative similar to what you'd find on a games console or some such. There are small lights on the different points, but they only light up *after* you've pushed them, which I thought was frankly insane.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience with the 27" BenQ BL2711U monitor, after arguably my own technical hiccups to begin with. Carrying an average price tag of £450, it's a little on the expensive side if you're just looking for an Ultra High Definition display for gaming, but for a designer, I'm sure the cost can be measured by its features. It definitely opened my eyes to the advantages of 4K.



RRP: £598.99 / \$549.00





BENQ W1080ST+

The W1080ST+ is a full HD, 1080p projector, that can deliver a screen size of upto 100 inches from only 1.5 meters away, thanks to it's short-throw technology. This means those with smaller rooms can still enjoy the picture size that a projector brings without having to remodel their homes to get the required throw distance. This model upgrades from its previous outing with the inclusion of being able to receive video wirelessly, meaning for those who can't run cables everywhere can still benefit. The W1080ST+ also supports 3D, by way of active 3D glasses which are an optional extra.

Out of the box, the projector looks not too dissimilar to other projectors in the BenQ range, with a white glossy finish and curved edges. Given the short throw technology and the fact that this projector may well be in front of you, it's aesthetically pleasing to look at. But, that's not what we're here for.

On paper, the W1080ST+ boasts full-HD 1080p native resolution, a screen size of between 38 to 300 inches and a 2200 Lumen output. It also has keystone correction both vertically and horizontally, so you can place it off to one side, if required. Last but not least, it has a full array of inputs available, with 2 HDMI ports, a standard

VGA D-Sub as well as both component and regular RCA sockets. The HDMI input supports the MHL (Mobile High-Definition Link) protocol, enabling the display of pictures and videos from a mobile device much easier. As mentioned briefly, the W1080ST+ is also compatible with the BenQ Wireless Full HD Display kit, an optional extra that will allow you to place the projector independently of the device that's supplying the video signal.

In use, this plucky little projector delivered a bright, good quality picture overall. With brighter scenes fairing the best. There's still good contrast to be had in dark scenes, though some black spots appeared to be a bit grey at times, though scenes showing a mix of content still displayed crisp and vibrant. But that vibrance comes at a small cost, and that's what's called the "rainbow effect". This isn't something that everyone will see or even notice, but it can be jarring when you do. But this isn't so much an issue of the W1080ST+ than it is a side effect of the single-chip DLP technology in use.



Last up is the built-in speakers. This unit has 10W of audio power under the hood. It's not going to stand up against a full home theatre solution but it's more than capable for quick, on the go action and fared somewhat better than other projectors with in built speakers.

RRP: £810.00 / \$988.00



GAME MICRO-REVIEWS

You might be looking for something to go with your new hardware - well here's what GameOn think about the latest AAA titles



XB PS PC

There's very little to dislike about Battlefield 1. What the game is at its core is a beautiful-looking and exciting period shooter that will give fans of the series (and those that have been clamouring for a AAA historical FPS) hours of fun.

Battlefield 1
9/10



XB PS PC

Dishonored 2 is a substantial improvement over its predecessor and is an expertly crafted continuation from the first. With a plethora of choices and wonderful architectural puzzle design, it's truly an immersive experience. It's just a shame it's held back by terrible and unfortunate PC performance.

Dishonored 2
7/10



XB PS PC

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim Special Edition

Skyrim is still a great place to get lost in and the visual upgrade is welcome. It perhaps doesn't go as far as it should and it's a shame no other aspect of the game got looked at but it's still well worth your time.

8/10



XB PS PC

Some minor points mar a pretty great game, with lots of secrets and depth. If you're eager to return to the world of Fallout, this will more than scratch that itch, just be prepared to build settlements.

Fallout 4
8.5/10



XB PS PC

Overall Grand Theft Auto V is a stunning game that will keep you entertained for hours, hell, even attempting to walk from one end of the map to the other is going to kill several hours due to the size of it.

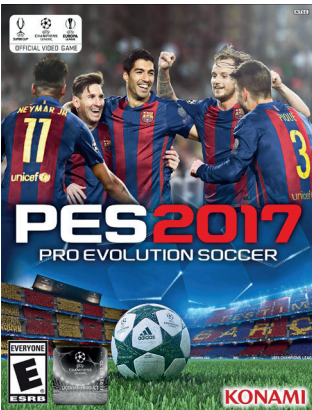
Grand Theft Auto V
7/10



XB PS PC

Ever wanted a game where you can mine, build and generally do anything you want without worrying about storylines and missions? If so this is the game for you. Minecraft lets you build anything that you can think up with the use of blocks. You may be thinking if there is no storyline or any sort of structure to the game where can.

Minecraft
8.5/10



XB PS PC

Pro Evolution Soccer 2017

PES 2017 might be a giant leap for PES, but it's a very little step for football games. Little to offer off the pitch and a joyless chore on the pitch. For hardened PES fans there's probably enough to satisfy, but for the rest of us we look to FIFA with hope and trepidation. Don't screw us on this one EA!

5.5/10



XB PS PC

Rocket League is a blast to play and will have you coming back for more, time and time again.

Rocket League 9/10



XB PS PC

While I was reviewing this, Ubisoft had to take the multiplayer servers offline saying that it was causing problems. It might have been the reason for the bad frame rate at times, because it seemed to be better when it was turned off. Despite this, I can only recommend Watch_Dogs 2.

Watch_Dogs 2 9.5/10



XB PS PC

The improvements to the game are much needed, the single player campaign is one of the best I have played this year. Graphics are fantastic and a treat to the eyes, game modes have increased overall for multiplayer but there is the occasional hit and miss.

Titanfall 2 9/10



XB PS PC

A great addition to the Deus Ex mythos, and more than just a better looking Human Revolution. If you're a fan of the series, or even just the last one, then you can't go wrong with Deus Ex: Mankind Divided.

Deus Ex: Mankind Divided 10/10



XB PS PC

Despite being a fan of the XCOM series as a whole I never expected this new entry to be as polished, intricate, immersive, beautiful and exciting as it is. XCOM 2 is not only one of the greatest strategy games of all time, it's also one of the greatest videogames of all time.

XCOM 2 10/10



XB PS PC

A marked improvement on last years entry, with plenty of new features to keep all levels of players interested. The new features add much needed playability to the sessions in the career and the manual starts/pit entry and formation laps add the extra sprinkling of realism needed to help it feel more immersive.

F1 2016 8/10



XB PS PC

It is just like a good Batman comic. Playing this makes you realise how much work goes into being Batman, the focus and commitment that Bruce Wayne shows, his willingness to do whatever it takes to save the day... It's not a perfect game, but it's a perfect Batman game.

Batman: Arkham Knight 9/10



XB PS PC

While it is repetitive, the driving and fighting mechanics are enjoyable as long as you remember to take a decent sized break every few missions. Ultimately, this is a game for those who care more about the story than anything else.

Mafia III 6.5/10

INTEL DESKTOP CPU GUIDE

So Intel's desktop lineup can be a bit of a minefield, I thought I would pop together a quick run through their range detailing the different features and hopefully give a good indication of a use case for each chip.

I'll start off with the standard desktop line, these are the bulk of Intel's desktop sales. Across the range of desktop chip's we have features such as integrated GPU's, 16x on chip PCI-E lanes which can either be used as a single 16x lane for a single card or as two 8x lanes for Crossfire / SLI support, there are boards out there that offer more than two card support via the use of a PLX chip.

Pentium and Celeron

These are Intel's entry level, basic dual core chips, I wouldn't really recommend these for anything more than light gaming, they are aimed more at the basic Facebook / web browsing machine.

There isn't a huge difference between the Pentium and Celeron lines, on the latest Skylake chips the Pentiums have slightly more cache than the Celeron chips, 3mb vs 2mb.

The Pentium chips also have a higher clock speed and some models have a better spec integrated GPU.

One interesting thing that some of these chips support and the i5's / i7's don't support is ECC memory, why would you have this on lower end chips and not high end chips? Well the main reason is NAS devices, they don't need 4 cores or a high clock speed but ECC memory is essential in my opinion, I actually run FreeNas on a Pentium chip with ECC memory, bear in mind you will also need a motherboard that supports ECC memory as well.

Example of a standard Intel Desktop CPU, the i3 / i5 / i7 chips share the same package.

Core i3

The Core i3 is the entry level "Core" chip, these are dual core like the Celerons / Pentiums but have hyperthreading which will give you 4 threads, better for gaming, and there are models with higher clock speeds than the Celerons / Pentiums, some models also have an extra 1mb of cache. These also support ECC memory so another good pick if you want a more powerful NAS system.

Core i5

This is the chip most gamers will likely have, these are true quad core chips but don't have hyperthreading.

For today's gaming at least for now 4 cores generally seems to be enough (DX12 / Vulkan may change that).

The cache on the i5's is bumped up as well, Intel's latest Skylake chips have 6mb compared to the 4 / 3mb on the Core i3 chips. Grab the K variant i5 and with a little tweaking in the EFI / Bios you can get some good overlocks.

Core i7

These are the highest end chips Intel offer, a lot of debate amongst the enthusiasts as to if there is any real world benefit over the i5's for gaming, I guess it comes down to each individual's use case, Someone who streams their gaming may benefit from the extra threads for example. So from a tech point of view this is the chip with all the goodies enables, it has four cores, the full complement of cache and hyperthreading, also if you're not interested in overclocking but want the best performance then they have higher clock speeds as well, though you will need to decide if a couple of hundred extra MHz is worth the premium.

Core i7 HEDT (High-End Desktop)

Next up we have the second part of Intel's Core i7 line, given that these chips are effectively unlocked Xeons I would have preferred Intel called them something different like Core i9 for example to differentiate and avoid confusion but it is what it is.

Benefits here are more cores, Intel's Broadwell line of HEDT chips start at 6 cores and top out at 10 for example.

More on chip PCI-E lanes, there are two versions of these chips with 28 lanes and chips with 40, the 40 lane chips are great for anyone looking to do CrossFire / SLI as you can run two cards at full 16x or 3 cards at 8x8x8x. This is also great for PCI-E storage, you can run M.2 / U.2 drives straight off the CPU's lanes (motherboard supporting), why is this any better than running from a chipsets lanes?, Well for most users you won't notice a difference but for content creators / anyone requiring high throughput you might see a benefit, on the standard desktop range the drives connect to lanes on the chipset, the chipset then communicates to the CPU via DMI, which is effectively a 4x PCI-E link. So imagine you are doing I/O intensive work, have a number couple of drives hooked up and a number of USB devices and you might see the link bottleneck. Again though for most of us this won't be an issue.



Other variants

So, not wanting to make it too easy Intel makes it a little more confusing with a number of variants within the core lineup which I will briefly cover.

K Series

These are the chips that I expect most people to have or are looking at, these are the only chips in the range that support overclocking, along with the chip you will also need a Z series motherboard, for example with Skylake you would be looking at a Z170 based board.

T Series

These are the low power chips, the Skylake T series chips are 35w, great for a media PC for example that needs to be low noise, or a office machine that does not need a lot of horsepower.

P Series

Odd one these, they come in a number of TDP (Thermal design power) variants the only common feature along the line is the use of Intel's lowest end integrated GPU, the price isn't that much lower than the standard chips with the higher end GPU so I am not sure who these are aimed at, they might be chips with failed GPU cores that are being cut down and sold at a lower price.

Lowest end graphics, HD510 on the Skylake range for example

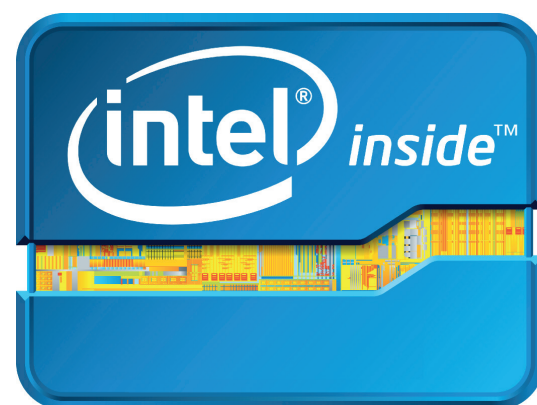
R / C Series

The first R Series chip I saw was the 4770R which was a chip that debuted in Intel's NUC lineup, it wasn't a socketed chip and was only available soldered to the board.

What made this unique is it came with Intel's highest end integrated graphics, and eDRAM, these made for powerful very small form factor machines, great for office use and media machines.

The C series were essentially the same but came in a socketed form factor, Intel released two of these with the Broadwell refresh a Core i5 and a Core i7.

Gamers were finding these to perform really well even compared to the newer Skylake chips, it's speculated the eDRAM helped a lot here, that said they are older chips now, use an older chipset and only support DDR3 and are quite expensive.



Conclusion

So that's a lot of CPU's to choose from, to summarize I would recommend the following use cases :

Pentium / Celeron = Web / Office work and basic gaming
Core i3 = Entry level gaming / Office work
Core i5 = Great for gaming at most levels
Core i7 = Enthusiast's
Core i7 HEDT = Enthusiast's / SLI and Crossfire / Content creators

Hopefully this guide helps anyone looking to pick up a new CPU.

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THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONSOLES

Trying to decide which console isn't being made any easier, with the recent releases of some upgraded versions of the latest consoles. Hopefully this will help you pick out which one you're looking for.

Xbox One

Standard model, which is going down in price since the introduction of the newer "S" model. Compatible with the motion sensing camera "Kinect"

Xbox One Elite

Comes with an Elite controller, better performing storage with 1Tb SSHD as opposed to the mechanical Hard Drive found in the standard model.



Xbox One S

4K Blu Ray player , 40% smaller and slightly more powerful than original Xbox One. Does not have a port for the Kinect, but an adapter can be ordered from Microsoft for free. Offers HDR content, can be positioned vertically and internal power supply (avoids the blocky object attached to the cable, allowing better fitting into more confined areas). In built storage available is up to 1TB (There was a limited run 2TB model available at launch, which may still be available internationally). HDMI 2.0 allows 4K and 60FPS. IR (InfraRed), TV controller compatibility, more updated controller. (Available separately)



Buyer beware:
Prices will vary depending on a variety of factors such as location, stock availability and the amount of items bundled with the console. Bundled items may include games and controllers.
The PlayStation Pro is the only console which will cost over £300 / \$300 *without* games.

PlayStation 4

The now 'defunct' PlayStation 4 model that Sony has stopped production of. You should still be able to pick up a refurbished or used one for a relatively decent price with the comforter that most first gen PS4s are still in the wild and working.



PlayStation 4 Slim

The slim is now the standard PS4 model and is 30% smaller, 16% lighter and 28% better at power consumption, with fewer USB ports. If you understood what all that means, you'll also be glad to know it houses the exact same innards as the original PS4 so your games won't look any different. Unlike the original, the Slim comes with both a 500GB and 1TB options with prices starting from around £230. In a nutshell, it's more of the same, in a better looking and smaller body.



PlayStation Pro

The PlayStation 4 with more power, perfect for those obsessed with crisper graphics, better frame rates and a 1080p resolution. With a price of around £400 and coming with a 1TB hard-drive, it is on the more expensive side of other consoles you can currently buy, but there is a reason. The PS Pro has a more powerful and faster GPU & CPU at its core, as well as harnessing the latest in HDR and 4K technology. Though there is no 4K Blu-Ray player for films (Sony are working with Netflix and YouTube on 4K streaming apps), the games you play will be the best looking ever seen on a PlayStation console, appearing all the better if you have a 4K television. Having the new console won't hinder the games you can play either, all PS4 games will be compatible with the Pro, some even receiving patches to optimise the Pro's technology. If you're obsessed with the latest tech, it's certainly for you, but if you just want to jump into the console space, the Slim will be just fine.

THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM SPECIAL EDITION STRATEGY GUIDE

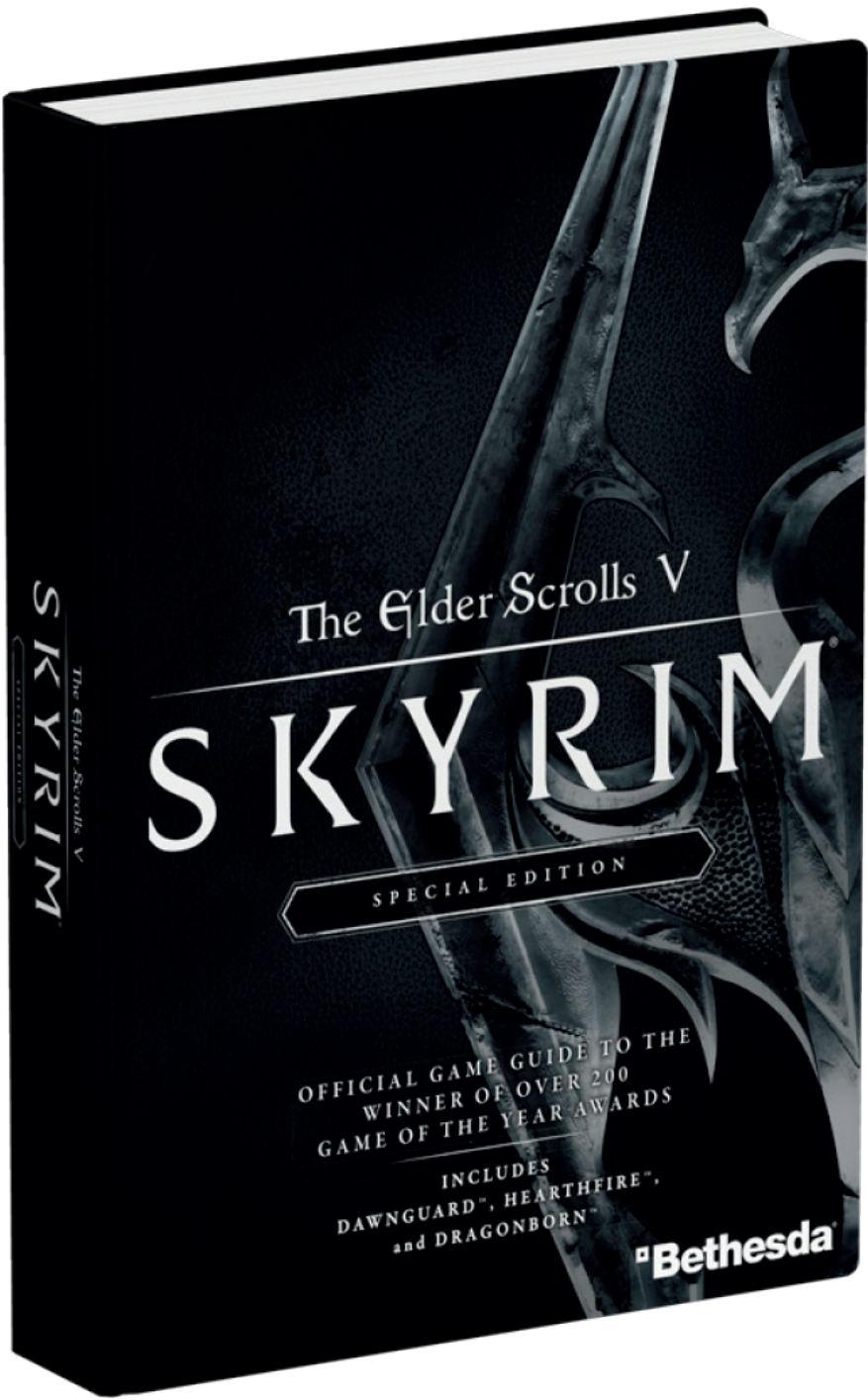
Following the release of Skyrim: Remastered Edition, Prima Games have brought out a full guidebook of the whole game, and they really haven't held back at all.

RRP: £24.99 / \$49.99

The detail within the book is simply astronomical. On the first few pages you are given a list of clear strengths/weaknesses with every race, as well a backstory behind their lore. From there, it launches into a guide about everything the game has to offer. Absolutely everything.

Every single weapon is detailed in the book. Walkthroughs for each mission (with methods for the best outcome these missions can offer, if multiple choices are available). They also reveal all of the locations and players are given a full, detailed map of the whole Skyrim area.

All in all, this guide is absolutely perfect for a fan of The Elder Scrolls. The sheer amount of detail contained within its pages will appeal to both new players, and even old ones that already poured hundreds of hours into the game. A must-have gift for any players of the game.

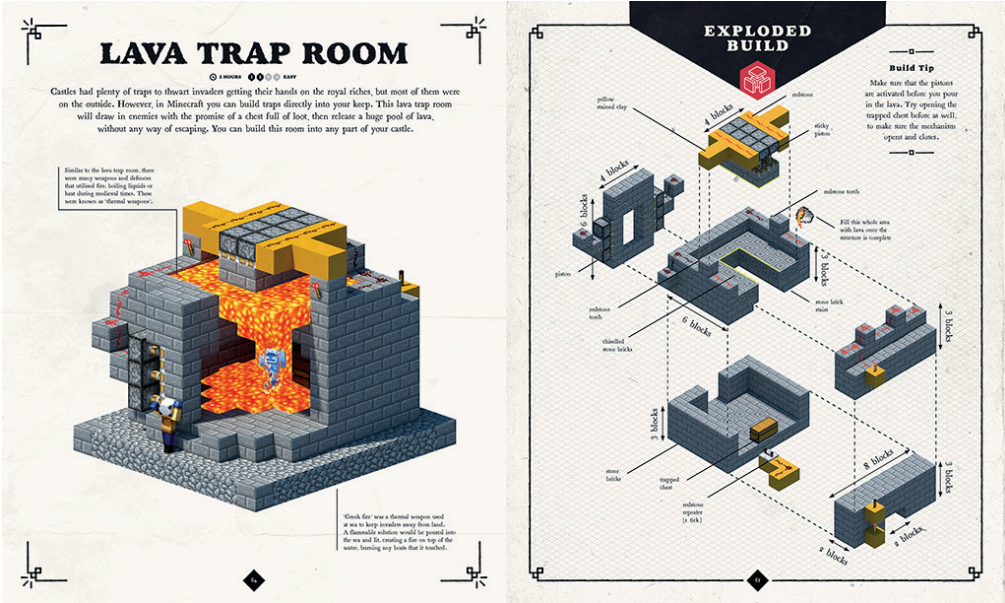


MINECRAFT: MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

Minecraft: Medieval Fortress is a building guidebook that can be appealing to both newcomers and experienced players. Being an avid player of the game for several years now, the booklet caught my attention as building had always been something that I had wanted to do, but lacked the creative flair in order to do so, instead dedicating my time to online PvP servers.

Within Medieval Fortress, you are given a step-by-step guide into building your own medieval town, complete with villages, castles and defence walls (with actual defensive measures, such as player outposts and traps within it). The illustrations within the book make the builds extremely easy to follow and splits & categorises it into many different sections, as to make sure the reader does not get lost or confused.

Overall, the Medieval Fortress guidebook is a fantastic gift for anyone who owns Minecraft. Even if they don't build very often, the detailed explanations behind each step make it very easy for new builders to follow, yet its complexity and sheer detail means that experienced builders can still find something new.



RRP: £12.99 / \$19.99

BESITER ECLIPSE 2 POWER BANK

Power banks are always useful, in our always-on digital world. You can't guarantee on finding a plug, and if you do there's probably someone already using it for their gadget -- so what are you to do? Oh, right, I already said power banks...

So that's where the Eclipse 2 from Besiter comes in -- the one I received to review has a nicely sized 5000mAh battery, which is almost double the size of the one I had been using before, and comes with a flat 25cm (10inch) long USB-to-micro USB cable. It has two types of charging available; 1 amp, or 2.1 amp. The difference between the two all depends on your device -- if it has a form of Fast Charge, then you can use the 2.1A socket with abandon.

Similarly, if it is a tablet, they require a little bit extra, so probably won't charge on the 1A socket. However, you can also charge two devices at once if you want to. It is also designed to allow you to charge it via USB, whilst you charge other devices, giving you plenty of options.

Of course, the device which I used the Eclipse 2 the most with was my Samsung Galaxy Note 4, which has a 3220 mAh battery as

standard. It charges about as quickly if I had it plugged into the wall, but despite the larger battery pack it takes 48% of the battery to charge my Note 4 to full, from 50%.

I can tell exactly how much charge remains in the Eclipse 2, because there is a digital readout. If you pick it up, it detects the movement and displays the remaining power, which is a big step up from four flashing lights on my old power bank...

It is also equipped with an LED, which pulls out from the same side as the display. It is quite bright, and very easy on the battery. Whilst it was stood on my desk with only the LED on, it took about 40 minutes for the battery to drain by 1%.

I was curious about what kinds of device the Eclipse 2 could charge, and honestly it charged everything I plugged into it:

- An Asus Transformer tablet, which is finicky as heck when it comes to charging.
- A Hudl tablet.
- A PlayStation Vita (which I usually charge via my PC's USB port) was just like having it plugged into the wall.
- A PlayStation 4 controller, even!

I'm really impressed with the versatility of the Eclipse 2, though do feel that the 10000mAh version would have been more useful. I have a lot of devices that need recharging regularly... As I type, a mini-keyboard, my phone, tablet and Eclipse 2 are charging on the desk beside me...

RRP: £19.99 / \$N/A



Suitable for:



Smartphones

Handhelds



Tablets



Controllers



STEAM LINK

The ability to play PC games from the comfort of my bed has long been a dream. I once had the PC at the foot of my bed, but the monitor was too small for me to read anything on it. My wifi connection in the bedroom isn't reliable, so I needed an alternative.

The box contains Steam Link, flat ethernet cable, HDMI cable, power cable with four adaptors: USA, UK, Europe and Australia. Having never seen an Australian outlet before, I was so confused for several Google-free moments...

The Link and plug are both well designed, and even though you can swap the end of the plug it doesn't feel flimsy like some (RIM Blackberry chargers for example). All of the cables are about 1.5m long, and the only one I'm not using is the ethernet one. It's far too short to go out of the bedroom and down the stairs...

The first thing I did after plugging it in was check for a system update, which I'm very glad I did. It completely changed the layout

and how everything looked -- so I didn't have to get used to two firmwares, just the one.

When connecting to the relevant computer, you need to input a security code. Not easy when your memory sucks and you have to remember four digits between the bedroom and living room... That



done, I loaded up Marvel Heroes to both get my daily login bonus, and to give it the first test. It performed horribly.

Everything was so laggy that I could only assume my internet was being throttled to 56kbps. Annoyed, I gave up messing with it, and went to bed.

The next day I decided to change the settings on the Link, and make sure that my PC was running nothing but Steam. It's eight years old, so perhaps the 6GB of DDR2 RAM and Intel Core 2 processor weren't up to scratch.

I attempted to load some really low memory programs, such as Visual Boy Advance and gens, but neither showed up correctly. So I went for Star Trek 25th Anniversary, though as I have that DRM-free from GOG, it didn't load

up through Steam's Big Picture Mode, nor did Simon The Sorcerer. With a sigh, and a desire to finally play it, I loaded up The Novelist.

As it's a simple first-person perspective, I was happy to find it running perfectly. No lag, inputs were obeyed instantly, and the graphics were perfect. I played it for a good few hours, before coming off to try using some desktop apps, as I'd been told it was capable of doing.

Unfortunately the best I could get was that it showed the desktop, then crashed. Not my PC, but the Steam Link. I checked the PC, and it was still running perfectly, and Elite Dangerous: Horizons

RRP: £39.99 / \$39.99

looking pretty fantastic. When either game got busy, there was a drop in framerate and the odd artifact on the screen for a moment, but it was pretty great playing from the comfort of my bed.

Now that it's up and running, I've been finding excuses to take my game playing upstairs, if you know what I mean. Of course, I mean my Steam Link. It's a great bit of kit, and it'll be even better when I've done my planned PC upgrades.



XQISIT BT IE 200 BLUETOOTH EARPHONES

What first intrigued me about the BT IE 200 earphones wasn't the fact that they were bluetooth -- that's been done before. It was the magnetic aspect. See, the selling point for this particular set of earphones is that they will pause your audio playback.

Fittingly, the box that the BT IE 200 comes in, closes magnetically. It's a solid little box, and comes with an instruction booklet and two sets of spare covers. Well, not spare, so much as different sizes. I've never changed the default set

on any headset I've owned, but they were honestly hurting my ears and so I went for the smaller size. The bigger ones blocked out more sound due to their shape, but I didn't wear them for long.

The bluetooth receiver hangs under the left earpiece and the control box is below the right earpiece. The control box has three buttons and a micro-USB port for charging. Two control volume and skip tracks, while the middle one is the Multi Purpose Button, answering calls, pairing with devices and acting as play/pause.

Over the course of a week I used them several times to test how they worked under regular use. I like to listen to podcasts when I'm driving around, and they were pretty good for that. However, being a family man, I found they pulled down to one side whenever I had to take one out of my ear to be able to hear my wife.

I've found that, unfortunately, the claimed time of four hours listening time isn't quite being reached, with a

full charge running just over three hours. I haven't checked the 150 hours standby time, but that's because I want to use them, not stare at them for six days solid...

That said, I do like using them. It's been a while since I had in-ear earphones, rather than ear buds, so they took a little getting used to, but I have. The magnetic 'pause' is useful, but only if you have them hanging below your chin.

If you have them around your neck you run the risk of being choked, depending on how wide your neck is -- unless you take both of them out before attaching them together, of course. It also doubles as a weird/fancy necklace!

RRP: £49.99 / \$N/A

Suitable for:



PlayStation Vita



Smartphones



Tablets



PC



SPEEDLINK QUINOX PRO GAMEPAD

I'll admit, I certainly wasn't expecting to find such a complex device in my hands upon opening the box. I've been using a cheap wired Xbox 360 controller for my PC gaming for so long that I simply wasn't prepared for the upgrade to the Quinox. It takes some design cues from the Xbox Elite controller, though it's only for use with Windows, and has a 2.5m cable.

The front is laid out like any other Xbox controller, with ABXY, Start, Back, two analogue sticks and a D-pad with a "home" button in the middle. All of the buttons feel fine, except for some reason Back which feels a little too spongy and doesn't activate all of the time. The sticks are great and a little higher than my old controller, but I like it. The D-pad is separate buttons rather than a circle, and is simple awesome.



Now here's where it differs from other pads. On the underside there are four extra paddles, which can be set to perform macro functions, as can the two buttons nestled on either side of the removeable cable (it's a micro-USB). Back on the front is a display which is how you can tell when you're setting things up or not. The final two buttons are also switches, and are on the bottom of the Quinox. It took some working out, as the instructions aren't super clear, but it's easy enough to set it up to run a macro, especially when you realise they are buttons as well as switches. When in regular use, you can use the switches to set how sensitive the analogue sticks are, which I found very useful for Elite: Dangerous.

The final two extra features aren't actually mentioned in the quick start guide, and I had to work out what they did. One turns vibration on and off, the other switches the pad from XInput to DirectInput - basically how it shows up on Windows. Most games support XInput, whereas DirectInput requires more effort on your part.

In the box you have a quick install guide in 20 languages (across two booklets) and an info guide. You have to download the drivers, but unlike other Speedlink stuff I've reviewed it doesn't have an app bundled with it to control the profiles and macros. The build quality is nice and solid, and the design

looks nice. The buttons and sticks are lit with red LEDs, though you can turn them off with the right switch. The paddles on the underside are small enough to stay out of the way when playing normally, though I have occasionally caught one when in a fraught part of a game.

I played The Crew, Sonic Generations and Elite Dangerous: Horizons with the Quinox. It has definitely improved my flying in Elite, with the sensitivity adjusted all the way up -- I have a bad habit of being awful at landing on a docking pad, but that was with my old gamepad! I landed perfectly twice in a row, and only fluffed the third landing because I was

distracted. The sticks and bumpers make a very reactive ship, even in combat situations.

If you can see yourself using all of the features, then this is definitely one to consider. It's cheaper than the Elite Controller (about half the price), although you can only use it with the PC and you can't take it apart. Personally, I don't need an Xbox controller that I can disassemble. My old controller is going in the bin, long live the Quinox!

RRP: £59.99 / \$69.99



Suitable for:



PC



ROXIO GAMECAP HD PRO

The Roxio Gamecap HD Pro is an external video capture device intended for recording gameplay from games consoles in an easy to use combination of hardware and software as well as provide an easy way to stream to Twitch and YouTube. So how does it fare?

First of all, the Roxio Gamecap HD Pro can capture multiple resolutions from 480i up to 1080p, this means you can capture from last generation consoles (Wii, PS3, Xbox 360, WiiU) easily as well as from both Xbox One and PlayStation 4. It can record at up to 60fps except at 1080p where it is limited to 30fps.

The Gamecap HD Pro fits in between your TV and your console and has both HDMI and Component inputs and outputs. You simply connect your console to the inputs then connect the preferred output to your TV (most likely using the HDMI option), finally you connect the box to your PC via the included USB cable.

It should be noted that you cannot connect a PS3 using HDMI as Sony enforce HDCP (High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection) sadly and the Gamecap HD Pro doesn't act as a HDCP stripper so you'll need to use a Component connection for PS3.

In the box you get the device itself, which is extremely light, a USB cable for connecting to your PC and supplying power, an installation DVD and a Quick Start Guide that explains how to set up a PS3/Xbox 360. No HDMI or Component cables are included however so that's something to factor in.

After installation of the newest software from Roxio's site (rather than the outdated DVD), it's simply a case of launching the included software where you'll then see your console's output in the preview window and some settings related to capturing.

From here you can configure whether you are using the HDMI or Component input source, the location to save files to and length of videos (if required). You can also choose from one of two video containers, M2TS or the more widely used MP4. Capturing video is then as hitting the green Capture button.

Jumping into the options lets you customise the bitrate for your videos as well as link your Twitch and Youtube accounts. Once you've done that, streaming to those services is as simple as hitting the Live Stream button. This all works really well and is great for a beginner but it's very barebones, there is no support for adding an overlay of any sort (camera or image) or any sort

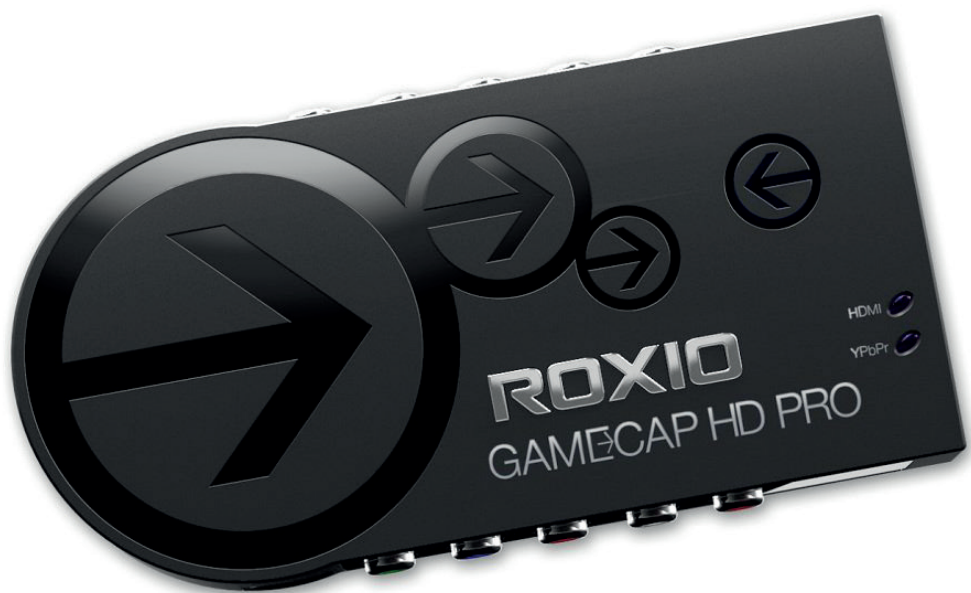
of scene transitions. As long as you only want your game image with voice over the top the included software does the job with a minimum of fuss.

If you want to go the extra mile all is not lost however as you can use the Gamecap HD Pro in both OBS Studio (Open Broadcaster Software) and XSplit streaming programs. Using these more advanced programs you can create overlays, show video from webcams, as well as other more advanced features. Support in other programs however is a little hit and miss, even though the Gamecap HD Pro shows up as a video device in other programs, it often won't work as you'd expect.

This isn't generally a problem as you'll most likely be using OBS or XSplit (or indeed its own software) to stream/record video but it does bear mentioning. The software also includes a surprisingly competent video editing package called Roxio Videowave, it's no replacement for Sony Vegas Pro or Adobe Premiere Pro but for the budding YouTuber it's an exceptionally fully-featured piece of software allowing

you to trim and piece together a video with a wide variety of transitions and effects. The product does have some negatives though, it's really light and the plastic casing doesn't feel sturdy at all, the lack of an HDMI cable in the box is a shame as that's something extra you need and the hit and miss compatibility with other software could be something that requires more investigation if you have specific needs.

The Gamecap HD Pro does what it says it will and in combination with its own software is straightforward to get setup and working quickly. If you solely intend to record videos from newer consoles for use on YouTube or to stream to Twitch in a plug and play manner then it performs those tasks admirably.



Suitable for:



PC



PlayStation 4

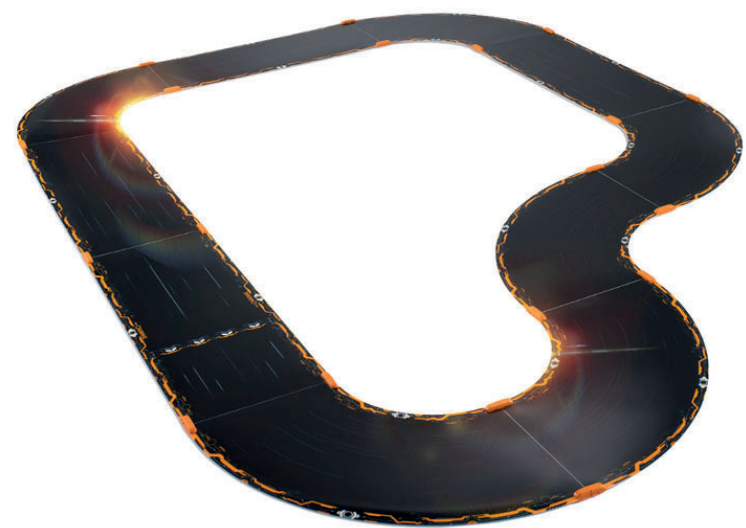


Xbox One

RRP: £129.99 / \$149.99

ANKI OVERDRIVE REVIEW

If you remember the old days of Scalextric racing car sets, where your cars would have to be manually slotted into the track and prone to coming off at every available corner, this is nothing like that.



We took a look at the Anki Overdrive Starter Kit, which comes with a wide selection of track for you to use, as well as two cars and a charging station which can simultaneously charge up to four cars.

Explained in the simplest terms I can conjure up, just so you can rush out and buy the damn thing as soon as you possibly can once you're through reading this. This is a track racing game, that you play with up to four players (or play with with AI-controlled cars), You race around the track with different mode and objectives, from trying to stay in the lead to how many time you can destroy your opponents.

I have to admit, at first we were expecting just a run of the mill normal racing game, which would get a bit tedious after a while of playing. Oh boy, we couldn't have been more wrong and we were thoroughly surprised.

First off, the cars just sit on the track instead of slot on. The track pieces magnetise together, making them extremely easy to construct and dismantle. The computers that are built into the cars stop it from shooting off the side of the track; the only way your car can leave the track is if you are knocked off by an opponent, and even then when this happened several times the cars were able to find their own way back onto the track and carry on as normal. You then race the using a mobile device (Android/iOS or Kindle Fire) to control the cars. Tilting your phone to the left or right veers you onto the four available



lanes, and you can control your speed via the on-screen throttle, which you slide up and down to vary your speed. On top of all of this, you also get weaponry attached to the car, which you can upgrade or swap out as you earn XP. Located on the right hand side, you have two buttons to operate these weapons; one for primary attack the other is for a special attack. Each car has it's own personal arsenal, really giving each player a unique experience and mixing up the gameplay.

After using our phones for a while, we decided to switch to tablets and both played using an iPad. Having the larger screen was really nice, but personally I preferred the phone as it was smaller and easier for the steering. My friend preferred the iPad though, due to the larger screen allowing for easier selection and control of speed and weaponry. Each player is required to have a phone or tablet (even an iPod Touch would work) but in this day and age, there aren't many households

without a couple of smartphones in the house.

The charging of the cars from drained only takes 10 minutes, and we found the battery life lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each time. With the charge time so short, it was easy to do things like make a cup of tea (we are British) or nip to the loo.

There is quite a list of devices that have been tested to make sure they are compatible with the Anki Overdrive racing system, but if you are not sure, you can find out by just downloading the app on the appropriate app store for your device, it will tell you if it's supported or not.

Once again, we have been very surprised about a lot of the features found in Anki Overdrive. With multiple game modes, this should keep you occupied for quite some time, there are ways just two of you can play and again will support up to four players at a time. But for those moments



when you find yourself in the house on your own, have no fear, Anki have you covered on that as well, as there is an AI built in so you can compete against it. This mode comes with a story mode, which is split into six episodes to keep you entertained. However, if you do have friends and still want to progress through the story mode, you can do co-op against the AI with a friend.

it's laps or amount of opponents destroyed. Not only this, but the game tracks these automatically and tells you what position you are in, making it much easier to determine the rankings of players

Overall the Anki Overdrive Starter Kit is a great present for kids or adults and enough comes with the game to keep you occupied for quite some time. Plus we can only hope that they implement new game modes later on.

RRP: £149.99 / \$149.99



Unlike conventional Scalextric, it is extremely easy to keep track of the game. Before starting matches you can adjust the score limit, whether



ANKI OVERDRIVE ACCESSORIES

Thinking of getting someone an Anki Overdrive for Christmas? Here are some great add ons which friends or family could buy for them.

Speed Kit

(Consists of two straight pieces)

If speed is what you need, then look no further. Build long straightaways where there's nowhere to hide! Put the hammer down and outrun your opponent or take aim and do battle.



Corner Kit

(Consists of two curve pieces)

Add more twists and turns to test your precision racing skills. Take tight corners at top speed, but watch out — slow down and you'll become a target! Or blast your opponent before they disappear around the bend!



Launch Kit

(Consists of two straight pieces and the raiser pieces)
Add jumps to your battlefield with the Launch Kit!

Collison Kit

(Consists of one Crossroad piece)
Pick off your opponents as they speed past, but watch out for devastating collisions and don't get caught in the crossfire!

Supercars

With a great selection of cars which all have their own unique primary and secondary power up for battling one another.



SuperTrucks

Supertrucks are nearly three times the size of Supercars, and use their heft, weapons and new control system to dominate the track. But Supertrucks are more than just oversized vehicles, they come with access to a new game mode and Commanders.

onki
OVERDRIVE™



COUCHMASTER CYCON

For quite some time, the main gripe I've had when playing games from the comfort of my sofa is that, for FPS games at least, I haven't been afforded the accuracy that comes with using a mouse and keyboard for input. Nerdytec have, however, come up with an elegant solution to that problem.

Enter the Couchmaster. The model we have here is the Cycon, which is their all-singing, all-dancing version that comes with all of the gadgetry you'll need for comfortable couch

based gaming. Out of the box, you'll get the two armrest pieces, the support case (which houses the USB3 hub), a 5 meter active USB3 extension cable, mousemat and a pocket for your mouse to go in when not in use.

The two armrest pieces are fairly simple, comprising of a foam inner and faux leather outer (other fabrics are available) that are fairly sturdy, but still allow your arms to rest on them without causing discomfort. Before use, I had worried that the armrests may have ended up

pushing my shoulders up, however, in use it became apparent that this wasn't the case.

The real meat of the Cycon is in the support case. In order to set this up, you need to remove two panels from the back of the case, and wire in your mouse and keyboard to the internal USB3 hub. Take note, that you'll also need to connect the USB3 hub extension wire that allows it to be connected to the longer 5m extension at this point. Something I'd forgotten to do and had to re-open the back of the support case to solve...

Once the keyboard and mouse is in place, you can hook up the Cycon's USB3 hub to your PC using the supplied 5m cable, and then get yourself comfortable for some gaming. Sitting at the Couchmaster feels a little weird at first, as you adapt to the more outward placement of your arms and hands. Initially, it's a little difficult moving your hands to the keyboard to type, but this is likely caused by years worth of muscle conditioning from sitting at a desk. It becomes second nature quickly enough, and

you'll be using your mouse and keyboard as naturally as if you were at a more standard setting of a desk. Getting in and out of a seated position is relatively easy too, as you can slide the support case over one of the arm rests to facilitate movement. Since the pieces are separate, you could also use the support case on it's own over a chair that has armrests already. Nerdytec do sell the support case solo - should you already have a single-seater chair that means the armrest pieces would go unused.

A major plus point is that the unit can be used for more than just a keyboard and mouse combo, with the addition of a USB port on the top of the support case, you could quite easily connect a joystick or gamepad to your PC such that you could control games like Elite: Dangerous whilst retaining the full command set afforded to you by having a keyboard at hand. Alternatively, you can pop your laptop on top of the support case and use it from the comfort of your sofa too. Though, if you've wired in a keyboard and mouse, you'll need to find somewhere to "hang" them whilst

using a laptop - or unwire them from the base completely.

I've since spent a couple of our Theme Nights here at GameOn using the Couchmaster Cycon, playing games such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive



and Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, interspersed with time spent playing single player outings. Sitting in front of a home-theatre system and large screen had me wanting to relive some of the experiences of games gone by, to see them in a new light. So with that, I fired up Half-Life 2 and got to work saving City 17 (again). Sat on the sofa, with the Couchmaster in place, watching

constant mouse shifting and keyboard presses meant nothing to the Cycon, which sat there and ate them up like it was a fully fledged desk. To wind down from all that, I moved onto some Factorio and well, 5 hours later I was still sat as comfy as ever laying waste to hordes of biters and placing transport belts, which speaks volumes for the comfort and usability of the Cycon.



Gordon Freeman get ported to the other side of the office on a large TV with full surround sound brought new life to the game, instead of being hunched over a small 22 inch screen with only a stereo headset for audio, and that's part of what makes the Couchmaster Cycon such a great addition to the gamers set piece. I also figured that a good test of the stability of the Cycon would be to play some strategy games, like an old favourite Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2,

Lastly, there's some additional gadgets available for the Couchmaster; an ash-tray, phone holder and a tablet holder round out the selection of what's available as optional extras. I quite like the idea of mounting a tablet to the Cycon, for those times you need to look up crafting recipes in Minecraft or where that last damn flag is in Assassin's Creed.



Suitable for:





[Click here to see if you have the latest version](#)