

PCSpecialist Zircon Nano

Not for those who hate fan noise, but an excellent and compact 1440p gaming PC based on AMD silicon

SCORE ★★★★★

PRICE £1,124 (£1,349 inc VAT) from pcspecialist.co.uk/reviews

Are we slowly moving away from the era of RGB excess and into one of subtle power? If so, the PCSpecialist Zircon Nano is bang on trend, squeezing impressive amounts of compute and gaming prowess into a compact mini tower chassis made by Lian Li (the A3-mATX). Its front fascia is the same size as an A4 sheet of paper, but it stretches back 443mm so it still consumes space on a desk. With its understated black grille and mesh surround, it looks professional, with only the hum from its fans revealing the power within.

To keep the price within sensible bounds – a price that’s guaranteed during the period this magazine is on sale, so until 6 May – Wakefield-based PCSpecialist sticks to a six-core Ryzen 5 9600X CPU and 16GB of DDR-5600 RAM rather than moving up the CPU and memory food chain. That’s a solid choice for most users, although if you ever want to upgrade the RAM you’ll need to replace the supplied DIMMs.

With only six cores, this CPU will hold you back in any task that exploits multiple threads, with the Zircon Nano returning a modest 13,411 in Geekbench 6’s multicore test and 922 in Cinebench 2024. The question then is whether it’s worth the time saving in those intensive tasks versus the amount of money you’re saving.

PCSpecialist sticks with AMD for the GPU, opting for the Radeon RX

9060 XT and its 8GB of VRAM. That lack of video memory means you’ll struggle to play demanding AAA games at 4K with maximum graphics settings, as shown by 15fps in *Far Cry 6* (Ultra) and 42fps in *Cyberpunk 2077* (Ultra). Drop to 1440p and you’re rewarded with smooth gameplay in both those games, with 93fps and 86fps respectively (56fps with RT Ultra in *Cyberpunk*). Both *Shadow of the Tomb Raider* (Highest) and *Dirt 5* (Ultra High) broke the 100fps barrier at 1440p, with *Borderlands 3* (Ultra) dipping just below at 95fps.

The graphics card dominates the inside of the chassis, but it’s so easy to remove I can’t imagine any upgraders being annoyed. With the aid of a crosshead screwdriver, I had full access to the PC’s innards within two minutes of sliding off the side casing.

Your main limitation is the mini-ITX Gigabyte A620I AX motherboard.

There’s no room for any more PCIe slots on this tiny motherboard, but fortunately it packs Wi-Fi 6E, Bluetooth 5.4 and a 2.5GbE port.

There’s only one M.2 socket, so storage options are limited to three SATA drives, one of which can be



ABOVE The Zircon Nano is a superb compact gaming PC, at a guaranteed price

“The fact you’re buying a highly capable 1440p gaming system in such a compact form, and for such a competitive price, is a relief in today’s testing times”

LEFT The 10Gbits/sec USB 3.2 Gen2 port on the rear is helpfully colour-coded

BELOW The compact chassis is extremely easy to access should you need to upgrade

3.5in. The motherboard’s single M.2 socket is filled with a Gen4 SSD made by Hong Kong-based Klevv. Let’s call it a value choice, with solid sequential read speeds of 4,994MB/sec but less exceptional writes of 2,701MB/sec. Still, it’s unlikely you’ll ever notice this lack of pace compared to big-name competitors.

My final word on storage is around your external options. There are two USB-C ports, one at the front and one at the rear, but both are limited to 5Gbits/sec. Three of the rear-mounted USB-A ports are stuck at USB 2 speeds (480Mbits/sec), one is USB 3.2 Gen1 (5Gbits/sec) and one helpfully finished in red supports USB 3.2 Gen2 and its 10Gbits/sec speeds. Two further USB-A ports sit at the front, along with the power button and headphone/mic jacks.

Lian Li recommends air cooling for this chassis and that’s what

PCSpecialist chooses, opting for its own-brand AS-150 cooler. It’s effective, but once you factor in the CPU cooler’s fans, a trio of bottom-mounted fans and a rear exhaust fan

there’s a constant, audible hum – a hum that ramps up when gaming. If I were to sit this system on my desk, and it’s stylish enough, I would want something quieter. You can simply disconnect the bottom fans, which helps, and in general the Zircon won’t overheat: the power draw is modest at 43W in idle and 336W at peak.

There’s a place in the world for the Zircon Nano. The fact you’re buying a highly capable 1440p gaming system in such a compact form, and for such a competitive price, is a relief in today’s testing times. You also have the reassurance of a three-year warranty (the first six months include collect-and-return cover) from a company that consistently excels for customer service in our annual Excellence Awards (see issue 375, p26). It falls short of a Recommended due to the lack of upgrade options and the fan noise, but is still a fine PC. **TIM DANTON**

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6-core AMD Ryzen 5 9600X processor
- Gigabyte A620I AX motherboard
- 16GB PCS Pro DDR5-5600 RAM
- 8GB AMD Radeon RX 9060 XT graphics
- PCSpecialist AS-150 air cooler
- 1TB Klevv C910G M.2 PCIe Gen4 SSD
- Lian Li A3-mATX chassis
- 750W Corsair SF750 PSU
- Windows 11 Home
- 194 x 443 x 306mm (WDH)
- 3yr warranty (6 months C&R, 1yr RTB parts & labour, 2yr labour only)
- power: 43W idle, 336W peak

