



**BUDGET GAMING PC**

PC SPECIALIST  
SABRE MK1

/ **£719** inc VAT

SUPPLIER [pcspecialist.co.uk](http://pcspecialist.co.uk)

**P**C Specialist's Sabre MK1 is one of the cheapest gaming systems on the market, which makes it a great entry-level option, but it also means inevitable compromises. This PC uses a GeForce GTX 1660 Super – one of Nvidia's newest Turing GPUs. It's designed for 1080p gaming, which means a relatively modest specification that includes 1,408 stream processors and 8GB of memory, but no RT or Tensor cores. The PC Specialist uses a small Zotac model that runs at stock speeds.

The GPU is paired with an Intel Core i5-9400F, which has six cores and runs at base and boost speeds of 2.9GHz and 4.1GHz, but it doesn't have Hyper-Threading. It doesn't have a great cooler either, being topped with a stock Intel unit.

Elsewhere, there's a basic 256GB SATA SSD and a 1TB hard disk. PC Specialist has also added a wireless card, although it's a single-band 802.11n, so it's hardly futureproof.

The Corsair CV550 PSU is modest too; it's not modular and only has an 80 Plus Bronze certification. There's only 8GB of memory, plus it's installed in single-channel configuration, so performance will suffer.

Not surprisingly, the Asus TUF B360M-Plus Gaming is also a basic motherboard. Positively, it has three spare memory slots and two M.2 connectors, and its Gigabit Ethernet and Realtek ALC887 chipset are fine for most people's needs – the Core i5-9400F has a locked multiplier, so you can't overclock it easily anyway. The motherboard also has spare fan headers, an on-board USB 3.1 Gen 1 header and six SATA ports.

Elsewhere, there are limitations. It's a micro-ATX board, which means fewer PCI-E slots – this system only has one

**SPEC**

**CPU**

2.9GHz Intel Core i5-9400F

**Motherboard**

Asus TUF B360M-Plus Gaming

**Memory**

8GB Corsair Vengeance 2400MHz DDR4

**Graphics**

Zotac GeForce GTX 1660 Super

**Storage**

256GB PC Specialist branded SATA SSD, 1TB Seagate Barracuda hard drive

**Networking**

Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet

**Case**

PC Specialist Wraith RGB

**Cooling**

CPU: Intel low-profile cooler with 1x 80mm fan; GPU: 2x 80mm fans; front: 3x 120mm fans; rear: 1x 120mm fan

**PSU**

Corsair CV550 550W

**Ports**

Front: 1x USB 3, 2x USB 2, 2x audio; rear: 2x USB 3.1 Gen 2, 1x USB 3.1 Gen 1 Type-C, 2x USB 2, 1x PS/2, 3x audio

**Operating system**

Microsoft Windows 10 Home 64-bit

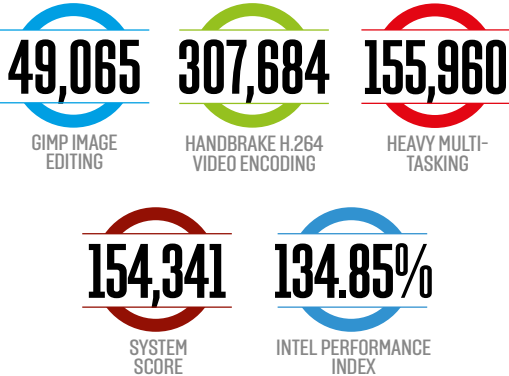
**Warranty**

One year parts and labour with first month collect and return, then two years labour only return to base

spare 1x PCI-E slot. At the rear, it has two full-sized USB 3.1 Gen 2 ports and a Type-C connector, but that's it for fast USB connections on the back.

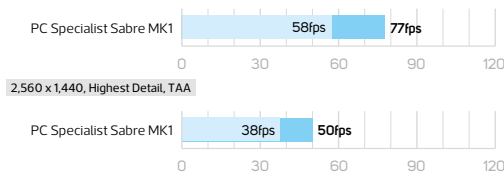
PC Specialist's own-brand Wraith chassis looks decent though. Its front panel is made from plastic mesh and the three RGB LED intake fans are bright and attractive. It's not too big either; this ATX chassis measures a reasonable 460mm tall and 210mm wide. There are magnetic dust filters at the top and bottom, a 120mm exhaust fan and a sole USB 3 port on the top, alongside two USB 2 connections.

## BENCHMARK RESULTS



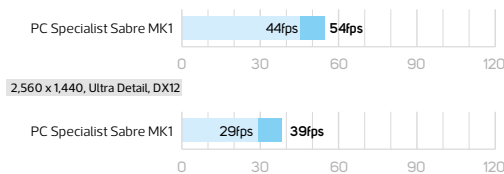
### SHADOW OF THE TOMB RAIDER

1,920 x 1,080, Highest Detail, TAA



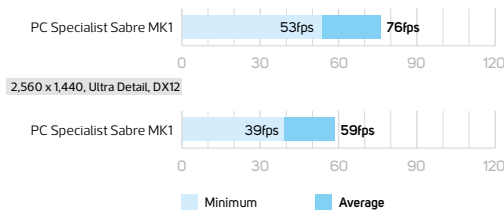
### TOTAL WAR: WARHAMMER II

1,920 x 1,080, Ultra Detail, DX12



### BATTLEFIELD V

1,920 x 1,080, Ultra Detail, DX12



The plastic mesh fascia and metal top panel are sturdy, and the tempered glass side window is strong too. Handily, the latter also sits on hinges and has a fabric tab for easier opening. The front panel is magnetic too, which is a useful touch. The rear side panel is weaker, though, and the PSU shroud feels flimsy. The case also has the odd sharp edge and corner, so be careful.

Meanwhile, the interior is basic, with no rubber grommets and a limited number of cable-routing holes, but it's pretty easy to build inside this machine. There's loads of room to work, and PC Specialist has kept cables neat, particularly when you consider the lack of a modular PSU. There's space at the rear for a spare 2.5in drive, but no spare hard disk bay.

This system has the usual PC Specialist warranty, which means three years of labour coverage and a year of parts protection, but only one month of collect and return service.

## Performance

The GTX 1660 Super is a decent GPU for 1080p gaming. In our trio of test titles, it delivered minimums of 44fps or better, and the minimums weren't far off 60fps in Shadow of the Tomb Raider and Battlefield V. That said, the Sabre's (non-ray-traced) Battlefield V results were a fair way behind what we usually expect from this GPU. Its 53fps minimum and 76fps average at 1080p results are perfectly playable, but the GTX 1660 Super managed a 75fps minimum and 96fps average in our recent graphics card Labs (see Issue 199, p46).

Meanwhile, the PC Specialist's CPU performance is a fair way behind Ryzen 5 3600-based machines, but the Sabre's overall benchmark result of 154,341 is good enough to handle everyday computing. Similarly, the SSD's read and write speeds of 528MB/sec and 454MB/sec are nothing special, especially when 250GB NVMe drives can cost under £50 now, but it's fast enough for conventional use.

The big issue here is the Sabre's single-channel memory. We swapped this rig's 8GB of 2400MHz memory for two 8GB, 2400MHz DIMMs, and the Sabre's benchmark score jumped to 159,510. In games, switching to dual-channel memory added 3-5fps to 1080p benchmark results. This upgrade costs under £10, and anyone considering this machine should make that change – it's surprising that PC Specialist is using single-channel memory by default here.

Thermally, the PC Specialist is solid. Its CPU and GPU delta Ts of 51°C and 50°C are good, with the stock-speed CPU not pushing the limits of the Intel stock cooler, and the system only produced a low rumble during gaming tests. The noise was much louder with the CPU stressed, but it's unlikely that this PC will see that level of CPU operation for a prolonged time.

## Conclusion

The Sabre MK1 is a solid option for budget 1080p gaming. Its GTX 1660 Super has enough pace to handle the latest games at respectable frame rates, and the rig has a reasonable chassis and a CPU that will cope with everyday computing. The low price does mean compromise though: the motherboard is basic, the SSD is a slow SATA model and the single-channel memory hinders performance.

The good news is that, even with a dual-channel memory setup, the Sabre MK1 is still a relatively affordable GTX 1660 Super system. If you do that, this system is ideal if you want to play games at 1080p but don't have much cash to spend.

MIKE JENNINGS

## VERDICT

Solid 1080p gaming for a reasonable price, but the spec could be significantly improved for not much more money.



### LIGHTSABER

- + Amazingly low price
- + Solid 1080p gaming pace
- + Good-looking chassis

### BREAD KNIFE

- 8GB single-channel memory
- SATA SSD
- Basic motherboard

### PERFORMANCE

16/25

### DESIGN

19/25

### HARDWARE

17/25

### VALUE

23/25

### OVERALL SCORE

75%