DESKTOP GAMING PC

PC SPECIALIST Apollo K-VR

COMPUTER SHOPPER BEST BUY ★★★★★

£1,579 • From www.pcspecialist.co.uk

VERDICT

Powerful in every task, this is a PC that excels in every task from photo editing to VR

PCs ARE A diverse lot, but the occasions when we get two desktops that are strikingly similar – despite coming from two different builders – are as amusing as they are rare. As such, we couldn't help cracking a smile when looking over the PC Specialist Apollo K-VR, with its mirroring of the CCL Theia VR (*Shopper* 348): same case, same RAM, same integrated Wi-Fi, same preference for water over air cooling, even the same quad-core Intel Core i7-7700K (we originally reviewed the Theia VR with a Core i7-6700K, but it's since been updated).

The big differences are the Apollo K-VR's ultra-premium GeForce GTX 1080 graphics card, compared to the Theia VR's GTX 1070, and the higher price (about £209 more) to match. As expected, though, this afforded us significantly higher average frame rates in Dirt Showdown: 169fps at 1,920x1,080, 155fps at 2,560x1,440 and 93fps at 3,840x2,160, all on max settings. This is definitely the kind of PC you'll want to pair with a 144Hz monitor.

VIVE ALIVE

The GTX 1080 also does good work in Metro: Last Light Redux, with 84fps at 1,920x1,080, 48fps at 2,560x1,440 and 20fps at 3,840x2,160 at Very High settings. At 4K, turning off SSAA (which isn't necessary at such a resolution) more than doubles the frame rate, to 42fps. The Theia VR is more competitive here, mind; it was 10fps behind at Full HD but only 5fps and 1fps behind at QHD and 4K respectively.

Not that there's any questioning of the Apollo K-VR's power, especially in its favoured arena of virtual reality. It scored a perfect 11 in the SteamVR Performance Test, with not a single instance of dropping below 90fps. Like the Theia VR, it also has the best chassis for VR headset owners in the NZXT Source 340 Elite. We've raved numerous times about its convenient magnetic puck, for hanging up the headset while tidying its cables, as well as the front-mounted HDMI port, so you don't have to reach round the back to plug it in, and both remain present and correct here. The latter is joined by two USB2 and two USB3 ports too.

PC Specialist's system also tore through our 4K benchmarks, scoring 149 in the image test, 164 in the video test and an amazing 184 in the multitasking test, for an outstanding 172 overall. That's a big step up from the Theia VR's 155, though that was using a Skylake chip. You can easily use this PC for design and number-crunching work, and there's no worry of it bottlenecking that 8GB graphics card.

COOLING AROUND

What's particularly impressive is how well PC Specialist has tamed the Core i7-7700K's less desirable tendencies. Kaby Lake processors can run hot, but the 120mm Corsair H80i v2 watercooler prevented it from exceeding 66°C during the harsh strain of our 4K benchmarks. A look at the BIOS confirmed it was running at stock speeds, so there's certainly scope for overclocking if you're comfortable with it.

The whole system is quiet, too, making it easy to live with – as does the storage, which covers both speed and capacity thanks to its main 250GB SSD and secondary 1TB hard disk. The former is a SATA drive, not the even faster M.2 NVMe, but it's still more than quick enough in operation. You could add up to two NVMe SSDs as future upgrades, as the motherboard includes two RAID-capable M.2 slots, along with plenty of other expansion opportunities in the form of three PCI-E x16 slots and three PCI-E x1 slots.

The rear I/O panel is just as well equipped; the four USB3 ports can handle peripherals while the single USB3.1 and USB Type-C ports accept fast data transfers, and the PC's audio capabilities are expanded with optical S/PDIF, C/SUB and rear speaker jacks. Two antenna ports for the 802.11ac Wi-Fi sit at the top, but we found it worked perfectly well in our labs without screwing it in.

There's also a huge selection of four DisplayPort, two dual-link DVI-D and two HDMI ports, though only one of the latter is included on the graphics card, and that will be taken up if you're using a VR headset. That said, DisplayPort and DVI-D are better choices for playing games at frame rates over 60fps, which with this system you'll probably be doing a lot of.

TO THE MOON

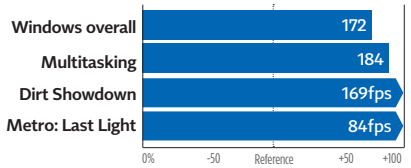
Honestly, we're struggling to find anything we don't like about the Apollo K-VR. You could argue that the Theia VR is a slightly smarter purchase, due to its recently upgraded processor and almost-as-good gaming performance, despite costing over £200 less.

Then again, that price gulf is consistent with that of the GTX 1070 and GTX 1080 when sold as individual components. Besides, let's not forget about all the other similarly specced, high-end PCs the Apollo K-VR is competing with – and it outperforms both the Palicomp i7 Predator (*Shopper* 344) and Asus's G20CB (*Shopper* 349) despite costing much less than both. It may be far from unique, but this is one PC that truly stands out.

James Archer

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR Quad-core 4.2GHz Intel Core i7-7700K • **RAM** 16GB DDR4 • **FRONT USB PORTS** 2x USB2, 2x USB3 • **REAR USB PORTS** 4x USB3, 1x USB3.1, 1x USB Type-C • **GRAPHICS CARD** 8GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1080 • **STORAGE** 250GB SSD, 1TB hard disk • **DISPLAY** None • **OPERATING SYSTEM** Windows 10 • **WARRANTY** Three years labour including one year parts and one month collect and return • **DETAILS** www.pcspecialist.co.uk • **PART CODE** Apollo K-VR



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