



PC Specialist Enigma K7

A well-balanced machine that offers plenty of virtual reality power now, yet room to grow in the future

SCORE ★★★★★

PRICE £833 (£999 inc VAT)
from pcspecialist.co.uk

While Microsoft has tried to ensure Windows Mixed Reality (WMR) works well on all modern computers, I invited PC Specialist to send in a sub-£1,000 system that might tempt people to upgrade to a bells-and-whistles VR experience. Its response is a supremely well-balanced desktop that offers plentiful power today, but has one eye on the future too.

Crucially, right now the Enigma K7 can tackle any VR game around. It scored 7.9 in the SteamVR Performance Test, which means that image quality remained “High” consistently throughout. Examining its performance more closely revealed that the Enigma was in the “Very High” zone for roughly a quarter of the time, while the Scan opposite didn’t drop for a moment.

The reason it didn’t perform even better is that PC Specialist balances its £999 budget to include a 6GB GeForce GTX 1060 graphics card rather than a meatier 1070 or 1080. That’s a sensible move: the 1070 would add £130 to the price, while a 8GB GeForce GTX 1080 card would raise it by £250. And while more speed is always welcome, I question whether or not you’d notice the difference in practice.

Arguably, the only area where the difference is obvious right now is gaming benchmarks. Here, the Enigma K7 again trailed the Scan laptop in *Dirt Showdown* and *Rise of*



the Tomb Raider. For example, at 4K with the top settings, the Enigma scored 51fps and 40fps in those two games, versus 92fps and 70fps for the Scan. But let’s not get distracted: the Enigma’s frame rates are still superb.

Away from gaming, the Enigma proved an excellent performer in our own benchmarks. The Intel Core i5-8600K is already a fast chip, with six physical cores and a base frequency of 3.6GHz, but PC Specialist supplies it pre-overclocked to 4.1GHz. That, together with the 16GB of Corsair RAM across two DIMM sockets, pushed the Enigma to an overall result of 193.

That shows the immediate advantage of a desktop PC versus a laptop: it’s a whisker away from the Scan despite that system containing a faster desktop processor.

Scan doesn’t have the thermal leeway to overclock that PC Specialist does – that’s why it upgrades the standard Intel CPU cooler to a CoolerMaster Hyper 212X. The result, together with the output from the LED-lit fan at the front of the case, is low-level fan noise that’s always there but never irritating.

The Enigma’s other obvious advantage is that you can upgrade almost every component in the box – either at the time of ordering

or when finances allow in the future. The Asus Prime Z370-P motherboard offers a great foundation thanks to its eponymous chipset, and with four 1x PCIe slots free there’s room to add more expansion cards – plus a second graphics card via the empty PCIe x4 slot. If you do intend to use WMR, you’ll need to add Bluetooth for the Mixed Reality controllers.

Adding more memory may mean replacing the heatsink, though, because this overhangs one of the two spare DIMM sockets. Fortunately, it’s easier to upgrade the 128GB M.2 SSD. While a solid-state drive will boost boot times and general responsiveness, the SATA-based BiWin SSD isn’t the fastest around – it only reached 535MB/sec sequential reads in CrystalDiskMark, for instance,

while a NVMe M.2 SSD will hit over 1,200MB/sec. Should you fill the supplied 1TB hard disk, fear not: there are three spare bays and PC Specialist has already put the cables in place, ready to be used.

This neat attention to detail spreads through the rest of the build, with cables tucked neatly out of sight where possible. There are two things you should note about this Corsair Red Carbide SPEC-04 chassis’ design, though. First is that the front-mounted USB ports are to the right-hand side of the case as you look at it (along with a power button, mic and headphone jack), so make sure that suits your desk arrangement. And second, there’s no way to add an internal optical drive.

If you tot up the cost of all the components inside the Enigma, you’ll reach a figure of around £1,050 – and

that’s without Windows.

For PC Specialist to provide all this, pre-overclocked and with such strong build quality, makes it something of a VR bargain. **TIM DANTON**

ABOVE The heatsink and chassis fans create a low hum, but it isn’t obtrusive



“Tot up the cost of all the components inside the Enigma and you reach a figure of around £1,050 – without Windows”



LEFT There’s plenty of room for expansion, with cables neatly placed to help

SPECIFICATIONS

Six-core 3.6GHz Intel Core i5-8600K (overclocked to 4.1GHz) • Asus Prime Z370-P motherboard • 16GB Corsair DDR4 RAM • 6GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1060 graphics • 128GB M.2 SSD • 1TB hard disk • Windows 10 Home • 210 x 433 x 492mm (WDH) • 3yr warranty (1mth C&R, 1yr parts, 3yr labour)

BENCHMARKS

