

DESKTOP GAMING PC

PC SPECIALIST Vulcan Elite S



£1,699 • From www.pcspecialist.co.uk

VERDICT

A plush PC that values versatility over the very best performance

SHINY AND EXPENSIVE, the Vulcan Elite S is a reminder of what PC luxury can look like without tipping into outright ridiculousness. Everything save for the Wi-Fi antenna is housed inside an enormous Cooler Master MasterCase H500M chassis, with tempered glass side panels and twin 200mm intake fans, and the whole system is dripping with RGB LEDs, from the fans and motherboard to the RAM sticks and AIO watercooler pump.

The key internals are all high end: there's a hexa-core Intel Core i7-8700K processor, an 8GB GeForce GTX 1070 Ti graphics card and 16GB of DDR4 RAM. Even if it's not all quite top of the range – the CPU is only running at stock speeds, and the GTX 1070 Ti is third in the GeForce 10-series hierarchy – we had high hopes for performance.

These were realised about as well as they could have been, especially in the CPU-heavy 4K benchmarks. The Core i7-8700K may not come overclocked but the image test score of 163 it produced is seriously high, a testament to the CPU's single-core muscle. Scores of 236 in the video test and 276 in the multitasking test, resulting in an overall score of 244, are also enough for occasional media editing.

CARD SHARK

Still, this is a gaming PC first and foremost. The GTX 1070 Ti averaged 132fps in Dirt Showdown running on Ultra settings at 1,920x1,080. This only dropped to 130fps after we switched resolutions to 2,560x1,440, and 4K didn't prove to be much bother either, with a 3,840x2,160 run returning a 93fps average.



Things got slightly dicier in Metro: Last Light Redux, at least on the most demanding graphics and resolution settings. Using the Very High preset, the Vulcan Elite S coped fine with 1,920x1,080 and 2,560x1,440 resolutions, managing 79fps and 44fps respectively, but at 3,840x2,160 it only ended up with 19fps.

The good news is that switching to the High preset and disabling SSAA (which is almost useless at such a high resolution anyway) upped the average frame rate to 55fps, a huge improvement to smoothness with minimal impact on visual quality. The Vulcan Elite S also scored a perfect 11 in the SteamVR Performance Test.

OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

However, these results, high as they are, aren't quite so impressive when you consider what else you can get for your money. For example, Cyberpower's Infinity X88 GTX (*Shopper 365*) costs less at £1,599, but offers an even more powerful GTX 1080 graphics card for superior gaming performance, and its Core i7-8700K is pre-overclocked, so it's a better multitasker, too, with an overall score of 368 in our tests.

If you're purely interested in gaming, the £1,100 Palcomp i5 Cosmos (*Shopper 366*) is only a few frames-per-second behind the Vulcan Elite S, and it did even better in Dirt Showdown at 1080p and 1440p, with 146fps and 136fps respectively (but only 82fps at 4K).

Clearly, the Vulcan Elite S needs other ways to justify its expense. Happily, it has one in the form of storage: a 512GB M.2 PCI-E SSD, combined with a 1TB hard disk. That's an awful lot of space, not to mention speed:

in the AS SSD benchmark, the M.2 drive posted a lively 2,695.75MB/s sequential read speed and a 1,495.92MB/s write speed. Pre-built PCs rarely go beyond a 256GB SSD, so this generous setup is great to see, and the main drive is passively cooled by the motherboard's built-in heatsink, too.

The combination of a spacious case and slot-rich motherboard also affords plenty of flexibility in how this PC can be customised. That includes ambitious tweaks such as multiple GPUs – both two-way Nvidia SLI and three-way AMD CrossFire configurations are supported – and open-loop watercooling, as well as simpler additions such as extra storage, thanks to the six spare 2.5in



drive bays (though there's only one spare 3.5in bay). Accessing these, as well as the PSU, requires removing large metal panels or a chunk of the shroud, but these keep everything neat and tidy, so it's worth putting in the effort.

Connectivity is good, with 802.11ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.2; the only downside is you'll need to find somewhere to place the wired antenna. There's a nice mix of video outputs on the graphics card, and while the rear panel has only five full-size USB slots (two USB2, two USB3 and one USB3.1, plus a single USB Type-C port), there are four more USB3 ports on the front, plus another Type-C connector.

We're still not entirely convinced that it's worth buying this PC over the Infinity X88 GTX; out of the box, Cyberpower's system is much more powerful, despite being cheaper. Even so, the Vulcan Elite S is a well-built desktop with excellent storage and a lot of future potential, so don't discount it entirely.

James Archer

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR Hexa-core 3.7GHz Intel Core i7-8700K • **RAM** 16GB DDR4 • **FRONT USB PORTS** 4x USB3, 1x USB Type-C • **REAR USB PORTS** 2x USB2, 2x USB3, 1x USB3.1, 1x USB Type-C • **GRAPHICS CARD** 8GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1070 Ti • **DISPLAY** None • **STORAGE** 512GB SSD, 1TB hard disk • **OPERATING SYSTEM** Windows 10 Home • **WARRANTY** Three years labour, one year parts, one month collect and return • **DETAILS** www.pcspecialist.co.uk • **PART CODE** Vulcan Elite S

