



PC Specialist Vulcan S-01

A well-built system with bags of potential, the Vulcan only misses out on the awards by a narrow margin

SCORE ★★★★★

PRICE £1,249 (£1,499 inc VAT)
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As Kermit once sung, it's not easy being green, so we have to congratulate PC Specialist for the attention to detail in its Vulcan S-01 system. Everything that can glow, from the LED strips on the motherboard to the DIMMs to the logo on the Zotac graphics card, does so with the same bilious hue, while strips above and below the tempered-glass side-panel continue the good work. And if you don't like green? Well, pick your own colour. Thanks to the Aura Sync capabilities of the Asus TUF Z370-Plus Gaming motherboard, you can have any tone you like.

What makes the Vulcan S-01 work so well visually is the InWin 101 case, the Corsair watercooling system and the clutter-free internal layout. Two chunky pipes connect the CPU waterblock to a side-mounted radiator with twin 12cm fans, and to great effect: the sound rarely rises below a low hum while temperatures usually stay well below 40°C.

The power supply is squirrelled away in a separate compartment at the top of the case, along with two slide-and-clip hard drive bays, one already filled with a 1TB Seagate Barracuda hard disk. This isn't the Vulcan's primary storage device, which is a 256GB Samsung PM961 M.2 NVMe SSD. The PM961 isn't quite as fast as the 960 Evo, but it's a cheaper and speedy alternative that won't feel much different in daily use. Using the A-SSD benchmark, we still measured sequential read speeds of 2,446MB/sec and write speeds of 1,117MB/sec.

What we like about the Vulcan S-01 is that it gives you a great platform for high performance. The Core i7-8700K is Intel's most desirable mainstream processor, and you can get the best out of it with the TUF 370-Plus Gaming motherboard. Its UEFI BIOS includes some of the simplest and most accessible overclocking tools around. PC Specialist packs in two 8GB 3,000MHz DDR4 DIMMs, with slots to fit another two.

The graphics card is a Zotac GTX 1080 running with a modest factory

overclock that takes the base speed up to 1,620MHz. This isn't the fastest card around, but given the might of the Nvidia GTX 1080 GPU even at stock speeds, you can still expect awesome levels of 3D performance, with the potential to push things further through overclocking utilities.

With a few caveats, that's exactly what you get, with the Vulcan S-01 delivering the kind of frame rates most monitors can't cope with at 1080p and Very High or Ultra settings, and perfectly playable 30fps rates at

ABOVE The Corsair watercooling system means this PC has room to go even faster

BELOW The power supply is tucked away in a separate area at the top of the case



4K resolutions. Play a recent game such as *Far Cry 5* on a 4K screen and the frame rate will never dip lower than 35fps; for the most part, it will hold above 40fps quite comfortably.

Performance is just as good with 2D applications, where the PC Specialist was the fastest of the systems without a pre-overclocked CPU. Those PCs pull ahead on most benchmark figures, but that hardly leaves the Vulcan sitting in the slow lane. It has more than enough power for 4K video-editing, professional image-editing and just about anything else. What's more, stability is rock solid, without any hint of a freeze or crash.

Connectivity is another strength. As well as two top-mounted USB 3.1 ports near the front, the Vulcan S-01 features another two USB 3.1 ports, two further USB 3.1 Gen2 ports and even a USB-C port. Meanwhile, the Gigabit Ethernet connector works with Asus's Turbo LAN network optimisation software to prioritise your network traffic, focusing on the applications you use most.

You won't find the Vulcan atop this month's leaderboards, mainly due to other manufacturers being more ambitious with their CPU and GPU overclocks. Yet this is a beautifully built and designed PC with potential to grow. The award winners are that little bit more enticing, but we'd still put the Vulcan on our shortlist.