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LABS: NAS DRIVES

Nas drives let you share files between a number of Macs, but which one came top in our tests?

	Netgear Stora	Seagate GoFlex Home	Synology DiskStation DS210j	Thecus N2200	Verbatim MediaShare	Western Digital My Book World Edition
	3	3	5	4	3	4
	Netgear + *netgear.co.uk*	Seagate + *seagate.com*	Synology + *synology.com*	Thecus + *thecus.com*	Verbatim + *verbatim-europe.co.uk*	Western Digital + *wdc.com*
	£155 (£132 ex VAT) from Oyyy + *bit.ly/aZTiWX*	£99.99 (£85.10 ex VAT) from Misco + *bit.ly/dBsy1d*	£145 (£123 ex VAT) from Pixmania + *bit.ly/dr1gl3*	£258 (£220 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/djVCLj*	£130 (£111 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/9yvS7r*	£105 (£89.36 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/976Mxq*
	175 x 150 x 146	171 x 80 x 135	161 x 88 x 218	214 x 115 x 139	178 x 178 x 50	173 x 58 x 147
	1.36	1.28	0.98 (enclosure)	3	1.73	1.09
	1	1	(enclosure)	2	1	1
	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit
	1x USB	1x USB	3x USB	4x USB	3x USB, 1x eSata	1x USB
	1 (plus empty second bay)	1	Up to 2	2	1	1x Gigabit
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
	1, JBod	N/A	Basic, 0, 1, JBod	0, 1, JBod	N/A	N/A
	Desktop Mirror	Memeo Backup	Synology Data Replicator 3	N/A	N/A	WD Anywhere Backup
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Three-year hardware warranty	Two-year limited warranty	Two-year warranty	Limited warranty	Three-year warranty	Three-year limited warranty

after our previous review, which adds Time Machine support, and the simplicity with which that feature is configured add to the overall value of the package.

It was already an excellent bundle before that addition. For instance, the bundled Anywhere Backup software allows you to encrypt backups, and it's remarkably easy to use. With so many good things to say about the My Book World Edition, it's little wonder that the same basic hardware has been available for so long. That's why it has held onto its special commendation.

Words Alan Stonebridge **Photography main image** Danny Bird **Cut outs** Julian Velasquez

Networks aren't just found in businesses these days. Even if you've got just one Mac at home, it will probably connect to a router to get online, but if you've got several Macs, you might want to share all sorts of files.

Mac OS X includes a file sharing feature to send files around a network, but that's no help if what you need is stored on one person's Mac and you don't have access to under wraps until that person gets home. A network attached storage (Nas) drive is an affordable and convenient way to share files.

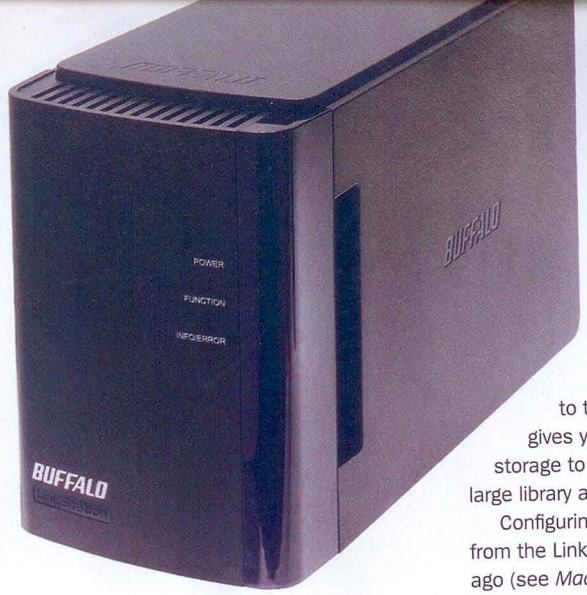
One of the most exciting reasons to add one to your network is to keep your family's music collection in one place. That makes all of the tracks available no matter whose Macs are turned on. Many drives can send photos, videos and music to game consoles and other devices that are compatible with DLNA and also common, and gives you a way to send and receive large files to people outside your home. Some drives can also run a web server, or you might use them as an intranet for a small office.

We've looked at 11 Nas drives that cover everything from basic media and backup services to full-blown web servers. They'll set you back anywhere between £100 and £258, depending on the features you need

Nas drive

Buffalo LinkStation Duo

Price £130 (£111 ex VAT)
from Ebuyer + *bit.ly/cmtm1v*
Contact Buffalo Technology
+ *buffalo-technology.com*
Pros Easy to set up and maintain
Cons No UPnP support + Lack of feedback during Time Machine setup
Verdict Good build and easy disk replacement, but the LinkStation Duo is a poor choice if you need networked Time Machine backups.



The LinkStation Duo has a pleasingly small footprint, yet it manages to cram two 3.5in disks into a Raid array. They can be striped for full capacity or mirrored for redundancy and protection in case one disk fails.

Disks are easily swapped by pressing the indentation to the left of the front panel. This pulls away with little effort, giving access to the disk bays. Software installation is straightforward, but in need of more care in its presentation: text explaining the difference between the power switch's on and auto modes was prematurely cropped, for example.

LEDs are used to indicate access and alerts. You can decipher the flashing patterns from the documentation, or you can fire up the web interface for a plainer explanation. The latter is divided into clear categories for creating shared folders, users and groups, checking the array's status, and configuring it for an uninterruptible power supply. Help is on hand throughout in the links at the top-right of each page, which take you to the full manual, frequently asked questions and a pop-up rundown of the settings on the current page.

Go to the Extensions page and you can configure remote access, the BitTorrent client, web and MySQL servers, and a DLNA and iTunes server, which can look for content on an external USB drive attached to the single port at the back. That gives you an option for adding more storage to ensure you have room for a large library alongside Time Machine backups.

Configuring that feature is unchanged from the LinkStation we looked at a year ago (see *MacUser*, 9 October 2009, p44). Supplying your Mac's network name and MAC address is no fuss, but waiting around seven minutes for the drive to prepare a backup file introduces a lengthy delay into the process.

The drive is bundled with LifeAgent, which is a straightforward way to back up to a network folder, removable drives, iDisk and Memeo Internet Disk, a paid-for service.

The USB port can also connect a printer for sharing. Options for managing its queue aren't refined, requiring you clear the queue if a problematic job holds it up.

Nas drive

Freecom Dual Drive Network Center

Price £236 (£200 ex VAT)
from Dabs + *bit.ly/cFDqjf*
Contact Freecom + *freecom.com/uk*
Pros Lockable drive bays + Detailed feature settings + Raid 0 and Raid 1
Cons Doesn't support Time Machine
Verdict A decent drive, albeit one that misses out two of the most widely appealing features of a Nas.

The name of Freecom's drive gives away that it's a Raid array. What makes it stand out from the crowd is the lockable drive bay doors, for which four keys are provided to ensure disks are secure but also easy to replace. The drive can operate in JBod (just a bunch of disks) mode or as a striped or mirrored mode.

Navigating around the browser-based interface is clear enough, although loading pages and making changes to some settings can take a few seconds. There are some very detailed options even for features you might expect to be straightforward, so keeping the full documentation to hand is a good idea.

User accounts can be assigned a disk quota. The FTP server lets you change its service and PASV ports, and you can choose who can use the protocol and whether they have write access, which is useful in a home office setup if a client needs to collect large files from you.

We had to jump through a few hoops to grant login and write permission for the media folder, although the default inaccessibility is a good assurance that the kids can't accidentally delete portions of the family's music collection. The drive also serves up to DLNA and UPnP devices, such as game consoles, and the BitTorrent client will take the strain off your Mac when downloading software published by that method.

The drive isn't packed to the gills with absolutely everything you might want, though. For example, it lacks a print server and it doesn't work with Time Machine. Its only USB port, which is positioned on the back panel, can be used to connect an external USB drive.

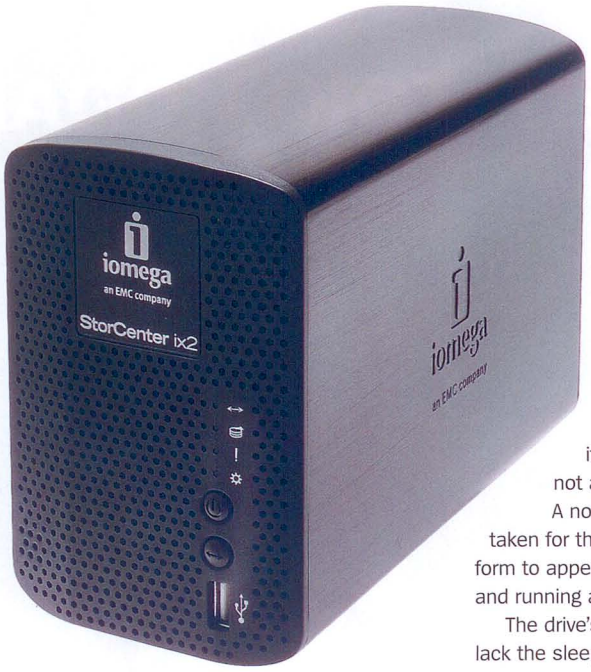
The drive lets you check the Smart status of its disks, repair them and rebuild the array. However, the log is appreciably verbose, and may initially overwhelm you.

Turn on power management and it lets you pick from presets for how soon the disks go to sleep, from 10 minutes up to two hours. There are no options to schedule wake-up and shutdown times, though.

Nas drive

Iomega StorCenter ix2-200

Price £215 (£183 ex VAT)
from Dabs + *bit.ly/bS57gN*
Contact Iomega + *iomega.com*
Pros Works with iTunes 10 + Fast Time Machine setup + Easy interface
Cons Unfriendly backup application
Verdict Support for iTunes 10, and DLNA and UPnP makes the this an obvious choice for media streaming.



The StorCenter ix2-200 is a compact, vertical-standing drive that feels very sturdy, with a perforated grille on the front side of its charcoal-coloured body. The full capacity of its two 3.5in disks can be used in JBod mode, but there's no striped (Raid 0) mode. You can, however, opt for Raid 1 to mirror one drive to the other for protection. Disks are secured in place with screws, although it's still a trivial matter to replace them.

There's an ample supply of USB ports: one on the front for copying content from external storage, and two on the rear, so you can share a printer and add more storage.

The web interface's Dashboard provides information about the system's temperature and how fast its fan is spinning. Customisable features are organised in a page of icons much like the Mac's System Preferences application, so it's relatively easy to find what you are looking for.

Among them is support for Time Machine, which is configured by providing a Mac's network name and MAC address, just like the Buffalo drive (opposite). Iomega is streets ahead when it comes to speed, though, as it took just seconds to prepare disk space. Alternatively, you can back up with the bundled Retrospect Express 6.1, an arcane product that's showing its age. It's certainly powerful, but not a friendly option for use at home.

A noticeable downside was the time taken for the browser-based tool's login form to appear in Safari. Firefox got us up and running a bit faster.

The drive's power management functions lack the sleep and wake scheduling found on other drives, instead being limited to setting a time after which the disks power down.

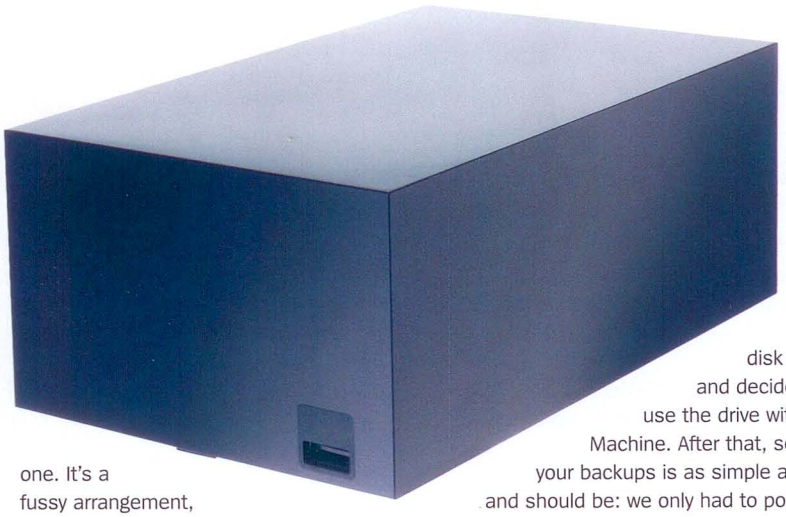
On top of the usual user and group configurations, you can specify quotas on specific folders. That's helpful if several people will share one, as you can ensure they don't quickly consume capacity.

Notably, the drive's media server had no problems with iTunes 10 (see box, p52). For the time being, the StorCenter is an easy pick if you don't want to roll back to version 9. The drive also streams to UPnP and DLNA devices.

Nas drive

LaCie Network Space Max

Price £223 (£190 ex VAT)
from Misco + *bit.ly/aNfloq*
Contact LaCie + *lacie.com/uk*
Pros Supremely simple Time Machine configuration + Informative layout of browser interface
Cons Only one USB port + Print server only works with PostScript printers
Verdict Network Space Max is a great choice, especially for setting up networked Time Machine backups.



The largest face of the glossy black Network Space Max is the one that lies on your desk, but it's still relatively compact with a modest footprint. Not bad when you realise that it packs in two disks, like several of its competitors.

These can be configured as a striped or mirrored array. Don't be fooled that they are sealed in by the initial appearance. Pulling elastic parts on the bottom splits the enclosure, but the top disk has to be removed if you need to replace the bottom one. It's a fussy arrangement, but you can be sure the disks can only be purposefully removed.

LaCie's Network Assistant sits in the menu bar and lets you choose which shares are automatically mounted when the drive becomes visible, which is great for MacBooks that come and go from the network.

The admin tools are highly distinctive. Widgets spread around every page provide a constant oversight of key information. Clicking one takes you to that category's full complement of settings. It seems like information overload at first, but it's helpful in orienting you towards your goal.

The interface can be a bit too clever for its own good, though. For instance, it isn't immediately obvious that you can click in columns to set disk quotas and decide who can use the drive with Time Machine. After that, setting up your backups is as simple as it can and should be: we only had to point at the drive in Time Machine's preferences pane.

Power management features let you choose how long it takes before the disk spins down. You can schedule sleep and wake times for a low-power deep sleep mode, although there are no options to set it differently throughout the week.

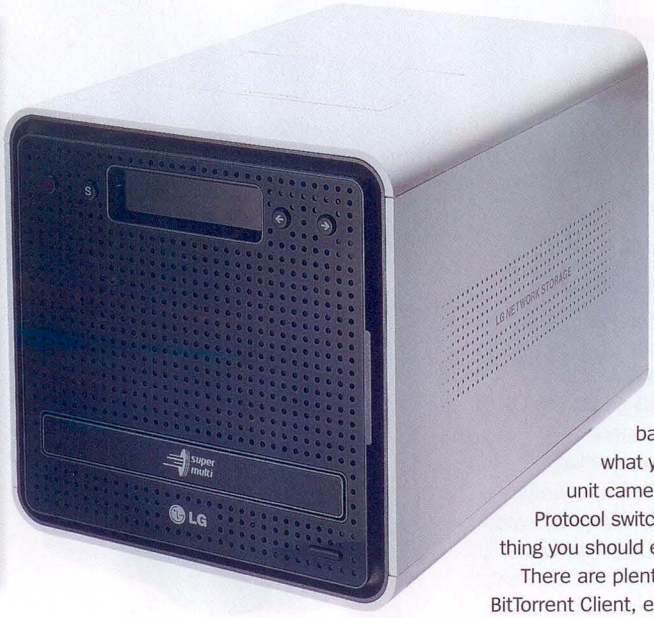
Each user gets their own share point and access to another for all users, which is where media for the iTunes server is placed.

There's only one USB port, which is located on the front panel. You can share a printer, but it will need to support PostScript. You're more likely to use the port to deliver music, photos and videos to DLNA devices, as that server is smart enough to work with content on the internal or an external drive.

Nas drive

LG N2R1 Network Storage

Price £216 (£184 ex VAT) from Pixmania + *bit.ly/amdWa9*
Contact LG Electronics + *lg.com/uk*
Pros Expansion ports + Card reader + DVD useful for Macs without SuperDrive
Cons Large physical size + Poor Mac software bundle
Verdict If you can live with its bulky size, LG's N2R1 has some unique and appealing features for home users.



LG's contender is the largest drive we looked at, with dimensions akin to a small-form-factor PC. It sports two 3.5in disks that are easily replaceable via the front door. They can work as a JBod, striped or mirrored array, or you can access them as independent disks.

The N2R1's size is partly down to a unique hardware feature: a tray-loading DVD writer that can also rip the contents of data discs as files or an ISO image. That might be handy if you've got a MacBook Air but no external SuperDrive. Such backups are controlled through the display on the front panel.

You can choose DHCP or a manual IP address there, too, and it's also a quick way to copy a USB drive's content to the internal storage. The most accessible port is on a pop-up panel on top of the case, where there's also a slot for copying files from Memory Stick, SD and xD cards. Two more USB ports at the rear are ample for increasing storage and sharing a printer. Whatever storage device you connect, it's easy to locate in the Finder, as each type is accessible through a dedicated folder – one for eSata, SDMMC, and so on.

Although it's Mac compatible, the software bundle is geared for Windows users. The only Mac-oriented tools are the Nas Detector and browser-based interface, essentially what you get with other drives. Our unit came with support for Apple Filing Protocol switched off, which is the first thing you should enable when setting up.

There are plenty of features, including a BitTorrent Client, email notifications that send the drive status at an interval (although only to one recipient), and the customary user, group and folder configurations.

The drive's media server will talk to iTunes and DLNA devices, and it's accessible remotely through a dynamic DNS service.

It's another drive whose Time Machine setup requires you to enter a device's name and MAC address. Like Iomega's drive (see p47), it's quicker to prepare space than Buffalo's offering (see p46), although it doesn't give a good breakdown of who is storing what.

Nas drive

Netgear Stora

Price £155 (£132 ex VAT) from Oyyy + *bit.ly/aZTlWX*
Contact Netgear + *netgear.co.uk*
Pros Has a free bay so you can pick a second disk yourself
Cons Idiosyncrasy of the web interface can be confusing + Limit of three users unless you pay more
Verdict The Stora's empty second bay is a great way to ensure that you're using disks from different manufacturers or batches.

As you might expect of such a cubic form, Netgear's Stora has two disk bays inside. More unusual is that only one of the bays is used, which leaves you to fill the second one with a disk of your choice when you're ready. Access to the bays is straightforward: simply push upwards on the front panel with your thumbs, then pull it away from the body. Levers on the back release disks from their adjacent cubbies.

The Stora uses the same Axentra HipServ software as the Seagate and Verbatim drives (see p50 and p51), and so it's encumbered with the same restriction of three user accounts unless you pay for extra features, one of which is unlimited accounts. Depending on your household, that could negate other attractions of this unit.

Time Machine configuration works in the same way as the other HipServ-based drives here, with name and MAC address used to identify Macs that need to back up. However, that meant we ran into the same initial issue, with Time Machine temporarily being unable to backup on its first run.

You can enable FTP logins separately for local and Internet-based access. Options in user account settings enable you to decide what happens when you copy a file that already exists – whether it's backed up, overwritten or the new version is renamed. You can elect that new photos are shared via the drive's media servers after they're uploaded, and that they're shared with other family accounts straightaway, too.

The theme applied to Netgear's version of the interface is particularly terrible, though. When we checked for a newer version of the drive's firmware, we were told that one existed and to click the Download button, but it was nowhere to be seen. To get at it, we had to widen our browser window to make visible a vertically tiny scroll bar on the far right of the page.

On the plus side, Stora's energy-saving features permit scheduling of different sleep and wake times for each day of the week.

Nas drive

Seagate GoFlex Home

Price £99.99 (£85.10 ex VAT) from Misco + *bit.ly/dBsy1d*
Contact Seagate + *seagate.com*
Pros Small footprint + Not the quickest Time Machine setup in the Labs, but superbly guided
Cons FTPS access and more than three user accounts are paid-for extras
Verdict The cheapest drive here is also the easiest to find space for.

Seagate's GoFlex Home is perhaps the most unusual hardware arrangement: the separate base contains the Ethernet port and a USB port for printer sharing, while the drive slides vertically into its dock. The body may be plastic, but there's a reassuring weightiness to the whole package.

Of the three drives here based on Axentra's HipServ, this is the only one that contains a single disk. Setting it up is quite straightforward. Like the other HipServ drives in this Labs, you're first asked to provide a few details to set up remote access, this time through *seagateshare.com*.

After setting up the administrator account, the drive verifies that it's running the latest software before letting you get anywhere near configuring its features.

Typical of the HipServ-based offerings, some features are paid-for pro services. These includes FTPS, creation of an RSS feed of photos that you've added to the drive, a Coollris 3D wall interface for browsing photos and automatic publication to Flickr. If you're interested in a drive that offers FTPS access, glance at the other options before you pay more on top of the basic cost of the GoFlex Home drive. Regular FTP access is a standard feature. It's turned off by default, and you can enable it separately for local and Internet-based connections.

In a large household, you're more likely to object to the same issue of only being able to create three user accounts. If not, that probably won't matter to you.

Preparing to back up with Time Machine took several minutes, but this and the other HipServ drives are informative and neatly guide you through a short number of steps required before the drive is available in Time Machine's preferences. Of course, we ran into the same initial backup issue as with the other drives, but that resolved itself.

The drive can send email notifications with alerts and errors to multiple email accounts, although there's no granularity for picking who is informed about what.

As well as your own file space, this drive contains a Family folder that's rather like a networked version of Mac OS X's Shared account. This folder can serve media to devices with DLNA and UPnP support and, of course, iTunes.

Nas drive

Synology DiskStation DS210j

MacUser LABS WINNER

Price £145 (£123 ex VAT) from Pixmania + *bit.ly/dr1gl3*
Contact Synology + *synology.com*
Pros Huge list of features + Uncomplicated admin interface
Cons Overkill for some
Verdict Synology wins for cramming so many features into a dual-drive box, yet still making it easy to manage.

On looks alone, the DiskStation wouldn't win any prizes. However, it reinforces the old adage that you should never judge a book by its cover.

It's not alone in providing a strong line-up of features, but the DiskStation Manager interface presents this diversity in a way that's easy to navigate. Categories are organised in a tree in the left pane; expand one of the top-level folders to get at the various sub-categories it contains. In fact, it's a lot like the management tools found in Windows.

Compared with the drives you'll find on the high street, the DiskStation takes a little while to get up and running, especially if you buy the empty enclosure and fit your own disks. The case slides apart along its length, like a Kinder Surprise but without the chocolatey goodness. You can screw one or two Sata drives into the bays inside, then run the Synology Assistant to install the DiskStation Manager software, which takes several minutes. It's clear what's happening throughout the process.

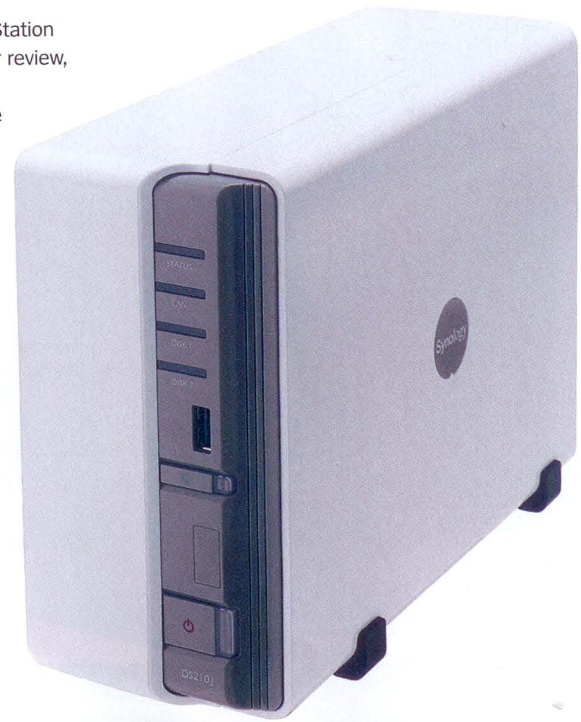
Our review unit came with DiskStation Manager 2.3. As we completed our review, Synology released version 3 of the DiskStation Manager tool. While we had no trouble installing version 2.3 on a blank disk, several downloads and attempts to update the installation failed with a bad patch error.

The resource management panel details CPU and memory usage, and you can check the disks' temperature, fan speed and Smart status. Email notifications can be sent to two addresses, and via SMS services such as Clickatell.

The DS210j can act as a web server, with MySQL and PHP. You can choose to allow each user account to create a site in their own folder.

Time Machine setup isn't quite so trivial: you need to set up a dedicated shared folder then inform the DiskStation (in another page) that it's the location for your backups. Still, we doubt you'd buy such a feature-rich drive if you weren't able to deal with this.

The DiskStation can protect itself against attacks with its built-in firewall. It's packed with features, but where it trumps the opposition is the way they're presented – in particular, it tramples all over Thecus' offering (opposite).



Nas drive

Thecus N2200

Price £258 (£220 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/djVCLj*
Contact Thecus + *thecus.com*
Pros Packed with plenty of features + Clear, iconised status display + Plenty of USB ports
Cons Ugly browser-based interface is a bit of a hinderance
Verdict The N2200 certainly isn't disappointing when it comes to features, but its interface leaves a lot to be desired.

The N2200 has a mostly metal body except for its rear panel and the plastic trim and disk bay doors at the front. The two 3.5in disks inside can work in a JBod, striped or mirrored array, and the drive lets you keep an eye on their Smart status.

Failed disks are a cinch to replace. Lightly press one of the bay doors to open it, press a clip on the tray handle and pull it forward from its nest. The most involved part is unscrewing a disk from its tray and fitting a new one.

When the Nas is turned on, its vertical display lights up with an arrangement of coloured icons that indicate network, disk and USB activity. If a problem occurs, you're unlikely to miss the clear indicators.

There's a generous supply of USB ports: one on the front for transferring files to the drive, and another three on the back to which you might attach extra storage or a USB printer. The web-based printer queue lists pending jobs, and you can selectively delete them.

Getting the drive up and running is a bit more daunting than its rivals, although Thecus' Smart Utility wizard does offer a one-click setup option on top of a manual process, which prepares the array. That takes a few minutes, after which you can set up a backup task or go straight to the web interface.

The quality of that interface is the biggest hurdle when making use of the N2200's varied functions. Its accordion-like collapsible menu wastes a lot of screen space, and leaves you to scroll through a list of subcategories in a tiny area, making exploration of the available options a chore.

At least it's backed up with comprehensive offline documentation, and you can tweak the more obscure settings steadily as you go, which even crop up in seemingly simple areas such as the iTunes server.

Thecus' drive certainly isn't light on features: it can connect to an IP camera, schedule HTTP, FTP, BitTorrent and eMule downloads, and it can be accessed over the web. Its build quality feels excellent, but it's let down by the poor presentation of its tools, which Nas newbies will find off-putting.

Nas drive

Verbatim MediaShare

Price £130 (£111 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/9yvS7r*
Contact Verbatim + *verbatim-europe.co.uk*
Pros Looks great + Feels robust
Cons Large footprint + FTPS access and more than three user accounts are paid-for extras
Verdict Verbatim's drive is a looker, and although it's a singe-disk Nas, you can mirror it to an external Sata drive later.

Verbatim's MediaShare drive is easily one of the most stylish that we laid our eyes on for this Labs test, thanks to its Apple-style form and brushed-metal finish. Whether it's intended for your home office or a living room, it won't look out of place. However, its footprint is among the largest in this selection, so that's something to bear in mind if your office desk of room for discreet expansion or to copy files off the Nas onto a portable drive.

There's also an eSata port that allows you to mirror its contents to an external drive, so if you're not flush enough to stump up for a two-disk Nas, you can always opt for this more clumsy arrangement at a later date.

The drive runs on HipServ software, so FTPS support, more than three accounts and the more luxurious photo publishing options mentioned for the Seagate drive (opposite) require an extra payment.

It includes three major components for any home Nas: a media server (DLNA), iTunes and a print server, and you can access the drive remotely when you're away from home through Verbatim's dynamic DNS service. Setting that up is the first part of configuring the software, although our first couple of attempts were unsuccessful without a clear explanation as to why. We could only pin it down to an intermittent network interruption as it seemed to resolve itself on a later attempt.

The top level of the web interface gives access to the Media Library and Photo albums, and a backup option for the drive, implying that's what Verbatim expects you'll primarily use it for. Actual configuration settings for the full feature set are gathered in another section of the interface.

The MediaShare supports Time Machine backups by entering the network name and MAC address pair. Just like the other HipServ drives, it's a clean, guided process to get this up and running, but we did stumble on the same problem with the initial backup attempt.

The MediaShare's drawback is that you can't just pop the lid off to replace the internal disk if anything happens to it.

MacUser HIGHLY COMMENDED

Nas drive

Western Digital My Book World Edition

Price £105 (£89.36 ex VAT) from Amazon + *amzn.to/976Mxq*
Contact Western Digital + *wdc.com*
Pros Firmware update adds Time Machine support + Broad media server capability + No-nonsense web interface
Cons No print server
Verdict New Time Machine support is a big bonus in this great media server.

Western Digital's drive featured in our last Nas Labs (see *MacUser*, 9 September 2009, p49), when it received a Highly Commended award. The hardware hasn't been updated since then, but it has received a software update with one important new feature.

The case is what you'd expect of a single-disk My Book drive, although the rounded front panel of the glossy white enclosure sports a basic activity light, not one of the e-paper displays found on more recent, premium direct-attached storage devices from Western Digital. Keeping an eye on available space and disk status is done in software.

There's a single USB port around the back of the drive for attaching external storage. The internal disk is sealed in, although that's certainly not unique to this drive.

Previously, we took issue with the several seconds it took to move between pages in the admin interface, but that appears to have been reduced to a more comfortable speed. The interface remains one of the easiest to understand in the group, too.

A large part of the My Book's appeal lies in the breadth of its media servers: it can stream to DLNA and UPnP devices, and it will send MP3, AAC and Apple Lossless audio to iTunes as well. Remote access is provided through MioNet. If you've got an iOS device, then you can show off photos stored on the drive with the free WD Photos app.

The drive's browser-based administration pages provide the typical functions for creating users, groups and shared folders, and it lets you amend the ports through which HTTP and FTP access comes, making life that bit more difficult for at least casual attacks.

When we previously looked at this model, it couldn't be used with Time Machine. That has since been rectified with a software update, and setting it up is as simple as choosing the drive in Time Machine's preferences. If that doesn't suit you, you can rely on the bundled Anywhere Backup software to schedule backups. It has good options for how many file revisions are kept and gets one up on Time Machine with the ability to encrypt backups.

This is one of the older models in our line-up, yet it remains a good bundle. The addition of Time Machine support makes it an attractive buy, and it's an inexpensive way to centralise your home's media and backups.

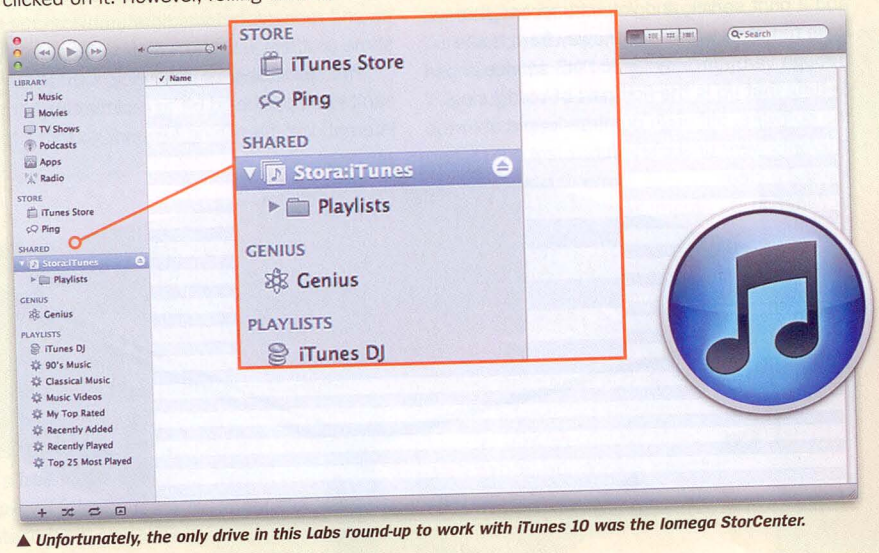
iTUNES 10 SERVERS

One of the most appealing features of many Nas drives is the ability to serve music to iTunes. However, iTunes 10 threw a spanner in the works. Within days of its release, reports surfaced of problems accessing music stored on Nas-based iTunes servers.

The iTunes server on each of these Nas drives continued to appear in iTunes 10's sidebar, but only one – the Iomega StorCenter – listed any tracks after we clicked on it. However, rolling back to iTunes 9.2.1 resolved the issue in all cases. If you don't have one of Apple's new range of iPods, you can roll back to iTunes 9. That's not a trivial matter, though. You'll need to grab the installer and make a few changes before you can use it again. Doing that is easiest if you back up using Time Machine. You can get the installer for iTunes 9.2.1 from Apple's site at *bit.ly/iTunes921*.

If you're using Time Machine, you're in a great position to roll back. Before you do, quit iTunes and force Time Machine to make one more backup. Move iTunes 10 to the Trash and empty it. Next, you need to locate the most recent iTunes library files (typically in ~/Music/iTunes) and preferences (several files starting com.apple.iTunes in ~/Library/Preferences/) from when you last used iTunes 9 and restore them over the updated copy that iTunes 10 was using.

Install iTunes 9, run through its setup and hold Alt when you launch it. Choose to open an existing library and point at the restored one in your Music folder. It should start as normal and be able to access tracks stored on your Nas drive. If anything goes wrong, you can reinstall iTunes 10 and restore its library and preferences from the backup you just made.



▲ *Unfortunately, the only drive in this Labs round-up to work with iTunes 10 was the Iomega StorCenter.*

iTUNES UPDATE
As *MacUser* went to press, Apple released iTunes 10.0.1, which is said to fix compatibility with third-party shared libraries such as these Nas drives' media servers. If you purchase a Nas device and can't see tracks on its media server, update iTunes through Software Update.

Nas drives

	Buffalo LinkStation Duo	Freecom Dual Drive Network Center	Iomega StorCenter ix2-200	LaCie Network Space Max	LG N2R1 Network Storage
Make and model					
Rating	3	3	4	4	4
Manufacturer	Buffalo Technology + *buffalo-technology.com*	Freecom + *freecom.com/uk*	Iomega + *iomega.com*	LaCie + *lacie.com/uk*	LG + *lg.com/uk*
Cheapest online price	£130 (£111 ex VAT) from Ebuyer + *bit.ly/cmtm1v*	£236 (£200 ex VAT) from Dabs + *bit.ly/cFDqjf*	£215 (£183 ex VAT) from Dabs + *bit.ly/bS57gN*	£223 (£190 ex VAT) from Misco + *bit.ly/aNfloq*	£216 (£184 ex VAT) from Pixmania + *bit.ly/amdWa9*
Dimensions (H x W x D in mm)	127 x 86 x 204	153 x 93 x 20	140 x 93 x 201	193 x 117 x 77	164 x 164 x 239
Weight (kg)	2.3	2.6	2.15	1.8	5
Capacity (TB)	1	2	2	2	2
Ethernet ports	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit	1x Gigabit
Expansion ports	1x USB	1x USB	3x USB	2x USB	3x USB, 1x eSata, card reader (SD, MMC, Memory Stick, xD)
Internal disks	2	2	2	2	2
Replaceable disk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Raid Array modes	0, 1	0, 1, JBod	1, JBod	0, 1	0, 1, JBod
Backup software	LifeAgent	N/A	Retrospect Express 6.1	LaCie Backup Assistant	N/A
Works with Time Machine	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
iTunes server	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UPnP media server	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DLNA media server	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BitTorrent client	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Print server	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Warranty	Two-year warranty	Two-year manufacturer's warranty	Three-year warranty	Two-year limited warranty	Two-year warranty

THE WINNER

The clear winner from our line-up is Synology's superb DiskStation DS210j, which is available as an empty enclosure, into which you can fit your own disks, or you can buy it pre-populated to save you the small effort of a few minutes of tinkering with a screwdriver.

If you decide to go for the empty enclosure option, take heed of the advice offered by Howard Oakley in this issue's *Mac Business* pages (see p112) and try to purchase disks that are at least from different batches. Ideally, buy disks from different manufacturers, too. This is so that both disks don't fail at exactly or around the same time, giving your valuable data increased security.

The DiskStation wins hands down for its combination of a brilliant array of features and the straightforward way in which they're presented. The uncluttered interface is enhanced by sheer responsiveness. Monitoring and maintenance functions are backed up with fantastic capabilities such as running a MySQL- and PHP-powered web server, serving media to iTunes and games consoles, and a firewall to protect the drive's valuable contents.

Synology's Nas drive isn't the right choice for everyone, though. If you want the simplicity of simply pointing Time Machine at a drive, or a central location for all your family's media, look to our highly recommended runner-up. Western Digital's My Book World Edition received the same award when we looked at it a year ago. It has a leaner feature set, and the feature you may miss most is a print server. However, the software update released