

Easy network storage & streaming

More than just centralised storage, today's network-attached storage devices are also full-featured media, backup and web servers for your home/small office network. **Dominik Krupinski** tests 14 of the latest NAS boxes.

The market for home media devices has exploded over the last couple of years, with media streamers like the WD TV Live becoming thick on the ground, increasingly affordable while packing more features and becoming easier to use. Alongside that boom, network storage (ie. where your media is probably going to stream from) has seen some pretty major developments. Network-attached storage (NAS) devices are no longer necessarily chunky and difficult to use, good for only centralised storage and backup solutions — even the cheapest NAS

boxes now offer simple plug-and-play media serving for fuss-free movie and music shares across home networks, while compatibility with backup solutions like Apple's Time Machine is pretty much a given. At the same time, higher-end NAS units with features like web server functionality and video surveillance support are becoming ever faster and cheaper.

TOP TIP Check the CPU

It's not so much the network or even the hard drives that limit data transfer speeds in NAS boxes — it's the CPUs used inside them. The faster NAS devices always have faster CPUs inside, typically, 1GHz or faster Marvell or Intel embedded processors. Remember, NAS devices are basically small fixed-application computers and as always, the faster the CPU, the better the performance. So if you find a NAS box we haven't reviewed here, check the CPU speed — it'll tell you a good deal about the device's data transfer performance.

SINGLE-BAY NAS DEVICES

QNAP TURBO NAS TS-119P+

STREET PRICE \$300 / CONTACT BLUECHIP INFOTECH / PHONE 1300 727 474 / WEB www.qnap.com

QNAP has tended to play to the office rather than the home user market with its NAS offerings, demonstrated by fairly industrial aesthetics, high prices and granular setup options. The flipside is a ton of high-end features and performance to match. In some ways, the TS-119P+ continues that tradition with a chunky metal construction and all the features

most users could want. Home users will appreciate DLNA and iTunes media serving, ample backup options and a BitTorrent client/download manager, while professionals will tick off the blazing transfer speeds, print, FTP and web server functionality, iSCSI connectivity and additional USB/eSATA ports. Where this NAS breaks from the past is in the work that's clearly been done

to its browser interface, which is still as full-featured as ever, but is now fast, slick and intuitive enough for even regular humans to use. It's still not cheap (with no drive included, remember to factor that in), but demanding users will get what they pay for. **PC User says:** This NAS box is a blazing fast, feature-packed and capable small-scale home server.



SYNOLOGY DISKSTATION DS111

STREET PRICE \$270 / CONTACT FORTUNETEC / PHONE (02) 9748 0001 / WEB www.synology.com

The DS111 is really aimed more at professional users than regular Joes looking to share a couple of files. That means it covers pretty much all of the NAS checkboxes (with the obvious exception of redundant storage), including web server functionality, while boasting seriously fast write speeds, thanks to a 1.8GHz CPU — transfers were as much as four times faster than cheaper

home-oriented NAS boxes, but still a little slower than the TS-119P+. Where it differs from QNAP's offering is largely in aesthetics — the DS111 is definitely prettier, with a chirpy white enclosure, but at the same time isn't quite as solid, with plastic taking the place of QNAP's rugged metal housing. Synology's software is also excellent — well-featured, yet

easy to use. Having said that, unless you're frequently moving a lot of files around and need the speed this one offers, it's probably overkill for most users. **PC User says:** Seriously fast and well-featured.

