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Synology DS216+

Offering a plethora of new features.

The latest NAS out of the Synology lab, the DS216+ is a powerful but affordable mid-range offering. Buried inside is the Intel Celeron N3050 CPU, which is a dual core that can burst from 1.6GHz up to 2.16GHz. It's also got 1GB of (non-upgradeable) DDR3 RAM, and runs the latest DiskStation Manager 6.0 OS. Importantly for media lovers, the DS216+ has a hardware transcoding engine, which can handle 4K resolutions at 30 frames per second. It also has hardware based AES-NI encryption, for extra security without (overly) affecting access speeds. The Synology NAS also supports the Btrfs file system, as well as Ext4.

The dual slots of the DS216+ can take both 2.5-inch and 3.5-inch drives and run them in RAID 0, 1 and JBOD. Round the back, it has the usual Gigabit LAN port, but also a less common eSATA expansion option. Combined with the USB 3.0

port (and 2x USB 2.0), this makes it easy to add extra storage or read external drives. You don't get direct HDMI output, though – just DLNA streaming.

Not surprisingly, the DS216+ offers top-notch read and write speeds. The interface is also excellent – even including features such as indicator LEDs that can be dimmed to a schedule. The NAS can also run a host of third-party apps, such as Plex, for a customised experience.

Synology also have a very comprehensive (if somewhat too numerous) array of mobile apps for remote management, streaming and backups.

Verdict

Great transcoding and encryption options without going overboard on price.



WD My Cloud Mirror (Gen 2)

Ready to go out of the box.

The sleek and unassuming white My Cloud Mirror uses a 1.33GHz dual-core Marvell ARMADA 385 CPU and 512MB of RAM. It also has a single Gigabit Ethernet connect and dual USB 3.0 ports round back.

Unlike a lot of the competition, the Mirror doesn't have a diskless option available. Instead, it sells in 4TB, 6TB, 8TB and 12TB models, for around \$500, \$600, \$800 and \$1,000, respectively. By default, the drives are configured in RAID 1, which halves the capacity but gives a full duplicate of the data. For access to the full capacity, JBOD or the faster but less safe RAID 0 are also available.

While on the lower end, the WD My Cloud OS 3 makes efficient use of the hardware. This results in great performance for day-to-day uses, such as backups and DLNA streaming, but excludes some features of higher-end NAS models, such as

hardware-based encryption. Where the Mirror excels is actually the mobile apps, which are designed to make it easy for even non-tech-savvy users to get the most from the NAS. Aside from configuration, you can remotely stream media, back up your smartphone and sync data files in a personal cloud.

When shopping for the Mirror, it's important to check it's the Gen 2 version as the older Gen 1 devices are still available, and often for a similar price.

The big difference is a faster dual-core CPU on the new model, which is well worth getting.

Verdict

A very easy to set up and access NAS for typical home use.

