

MEDIA Monitoring

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LABS BRIEFS

▶ **LENOVO LT1421WD**

PRICE \$170
SUPPLIER www.lenovo.com.au

One of the more annoying things about moving from a multi-monitor work PC to a laptop is the loss of screen real estate. For anyone seriously multitasking, being able to run a second screen is a massive productivity boost. Lenovo's LT1421wD monitor is a USB-based 1366 x 768 14in screen designed to facilitate multi-monitor laptop setups. It is relatively thin and light, weighing in at 1080g, and comes with a cover that doubles as a stand. It connects via one or two USB ports depending on your laptop's ability to supply power. In our testing it coped with both productivity and video playback with ease, but struggled when a 3D game was thrown at it. It isn't a replacement for a real monitor, but for those who want a multi-monitor setup on the go it is eminently portable, easy to use. Just keep in mind that it is draining your battery so overall life won't be as long as without.



John Gillooly

OVERALL ★★★★★

▶ **DROIDAX PORTACHARGE**

PRICE \$49.95
SUPPLIER www.droidax.com.au

One of the unfortunate side effects of the rise of the smartphone has been dwindling battery life. Some of these phones barely last a day under heavy use, which increases the likelihood of being caught with a flat battery. Enter portable battery chargers, in this case Droidax's Portocharge. This pack charges via a micro USB port, and delivers power via two standard USB ports. It also comes with a USB adapter that covers pretty much every non-Apple phone out there. What we really like though is the readout on the front showing the % charge left in the portocharge - handy for knowing when the pack itself needs charging. It has more than enough juice for a single full charge on our test phones, and when left alone for a month it only lost 15% charge. These few factors mean that the Droidax portocharge stands out from the ever-widening pock of such devices.



John Gillooly

OVERALL ★★★★★

▶ **CORSAIR VENGEANCE K60**

PRICE \$140
SUPPLIER www.corsair.com

Corsair's new FPS-focused keyboard, the K60, is a delightfully tough and well-designed piece of kit. With a single piece of rigid aluminium holding it together, this keyboard can take a hammering without bending or warping, and it looks great to boot. Even better, the main keys that any FPS player uses - the WASD keys, and some number keys - can all be replaced with specially textured and angled keys made of contrasting bright orange. They take some getting used to for typing, but during a heavy gaming session they deliver excellent tactile feedback; combined with the mechanical Cherry red switches used on all the alpha keys, this is a premium keyboard for serious gamers who want a ruggedised piece of kit. Match it with Corsair's new M60 mouse, and you'll have an FPS-focused set of input devices that is hard to beat.



David Hollingworth

OVERALL ★★★★★

▶ **CORSAIR VENGEANCE M90**

PRICE \$90
SUPPLIER www.corsair.com

Corsair's move into peripherals includes two product lines - the 60 series, focused on the first person shooter market, and the MMO/RTS-focused 90 series. In practice this means that the new M90 mouse is laden with extra buttons to cope with the relentless hotkeying that is needed in a game like WoW or Star Wars: The Old Republic. It does this by arranging the buttons in an ergonomically delightful way, spread around the thumb so minimal movement is needed to hit them. It takes a bit of learning, but it soon becomes clear just how good the button layout is (it is light years ahead of the Razer Naga, which is the main competitor to the M90). The design is comfortable, main buttons nice and responsive and we especially like the large scroll wheel. This truly is an astonishing debut.



John Gillooly

OVERALL ★★★★★

▶ NETGEAR WNDR4500 N900 ROUTER

PRICE \$346

SUPPLIER www.netgear.com.au

We have been highly impressed with Netgear's routers of late, and the W4500 continues this trend. This dual band router supports Mbps connections as long as you have a compatible adapter, but even without this it delivers good, consistent speeds. We found setup to be quick and easy, with clearly labelled connections and the requisite cabling (although putting the spare login details on the pull off plastic wrap seems a bizarre idea). Performance was solid on both wired and wireless connections, and we had little issue using the inbuilt file and printer sharing functions. We do have to give a disapproving look at Netgear for including blue USB 2 ports, though; trying to trick us into thinking it's USB 3 is not cool. Overall this is a solid product, although it will be used to its best if you have a '3x3' wireless card to take advantage of the advanced wireless speeds that the router is capable of.

John Gillooly



OVERALL



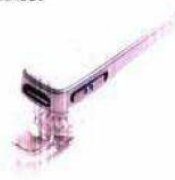
▶ PLANTRONICS MARQUE M155

PRICE \$77

SUPPLIER www.plantronics.com.au

By the sheer number of white Bluetooth headphones we've had in the office we can only assume that manufacturers have given up on selling them to anyone but iPhone users. We jest, of course, but it is refreshing to see some new styles hitting the market. The Marque M155 continues Plantronics' tradition of subtle style and streamlined design, with a slim unit that features a power switch, volume controls and a multi-function button that bears a reasonable resemblance to the iPhone home button. At 7g, the M155 is so light it's easy to forget you're wearing it. The unit comes with three different earpieces to help get the right fit and even an optional hook for added stability. We tested the device while running and found that its light weight kept it stable and it could stay in without irritation. The voice recognition - saying "answer" to answer - was a nice touch and worked fairly well. Call quality was solid, although excessive external and outdoor noise was an occasional problem. All things considered, this was a great headset for the price.

Nic Healey



OVERALL



▶ OCZ OCTANE S 512MB

PRICE \$1220

SUPPLIER www.ocztechnology.com

Last year OCZ purchased controller manufacturer Indilinx, and the Octane is one of the fruits of that move. It packs the new SATA 3Gbps 'Everest' controller and sits below the Sandforce powered Vertex 3 in OCZ's product lineup. Unlike Sandforce drives, this technology is now exclusive to OCZ, which makes it stand out in what is becoming a very similar performance landscape. In AS SSD we saw sequential writes of 450MB/s and reads of 329.72 MB/s, with 19.91MB/s reads and 38.79 MB/s writes in the 4K-threaded test. It is decent enough performance, and bodes well for the Everest controller - however this 512GB model costs over \$1000 and we suspect is the best case scenario for the Octane product line. We'd be keen to see how it works in lower (and more realistic) capacities, where competition from Sandforce products is intense.

John Gillooly



OVERALL



▶ XFX RADEON 7970 BLACK EDITION DOUBLE DISSIPATION

PRICE \$938

SUPPLIER www.xfxforce.com

In our look at AMD's RADEON HD 7970 on page 42 a few things were clear. It is both the most expensive and the fastest single GPU card on the market. While that testing was done with an AMD reference card, XFX's clunkily named RADEON HD 7970 Black Edition Double Dissipation version turned up a couple of days later. Not only is it the first 7970 we have seen with a custom heatsink (and what a beautiful heatsink it is), but it is also clocked faster than the reference card, with a core speed of 1GHz as opposed to the standard 925MHz. This makes it even faster and more expensive than the stock models. The price still makes it hard to recommend to all but the most flush of gamers, but if you want to drop over \$900 on a video card, this is the one to get.

John Gillooly



OVERALL

