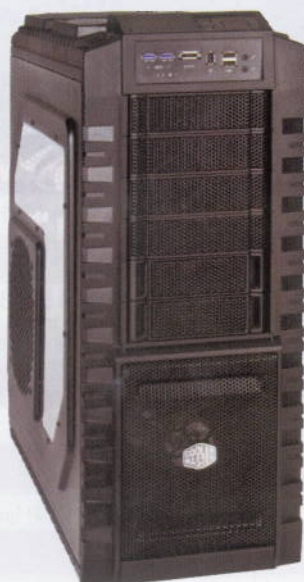


EDITOR'S CHOICE

■ COOLERMMASTER HAF X



In this industry several months is a long time but despite being on the market since last year, CoolerMaster's amazing HAF X beat every other case here and claimed our Best Performance prize.

The HAF X really does have it all starting with striking looks. In this groupstest, while its competitors were all far from ugly, the HAF X looked

sharp and imposing. Its larger-than-life frame also meant it offered the most internal space and this came in handy when building our rig into it. It simply offered acres of space to work with.

The HAF X also offered plenty of cooling; it is equipped with multiple slow-spinning fans that due to their massive size get the cooling job done without any drama at all.

■ GIGABYTE SUMO 5112



Choosing a Best Value winner took some deliberation because the team was divided when it came to choosing between one of the two Gigabyte cases.

The Setto II 142 immediately won brownie points owing to its low price and reasonable feature set. While you can't build an insanely overclocked rig into this chassis owing to its

slightly limited cooling (in an overclocking respect), there isn't much else you won't be able to use it for.

In the end however the team ultimately got behind the Sumo 5112 because it offered the best of both worlds. The Sumo looks great, offers a decent amount of internal room and expansion options and yet is the second least expensive case on test here.

HOW WE TESTED

The best way to gauge how good or bad a case is to build a complete PC into it. As a result we built a high-end rig consisting of an Intel Core i7 980X processor, a Gigabyte GA-EX58-UD4 motherboard, 6GB of Kingston DDR3 memory, an AMD Radeon HD 6990 GPU, a 10,000rpm VelociRaptor hard drive and a Serial ATA DVD-ROM drive.

During our build process we were able to see for ourselves how easy or difficult it was to work with a case in terms of rig building. Here we looked at how easy it was to mount the motherboard, how much space was available to fit a large GPU (the Radeon HD 6990 GPU measures 30cm in length) and whether or not there was any helpful extras such as cable routing paths etc.

We were also able to examine the chassis' cooling capabilities accurately as a result of fitting a PC into each case. Here we paid close attention to how fans were positioned and configured. When the machine was running we also checked noise levels and cases that shipped with small, loud fans scored less in terms of performance than counterparts that relied on large, quiet fans. We also paid close attention to features on offer including a tools-free design, number of drive bays and whether or not a case included rounded-edges on the inside. We also checked on what sort of front-mounted ports were offered by each case. If a case offered a full range of USB ports, Firewire, eSATA and audio ports, it walked away with a higher feature score than one that lacked these ports.