



Full HD NetTop

ASRock NetTop ION 330

BY MICHAEL LOW

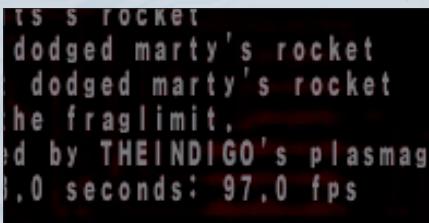
The increasing prevalence of netbooks and nettops has certainly widened the spectrum of options for consumers who value nothing more than a PC that is easy to lug around, doesn't take up too much space and is powerful enough to surf the Web and to email. Yet, the incremental variations of these power-efficient products seem to dwindle down along with their prices. This calls for an intervention of sorts, and NVIDIA boldly steps up to the plate with its HD-capable ION platform. The result is a new breed of mini notebooks and mini desktops that are capable of fluid, high-def video playback while preserving the small footprint and energy-efficiency advantage of the Atom-powered platform.

With seven years of experience in manufacturing motherboards, ASRock has moved on to netbooks and home theater PCs. The NetTop ION 330 is one such product. Upon unpacking the box, you'll notice that this nettop arrives with only the bare essentials, which means no monitor, speakers, keyboard or mouse. It's also not too heavy and not

too small either. The chassis is given a full glossy black finish, with only a lone power button and slim optical drive occupying its front face. The rear is where all the action resides. Besides the inclusion of a HDMI port, the back of the unit is also home to a VGA port, an optical audio out, six USB ports, a LAN port and three audio jacks.

Our review unit was preloaded with Windows Vista Ultimate. While other Atom-based desktops may have a hard time playing catch-up, the 2GB of DDR2 memory and the GeForce 9400M graphics chipset helped keep the Vista experience smooth sailing, barring the initial OS startup sequence. With claims of Full HD video support, we threw in an assortment of 720p and 1080p HD videos of varying formats as a test. Lo and behold, you will never have thought that an Atom PC is capable of delivering smooth HD video playback with perfectly synced audio.

However, we noticed that different codec packs yield different results, so playback performance



Delivers decent Quake 3 performance at 97 FPS

may vary. Don't forget that there's also a DVD Super Multi drive for DVD movies as well.

Although the GeForce graphics chipset does a great job of accelerating HD video playback, gaming is unfortunately still a no-go with the exception of older PC titles and the occasional online flash game. If you're the type to leave a PC running all day, you'll love ASRock's Instant Boot feature. Simply enable Fast Mode and turn off the nettop when no longer in use. Once powered on, it takes just a few seconds to bring you back to the desktop.

Apart from low power consumption and noise operation levels, the clutter-free HDMI connection and excellent Full HD video acceleration performance makes the ASRock nettop a potentially serious contender to the living room entertainment throne. Just add-in a wireless network USB adapter and a wireless keyboard and mouse, and the NetTop ION 330 may just be the HTPC you're looking for.



Plenty of USB ports to add to the HTPC experience

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU	RAM	HDD	OS	Price
Atom 330 @ 1.6GHz	2GB DDR2	320GB	Vista Ultimate	RM 1299

Processor / Chipset : Intel Atom 330 (Dual-core) @ 1.6GHz / Intel 945GME
Board : NVIDIA ION
Drives : Slim DVD Super Multi, 320GB SATA II HDD
Network : NVIDIA nForce 10/100/1000 Ethernet
Graphics : NVIDIA GeForce 9400M graphics
Audio : HD Audio
I/Os : 1x HDMI, 1x D-Sub, 6x USB2.0, 1x S/PDIF (Optical), 1x Gigabit LAN, 3x audio jacks
Accessories : External power supply
Operating System : Microsoft Windows Vista Ultimate
Dimensions : 195 x 70 x 186mm
Weight : 1.75kg
Warranty : One-year
Contact : Planet Technology (M) Sdn Bhd
Telephone : (03) 5032 3888
URL : www.asrock.com

Available at

PLAZA LOW YAT
shopping centre

HWM'S VERDICT

Physique: **9.0**
Performance: **8.5**
Design: **8.5**
Value: **9.0**

9.0

Out of 10

Compact, light and quiet – what's there not to love?

