

Scan 3XS P55 liteDAW £1225



The PowerDAW's sprightly younger sibling bounces onto our test bench

In **cm140**, the Intel Core i7-based 3XS PowerDAW system from Scan scooped a 9/10 score, and was declared the most powerful system we'd ever used. Now we have the pleasure of trying their 3XS P55 liteDAW, which is based on Intel's new, more affordable Socket 1156-based range. The base price of the system we have is £975, although our review model has some extras that have bumped up its price.

Outwardly, this system is more compact than the beastly PowerDAW, and aside from the slightly cheesy Cooler Master text, the black, aluminium case is stylish and understated. Round the front are two USB ports and an eSata slot, while 10 USB slots and two FireWire ports are hiding around the back. Inside, there's space for DSP cards, further hard drives, etc.

Audio-specific features include foam insulation, Prolima Megahelms CPU cooler, two 1TB Samsung hard drives (one partitioned for system and storage, the other for audio) in Scythe enclosures, four Sharkoon 'golf ball' fans, and OS tweaks to aid smooth performance.

Oh, do be quiet!

The system is impressively quiet - noticeably more so than the Rain Recording Element i7 (**cm137**, 8/10). We don't have the 3XS PowerDAW on our test bench any more to compare directly, but we think the liteDAW also beats that one on the noise front. Hard drive grinding can be a little noticeable, but this is likely exacerbated by the rest of the system being so stealthy.

There are a few CPUs that will work with the Socket 1156-based boards, but Scan reckon musos should skip the cheaper i5 chips and at least go for the Core i7 860, as these have Hyper Threading enabled, which makes a real difference for music software. The system we've

got has a four-core i7 860 chip, which the OS sees as an eight-core CPU, due to Hyper Threading.

The chip usually runs at 2.8GHz, but Scan ship the system overclocked by 20%, as they reckon the chips can be pushed hard without overheating and thus crashing the system. To put this to the test, we played a CPU-heavy production on a loop for an hour. Nothing happened, so we fired up Core Damage (an app that constantly maxes out all cores to 100%), and left it running for a couple of hours - the case got a little warmer than usual near the back, and the fans whirred harder to compensate, but that's all.

We were able to play about 100 simultaneous 24-bit WAV tracks in Cubase 5 without dropouts - the same as the PowerDAW. As for CPU power, see the boxout below.

This system came with a dual boot setup, with Windows 7 Premium 64-bit Home and XP Professional both installed - individually, these cost £80 and £95 extra, while the dual boot setup is £250 due to the extra configuration and testing. We were keen to try out Windows 7, and happily, we didn't run into any issues - all the software we tried worked fine, as did our Focusrite Saffire 6 USB interface. And we found system performance to be equal to that of XP.

Overall, this is a highly impressive system that takes the crown as the most flat-out powerful we've ever used, yet costs a fair bit less than previous contenders. Can't be bad! **cm**

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System Spec

PC Intel Core i7 860 (overclocked to 3.32GHz), 4GB DDR3 RAM, Gigabyte GA-P55-UD3 motherboard, Prolima Megahelms Cooler, 625W Enermax MODU82+ EMD625AWT PSU, 2x 1TB Samsung HD103UJ Spinpoint F1 hard drives, Sony Dual Layer DVD drive, AcoustiPack Ultimate kit, Lycom FireWire card (TI chipset), 4x120mm Sharkoon Golf Ball fans, Microsoft Windows XP Pro SP3, Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit

Alternatively

Scan 3XS PowerDAW cm140 >> 9/10 >> £1680
Starts at £1375, but should be a little more future-proof

Rain Recording Element i7 cm137 >> 8/10 >> £2089
Base price is £1399 - our test model had an SSD drive and other goodies

Verdict

For Very quiet and stays cool
Powerful, overclocked i7 CPU
Stylish looks

Against Not much!

Another slick, powerful system from Scan, offering a good deal of bang for your buck

Core blimey!

We ran the same CPU-stressing tests on the 3XS P55 liteDAW as with previous i7 review systems. First up, we tried to run as many instances of 2CAudio Aether as possible (at 44.1kHz, maximum buffer size) with the Haunted Forest preset. On the 3XS PowerDAW, we'd managed 46 instances, but the liteDAW trounced it with 53. We tried a similar test with D16 Redoctor, with the default preset at Medium Quality: PowerDAW, 87 - LiteDAW, 101. And with the

Highest Quality mode, the liteDAW beat it 34-25. To be fair, if we'd overclocked the PowerDAW, too, it might've done equally well, but remember that we're testing the systems 'out of the box' here.

So, the liteDAW would seem to give you better performance for less cash. However, one advantage of the PowerDAW is that it's Socket 1366-based, meaning you should be able to upgrade it with a six-core chip when Intel bring them out next year.