

● NETWORK ATTACHED STORAGE

Freecom FSG-3 Storage Gateway

PRICE £157 (£184 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £5 (£6 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com/uk (code: 3TPCD1)

INTERNET www.freecom.com

VERDICT Although a touch noisy, the Freecom Storage Gateway has more features than most NAS appliances and is great value for money.

Following last month's NAS appliances Labs (see issue 136, p110) comes Freecom's new FSG-3 Storage Gateway. The paper specifications are tantalising: this isn't simply a NAS appliance – it's also a three-port wired Ethernet router, an FTP server, a print server and a web server.

There are four powered USB 2 ports, one of which is specifically designed for removable hard disks. The evidence for this is a dedicated Unplug button, which stops the drive and allows you to safely remove it. The other ports can be used for any mix of hard disks, printers, removable storage and cameras.

Like the Synology Disk Station 101g+ (see issue 136, p119), the FSG-3 also has an eSATA port, although drives are still very thin on the ground. Freecom expects to start shipping matching eSATA disks – which will stack on top of the FSG-3 – sometime early this year.

In the box, there's a stand and wall bracket, an Ethernet cable and an external PSU – one trade-off for the small dimensions. A bonus is the copy of Acronis True Image OEM Edition. While it can't back up individual files and folders, it can take a full image of any hard disk and store it on the FSG-3, so it's a backup server too.

Installation is simple, since the built-in DHCP server can automatically assign IP and DNS addresses. Alternatively, you can use the discovery utility on the included CD to find the appliance on your network. When you enter

the FSG-3's IP address into your browser, you're greeted by a friendly homepage, giving you the option to view the shares or go to the web-management interface. With the latest firmware installed, this not only allows you to create user and group accounts, but also set individual quotas to restrict the disk space they can use. Unfortunately, there's no way to give read-only access to shared folders, a limitation for some.

Another slight gripe is the noisy rear fan. In the management interface you can choose temperature-controlled regulation, constant maximum speed or Hot and Silent. The latter has a warning message attached: 'Using Hot and Silent could permanently shorten the life of the appliance', which effectively means you can't use it. Our other moan is that it doesn't retain the hidden attribute of Windows' files, so files such as hidden album art show up when you browse music folders.

A wireless version of the FSG-3 should be available by February, but until then you can attach a Wi-Fi access point to one of the Ethernet ports to turn it into a wireless router. Add an Ethernet ADSL modem and you have a fully fledged wireless NAS server. The web server supports SSL encryption, as does the FTP server.

Copying 680MB of files onto the appliance via Ethernet took two minutes, 13 seconds – 5.1MB/sec. Reading was quicker at 5.4MB/sec. It isn't the quickest we've seen but only the Synology was noticeably faster at reading,



This very flexible friend can be a web server, backup server and much more.

managing 8.9MB/sec.

A range of capacities is on offer from the 160GB model here through to the 500GB flagship, which costs £410. The sweet spot is 250GB, which costs £200 – just 80p per gigabyte. Of course, you can add capacity with any external USB disk, not just those from Freecom.

Considering the wealth of features on offer and the price per gigabyte, which undercuts the Disk Station 101g+ by some way, the FSG-3 Storage Gateway easily takes the A-List crown, and we can only see it being replaced with the wireless version when it's released.

JIM MARTIN

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

SPECIFICATIONS 160GB 7,200rpm, 8MB cache hard disk; NTFS pre-formatted; 266MHz Intel XScale CPU; 64MB SDRAM, 4MB flash RAM; 4 x USB 2 ports; 4 x 10/100 Ethernet ports; 1 x eSATA port; FTP server; print server; web server; network router; SPI firewall; user quotas; supports Windows, Mac OS and Linux clients. Dimensions: 174 x 145 x 47mm (WDH). Part code: 24837.