

Biostar K8NHA Grand

PC PRO
A LIST

PRICE £48 (£56 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.overclockers.co.uk

VERDICT Packed with controllers including RAID, FireWire, six-channel audio and gigabit Ethernet, plus a good accessories bundle, the Biostar is a veritable bargain at £48.

Compared to the selection of Intel motherboards on test, even the most expensive AMD boards look like bargains by comparison. Thanks to the fact that Socket 754 AMD processors are better value than their equivalent Intel counterparts, it's tempting to choose a motherboard like Biostar's K8NHA Grand as the basis of your next PC. At £48, this is a great motherboard that has a price and features combination Intel buyers can normally only dream of.

The K8NHA Grand, which is based on nVidia's nForce3 250Gb chipset, supports RAID on both Serial ATA connections and two Ultra ATA channels. Gigabit Ethernet is also supplied, as well as six-channel

audio. Software-wise, Norton Internet Security 2004 is a welcome bundle for protecting your system, albeit a 90-day trial version. But it was the K8NHA's accessories that really pulled it away from the field.

Two FireWire ports, a backplate with twin USB 2 ports and yet another with coaxial and optical S/PDIF outputs all conspired to make the expensive Intel efforts look rather forlorn. A pair of Serial ATA cables, an Ultra ATA cable and a floppy disk cable can also be found in the box – enough for most users. A second FireWire port on the backplate has no header to connect to though – there's only one on the board.

One area where many of the AMD boards disappoint is the number of DIMM sockets. Just two reside on the K8NHA Grand, giving it a

maximum capacity of 2GB. As 1GB memory sticks are expensive, this is all the more limiting. However, most people will be happy with one or two 512MB DIMMs for the lifetime of this motherboard.

Overclockers will be pleased with the K8NHA Grand as it not only sports the standard BIOS features for overclocking but also Biostar's WarpSpeeder software, which allows the setting of core voltages and clock speeds from within Windows. If you're too enthusiastic when setting clock speeds, the BIOS will reset to a previously working level.

In terms of layout, the only complaint we had about the K8NHA Grand was the placement of the DIMM sockets. Admittedly, on a heavily featured ATX-format board there isn't masses of space, but long AGP cards are going to foul the clips of the DIMM sockets if they're left open.

Ultimately, the Biostar has lots to recommend it. With Socket 754 processors being such capable performers, the K8NHA Grand is a wonderfully priced motherboard that we'd happily buy.



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