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NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE DEVICE

\$399 | WWW.ASUSTOR.COM

Asustor AS3102T

This two-bay NAS could be your new media hub.

A basic NAS is incredibly handy for making backups, storing data and serving up media. But if you want to knock things up a notch and stream 4K or use other advanced features, higher end hardware is needed. Of course, faster NAS boxes have always been available, but most start to cost as much as a decent HTPC. The Asustor AS3102T is something different, leveraging the new dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N3050 CPU to provide excellent all-in-one functionality, whilst still keeping the price under \$400.

At first, the NAS looks like a standard two-bay affair, with the typical single Gigabit Ethernet connection and three USB 3.0 ports. But lurking around the back of the AS3102T is an HDMI port for direct playback of media to a TV. It supports to the 1.4b standard, which means it can handle 4K

resolutions – a must for media junkies. The Asustor also has an optional IR remote (the AS-RC10) for around \$30, but can also be controlled via wireless keyboard and mouse or a smartphone app. The NAS also looks the part, with a black diamond pattern front panel that blends in with other AV gear.

The AS3102T has a quite decent 2GB of DDR3 RAM, which, combined with hardware acceleration, helps the NAS perform transcoding on the fly. This means content can be more easily played back on different devices, and helps remove any issues with unsupported codecs whilst optimising bandwidth use. Unlike lesser CPUs, the Celeron N3050 supports the Intel AES-NI instruction set, which drastically improves transfer speeds to not much below normal with encryption turned on.

The Asustor NAS doesn't use hot swappable drives (not an issue for most

users) – instead, the cover needs to be removed and 3.5-inch models are screwed into place by hand. Dropping in two 2TB Seagate Barracuda drives and getting up and running was quick and painless, and the NAS can be configured in RAID 0, 1 and JBOD.

In actual use, the AS3102T offers excellent read and write speeds, and averaged 109.65 MB/s reading and 110.47 MB/s writing in our tests. It's also very quiet and has a low power sleep mode – important for use in the living room.

The AS3102T has a comprehensive array of apps available for the NAS itself (194 at the time of writing), ranging from Plex and Kodi (formerly XBMC), to camera surveillance, downloads and cloud storage syncing.

The direct TV interface on the NAS is excellent and, aside from media playback, can be used to manage settings, monitor

security footage, watch YouTube, browse the Internet via Chrome and run other applications. Asustor also provide comprehensive Windows and Mac OS X software to manage backups and configure the AS3102T.

For mobile use, Asustor has an array of iOS and Android apps to handle tasks such as mobile backups, NAS management, streaming and more. The options are functionally excellent, though, some – such as music and video playback – would be better off as a single app.

■ Lindsay Handmer

Verdict

Features ★★★★★
Performance ★★★★★
Value ★★★★★

This dual-bay NAS is a potent combination: versatile, affordable and high-performance.

