



SILVERSTONE Fortress FT01-W


**COMPUTER
SHOPPER**
ULTIMATE

£144 inc VAT

From www.overclock.co.uk

Silverstone's latest PC case is an impressive piece of engineering. The FT01's top, front and bottom are formed from a single U-shaped piece of aluminium. This makes the case feel incredibly sturdy, and it look great too. The rear of the case is riveted securely to the rest of the body and is also made of aluminium, as are the side panels.

The FT01's pleasingly simple front panel has just a power button on it. Above this are five 5¼in drive bays: simply slide in an optical drive and press a large button inside to lock it in place. No external 3½in bays are provided, and there's no 3½in adaptor for the 5¼in bays. If you want to fit a memory card reader, you'll have to buy an adaptor – Silverstone's matching FP51 costs around £10. At the bottom is a huge grille for the front fan.

The side panels are securely attached but easy to remove. A metal catch pulls a rod that runs the length of the case, releasing the panel at three separate points. Both panels are lined with foam to help reduce noise. Our review model had a 19in Perspex window, but you can buy a version that doesn't have this if you prefer. Removing the right-hand panel makes it easy to run cables behind the motherboard tray, which helps to keep your PC neat and tidy.

Inside the case at the front is a big 180mm fan. A convenient slide-out dust filter is easy to keep clean. Behind the filter are seven 3½in drive bays, which are cooled by the big fan's airflow.

Each 3½in bay has a removable plastic caddy into which you clip your hard disk. The top bay has built-in data and power SATA connectors. Simply slide in the caddy and the disk plugs in without any need for fiddling around with cables. Additional SATA connector kits for the other drive bays



are available for around £6 including VAT (part code: CP05). The upper four drive bays are removable, so you can install large 305mm graphics cards in this case if you wish.

The power supply is positioned at the bottom of the case. The FT01 sits just above the desk on plastic feet, while a grille beneath allows airflow to cool the supply. This intake has a dust filter to stop your supply getting clogged up. On the rear is a standard 120mm fan.

The top of the case houses a second 180mm fan. Between them these two big fans provide plenty of airflow through the case, and as they run quite slowly they make little noise. You can control the speed of both fans directly from your motherboard, or by using a Windows utility such as SpeedFan (see www.almico.com/speedfan.php).

This case looks great, with no cheesy logos or LED lights. Despite its fairly compact dimensions we had no trouble installing our components, and there's plenty of space for upgrades. Its airflow and build quality are also impressive, and only the high price stops it receiving a Best Buy award. However, if you're looking for a stylish case for your PC, the FT01 is a prime candidate.

Seth Barton

SUMMARY

- Amazing build quality
- Plenty of airflow
- No 3½in adaptor supplied

PC CASE 5x 5¼in bays, 7x internal 3½in bays, 2x USB and 1x FireWire ports, 486x211x495mm, two years RTB warranty
PART CODE SST-FT01B-W
DETAILS www.silverstonetek.com

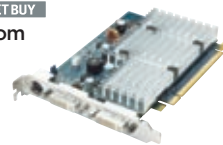
SAPPHIRE Radeon HD 3450


**COMPUTER
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BUDGET BUY

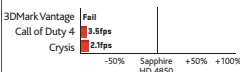
£30 inc VAT

From www.ginger6.com

The Radeon HD 3450 is no good for modern games, but it's an ideal card to have in a media centre PC. It's cheap, silent and has built-in hardware video acceleration, so if your PC has a dual-core processor you can play back high-definition content. It comes with an adaptor to turn a DVI port into an HDMI port, so it's easy to plug into a TV.



PCI EXPRESS GRAPHICS CARD
ATI Radeon HD 3450 chipset, 512MB DDR2 memory, PCI Express x16 2.0 interface
PART CODE 11125-10-20R
DETAILS www.sapphiretech.com
FULL REVIEW Oct 2008



MSI P43 Neo-F


**COMPUTER
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BEST BUY

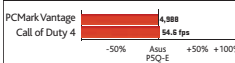
£55 inc VAT

From www.eclipsecomputers.com

This is one of the cheapest Intel LGA775 boards we've seen, and it supports processors with a frontside bus of up to 400MHz. There are four memory slots supporting up to 16GB of PC2-8500 DDR2, plus all the expansion capability you'll need, including three PCI slots and two PCI-E x1 slots.

This board was almost as quick in our tests as far more expensive models. It's ideal for those who don't require fancy features such as RAID arrays or multiple graphics cards.

INTEL MOTHERBOARD LGA775 socket, Intel P43/Intel ICH10 chipset, 4x DDR2 667/800/1066 slots, 1x PCI Express x16 slot, 2x PCI Express x1 slots, 3x PCI slots, 1x IDE port, 6x SATA/300 ports
PART CODE MS-7519-010
DETAILS www.msi.com.tw
FULL REVIEW Nov 2008



CHOOSING A... Processor

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

MANUFACTURER: Intel

PROCESSOR: Pentium Dual Core E2140

SOCKET: LGA775

Recommended minimum in grey

- 1** A processor with the minimum specifications above costs around £45. It's reasonably fast, but is best suited to standard office applications. As it uses the established LGA775 interface, you may not need to buy a new motherboard to match, but check that your particular motherboard supports a dual-core Pentium processor.
- 2** If you're upgrading only the processor, you'll be limited by your motherboard's socket type. AMD Socket 754 boards provide the least choice; an Athlon 64 3400+ is the fastest compatible processor. Socket 939 motherboards provide more options, including dual-core X2 processors going up to the fast FX-60. Socket AM2+ is the latest standard and supports AMD's full range. Intel's LGA775 socket has been around for a few years, but check your motherboard's manual for processor support as only the latest chipsets support Intel's Core 2 Duo and Core 2 Quad processors.

- 3** If you're building a PC from scratch, it's best to pick the processor first and then choose a motherboard to match. If you're building a basic office PC, a budget dual-core processor is fine. If you do a lot of intensive tasks, an Intel Core 2 Duo or Quad is a better choice.

The Core 2 Duo range is our current favourite. You can buy Intel's fast E8500 (see 'Also consider...', opposite) for just £149 including VAT. If your motherboard doesn't support Core 2 Duo, it's worth upgrading as the Pentium D range of dual-core processors is no longer available. Avoid single-core Pentium 4s and Athlon 64s as they are poor value.

- 4** Intel's Extreme processors and AMD's Black Edition processors are multiplier-unlocked, so you can overclock them without affecting your memory or other components. However, the Core 2 Extreme QX9770 costs a whopping £916.
- 5** You can buy Intel's mobile Core 2 Duo and Core Duo processors, too. However, you'll need a motherboard or barebones PC that's compatible with Socket P. Mobile processors are more expensive, so buy one only if necessary.