

Thermaltake Element S

An array of thoughtful features in an understated design

Say you're a content creator—video, graphic design, whatever. You want a computer that's quiet, functional, and hopefully doesn't look like it was designed by a candy raver, or worse, Apple. That's what Thermaltake is betting on with its Element S, an understated black midtower case with restrained red accents and plenty of drive space that's marketed toward content creators.

The Element S is built from steel, painted black inside and out, and decked with black plastic trim on the top and a red-rimmed, black-plastic front-panel door. It weighs close to 18 pounds, and measures 21.3x9.1x20 inches. The model we tested included three fans: a 12cm, 1,300rpm front intake fan, a 14cm 1,000rpm rear output fan, and a 23cm 800rpm red LED fan on top. The case also includes rear mounts for two 6cm VGA exhaust fans, which is rare, but makes sense if you're encoding video using a high-end graphics card. The Element S also has two holes for water-cooling tubes, but doesn't include rubber grommets in them—they're just bare metal punchouts in the case that could puncture the tubing over time.

The Element S has three 5.25-inch bays and a seven-slot hard drive cage, the latter of which can be oriented so that the drives either sit

parallel to the front of the case or perpendicular to it. Swapping the cage's orientation involves removing a few thumbscrews, popping off the whole front panel, and temporarily removing the two front fan clips. Fortunately, the whole process takes just a few minutes. Mounting the drives with SATA ports facing the rear of the case improves airflow and makes connecting drives easy, but it makes the task of adding and removing drives slightly more difficult. The drives slide in and out on special thumbscrews, and lock in with a plastic clasp. Thankfully, Thermaltake includes enough of the screws to fill all seven drive bays.

Great news for fans of solid-state drives: The Element S includes mounts for two 2.5-inch drives, which is the kind of forward thinking we salute, and we wonder why it's still so rare in case design. Even cases that ship with 3.5-inch-to-2.5-inch drive bay adapters are rare, much less designs that let you keep all your 3.5-inch drive bays free. And while the motherboard tray on the Element S isn't removable, it at least features a backplate cutout for the CPU cooler.

The PSU mounts are slightly elevated to improve airflow for units with bottom-mounted fans; the front fan mounts feature clips so they can be swapped easily (or removed to switch the hard drive cage orientation), and the case's front bezels act as dust filters. The Element S's front panel connectors include audio in and out, two USB ports,



Beyond its modest exterior lies a wealth of hard drive bays and bonus features.

and an eSATA port.

We wish the optical drive bays were toolless (as it is, they require the use of a couple screws), but no part of installation was actually difficult.

The Thermaltake Element S is a good midtower case at a competitive price—at \$150, it's \$80 cheaper than the Silverstone Fortress, and \$30 cheaper than Hiper's Osiris. Both those cases, however, are made of pricier aluminum. Still, with plenty of drive bays and fans and not as much flash as most gaming chassis, the Element S strikes a more professional tone than more ornate cases, and offers a lot of substance in a grown-up case. —NATHAN EDWARDS



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