Synology RT2600ac Wi-Fi Router

THE BEST ROUTER ON THE MARKET

This is a router that does everything you could ever ask for, whether you're a network noobie who just wants to run the setup wizard and have everything running in seconds, or you're an advanced user who wants to fiddle with the deepest of settings. Not only that, but it's wickedly fast, has a very attractive price and one of the best user interfaces we've ever seen on a router.

The twin channels combine to deliver a total of 2.53Gbps of bandwidth. The 2.4GHz channel delivers up to 800Mbps of bandwidth, while the 5GHz boosts this to 1.73Gbps. These are both powered by the Qualcomm IPQ8065 802.11ac radio. It's no record-breaker compared to the AC5300 routers that are on the market, but this bandwidth is more than enough for your average house hold or small office. It uses a 4x4 transmitter/receiver antennae configuration, which are mounted externally to deliver the best possible performance. Each one can be angled both vertically and horizontally.

It's also fully MU-MIMO compatible out of the box, with no need for beta firmware sometime in the vague near future, unlike many other routers being sold as MU-MIMO models. It's powered by a Qualcomm IPQ8065 dual core 1.7GHz processor, along with 512MB of memory. There are two USB ports, one 2.0, the other 3.0, so you can use it as a print server or network storage device if you connect an external hard drive. There's also an SD Card reader, and it'll work with most 3G/4G dongles.

We've recently moved test spaces, and in the process have changed our testing procedure. Rather than use synthetic

∧ Simple good looks contrast with most competing over the top designs, and performance is fantastic

tests, we now copy a 1.12GB HD video file to a Wi-Fi connected laptop from our desktop PC, which is connected to the test router via Ethernet. This delivers real world speed tests, and the RT2600ac did incredibly well. At a range of approximately nine metres, the 2.4GHz channel delivered 573Mbps. The 5GHz channel dropped to 132Mbps, but this is to be expected, as its speed drops dramatically over range and if there are any obstacles in the way, such as the two half-height walls between our two test PCs.

But what really makes this router shine is the incredible user interface. We're intimately familiar with Synology's amazing NAS interface, and the RT2600ac follows suit. To put it bluntly, this router has the best interface we've seen in a consumer router. It's got a very similar layout to Synology's NAS operating system, and looks basically like a Windows desktop.

If you don't want to fiddle with the settings, the start-up wizard will have you good to go in less than a minute. However, if you're the type who likes to get down and dirty with advanced networking options, there's a plethora of settings to tweak. There's also a huge amount of information supplied to monitor your network, such as which devices are using

the most bandwidth, the total CPU load, and a whole lot more.

Another brilliant feature of the interface is the support for add-on applications, found in the Package Center. Currently there are only a handful, but they're all of use. The VPN package makes setting up a VPN an entirely pain-free affair, while the Cloud Station Server makes it a cinch to set up your own personal cloud. Hopefully more applications are released in future, but this feature alone makes the RT2600ac worthy of your attention. This router really does do it all, and at a great price point. We'd go so far as to say it's the best 2600AC router on the market, with blazing speeds, a rich feature set and that oh-so-amazing interface. Highly recommended for both novices and network engineers alike.
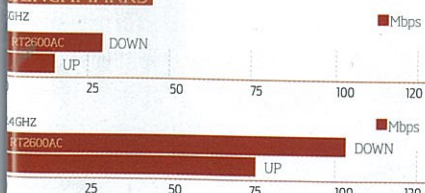
Bennett Ring

KEY SPECS

$369 · www.synology.com
Dual channel (2.4GHz – 800Mbps · 5GHz – 1.73Gbps) · EEE 802.11a/b/g/n/ac · twin USB ports (1 x 2.0, 1 x 3.0) · MU-MIMO compatible · beamforming

OVERALL

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

BENCHMARKS

GHZ
RT2600AC DOWN — ■ Mbps
UP
25 50 75 100 120

4GHZ
RT2600AC DOWN — ■ Mbps
UP
25 50 75 100 120

BENCHMARKS

147MB FILE · 5GHZ
RT2600AC 132Mbps — ■ Seconds
15 30 45 60 75

147MB FILE · 2.4GHZ
RT2600AC 573Mbps — ■ Seconds
15 30 45 60 75