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Review: Aten CS1774 KVM switch

A compact KVM switch that includes a network hub

Price: €250 (€170 approx)

Manufacturer: Aten

Technical specifications

Ratings

Overall rating: ★★★★★
Features: ★★★★★
Ease of use: ★★★★★
Value for money: ★★★★★

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Verdict

Pros: Easy to set up and change between computers
Cons: Network hub arrangement
Overall: An excellent way to save space. The network hub and switching options make controlling multiple computers as transparent as possible

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Tim Smith, Personal Computer World 12 Apr 2007

It might seem a little odd in these days of virtualisation to review a keyboard, video and mouse (KVM) switch, but there are still times when separate computers are the best solution.

The CS1774 reduces desk clutter by using a single mouse, keyboard and monitor for up to four computers.

It offers plenty more than basic KVM switches, with mic and headphone connections and a built-in network hub.

The CS1774 switch is more compact than we expected. Most of the sockets are located on the back but there are a couple of USB ports on the front, designed for use with peripherals.

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It is assumed that the keyboard and mouse will connect with USB, but there is an adapter for a PS/2 keyboard and mouse. All monitor ports are VGA.

The single cable per computer splits into two USB, monitor and audio at the computer end. The KVM plug is colour coded and keyed to ensure you don't plug it in the wrong way round.

The network connection is made separately. There are lights on the front to show if the computers are on; these double as selection switches. Keyboard shortcuts can also be used to cycle through the live computers and to jump directly to a specific computer. The provision of both selection methods is very welcome.

At €250 (£170 approx) the CS1774 pays for itself in reduced hardware costs even if it is only used for two computers, not to mention the space saving. A cheaper model for just two computers is also available.

A similar result could be gained by using remote access software such as VNC or Windows Remote Desktop, but there are good reasons not to.

The biggest issue with software such as this is that it gives full access to anyone on the network with the username and password - a real security worry.

The addition of a network hub is a great idea and further helps to reduce clutter, but there were a couple of disappointments. The first is that the network cable is separate to the main cable and the network sockets are mounted in a separate group.

Combining them would have kept things much tidier and made diagnosis easier in the event of a network fault.

However, this is a very minor complaint to what is a very useful device. In short, the Aten CS1774 is well worth considering if you plan to use several computers at one desk.

See also:



■ [Review: Belkin Switch2 Wireless kit](#)
 Run two computers off a single keyboard, monitor and mouse set
 30 Oct 2006



■ [Review: Raritan Z-Series Z4200U KVM switch](#)
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