Speakers
Edifier 2.1

Loud but is there substance?

E difier needs no introduction as we looked at their very impressive 5.1 speaker system, the R501, last September. That particular speaker system won a truly deserved award from PC Plus. This time around, Edifier has a 2.1 speaker system that they are very eager to introduce to young chaps who love loud music.

The Edifier 2.1 certainly lives up to its claims of being extremely loud during the tests sessions - the office next door to ours will attest to this. Doors, windows and walls vibrated tremendously and one could never ever imagine that the source would be coming from a set of plain-looking RM430 speakers.

A closer look
The speaker design is rather common and would not warrant a second look when they aren't turned on. They are made of wood and have a thin black finish that scratches off easily.

It wouldn't be too hard to find a place to set the satellite speakers next to your PC as they aren't too big. Since they are magnetically shielded, it's even okay to place them right next to the monitor. The subwoofer, however, is on the bigger side as it's about the size of a mini-tower casing that's a bit shorter.

As mentioned earlier, the speakers are extremely loud and this would be great for bass fanatics. Personally, we find that it can be a bit annoying as well as the Edifier lacks the ability to deliver clear mids as the bass might drown it out. This, despite the satellites having two drivers for extra clarity and fidelity.

A wired remote control is included together with the speakers. It is connected to the subwoofer and the cable is only a mere 1.4 metres long. This isn't really anywhere near long enough especially since the subwoofer is normally placed on the floor.

What's really good about the Edifier 2.1 is that it has optical output. For RM430, it's a steal for its features.
David Chieng

PCPlus Verdict

FOR
✔ Amazing bass
AGAINST
✘ Short wired remote

FEATURES	8 9 10
PERFORMANCE	8 9 10
OVERALL	8 9 10

Motherboards
Gigabyte 8S655TX Ultra

An alternate dual-channel solution for Intel P4 systems

BENCHMARKS
PCMark2002 CPU 7,528
PCMark2002 Memory 10,037
3DMArk2001SE 17,872 3DMarks
Q3A Demo Fastest 480.4 FPS
UT2K3 CPU 640x480 167.77

A s part of our work, reviewing motherboards are a regular occurrence. One brand we've always liked is Gigabyte, as their motherboards tend to be among the most fully featured and least problematic. That's why, when the Gigabyte 8S655TX Ultra arrived, we had high hopes.

655TX? What's that?
The Gigabyte 8S655TX Ultra is a motherboard based on the SiS 655TX chipset. The 655TX is an improved variant of the 655FX, which was originally intended to go head on with Intel's 865/875 chipsets in the performance arena, though sadly, the 655FX wasn't up to par. The 655TX improves upon the 655FX via a reduction in latency by removing half the command cycles from the communication between the CPU and memory. The 655TX also fully supports FMB (Flexible Motherboard) 2.0 and VRM (Voltage Regulator Module) 10.0 specifications, which means full compatibility with the upcoming Intel Prescott processors.

Features
Gigabyte's 8S655TX motherboard allows the use of dual channel DDR400 memory, along with support for Intel's latest 800MHZ FSB processors. The motherboard oozes of Gigabyte's quality in design - components are so well laid out that installing or removing hardware is made easy. For instance, the memory and AGP slots are nicely far apart, allowing for easy memory installation or vice versa. Features such as Gigabyte's patented GigaRAID allows for an additional four IDE hard drives in RAID 0, 1 or 0+1 configurations.

Performance was quite impressive, considering that SiS-based motherboards haven't really been standing out in the performance rankings in P4 motherboards recently. If you're looking into an alternative Intel Pentium 4 motherboard, the Gigabyte 8S655TX Ultra will certainly impress.
David Chieng

PCPlus Verdict

FOR
✔ Support for upcoming Prescott processors
✔ GigaRAID & Serial ATA
✔ Excellent component layout
AGAINST
✘ None

VALUE	8 9 10
FEATURES	8 9 10
PERFORMANCE	8 9 10
OVERALL	8 9 10