Zyxel Multy X
The Multy X delivers both lightning fast Wi-Fi and impressively wide coverage for a reasonable price

SCORE ★★★★★
PRICE Twin pack, £224 (£269 inc VAT) from pcpro.link/282multy

Next to BT's classy discs or Google Wifi's friendly little cylinders, Zyxel's bulging Multy X modules look rather cheap – and with a sizeable footprint of 236 x 178mm, they take up more shelf space than most rivals, too. But these nodes are large for a reason: each one crams in a dedicated 4x4 antenna array for the backhaul – providing a huge theoretical bandwidth of 1,733Mbits/sec – alongside separate 2x2 arrays for connected clients.

In practical terms this means that the nodes can communicate between themselves faster, and over longer distances, than most other mesh systems. In my own house, I was able to connect the primary node to the modem in the living room, haul the other node all the way to the utility room at the rear of the house, and still – according to the signal meter that's built into the Multy X smartphone app – enjoy a "perfect" connection between the two.

That in turn translated to some seriously impressive wireless coverage. No matter where I roamed around the house – indeed, even when I strayed out onto the exterior terrace – I enjoyed the kind of blazing speeds that had previously only been attainable when sitting right next to my old router. Even on the slower 2.4GHz band, the connection topped 5MB/sec almost everywhere around the building.

That alone would be enough to earn the Zyxel Multy X a warm recommendation, but there's other good news, too. I've complained elsewhere that two Gigabit Ethernet ports isn't really enough for a system that intends to replace your router. The Multy X shows how it should be done, offering a generous four ports on each node, so you can attach up to seven wired clients without needing to mess around with switches. It's just a shame that the USB 2 port at the back of each node doesn't currently do anything – it would be nice to be able to connect an external hard disk, but Zyxel says the connector is "reserved for future usage", and I suggest you don't hold your breath.

I was also pleased to note that splitting up the 2.4GHz and 5GHz wireless bands is as easy as flipping a toggle in the Multy X app. By default the 5GHz network is, slightly oddly, distinguished by having ".speed" appended to its SSID, but you can change it. There's a very simple parental control system too, which lets you configure internet access schedules for single devices or groups.

As a final bonus, the Multy X system works with Alexa, so if you have an Amazon Echo device you can verbally instruct it to disable the guest network, test your internet speed or temporarily suspend internet access. It would have been nice to reboot the router with a voice command, but if your internet is glitching then Alexa probably won't work anyway.

While the Multy X gets a lot right, it does hit a few bum notes. Yet again, you're stuck with a custom IP range – 192.168.212.x, if you're interested – which will be frustrating for anyone who has their IP addresses set up the way they like them. And, as with Google Wifi, while you can inspect your connected clients, you can't blacklist any that shouldn't be there. (You can cut off their internet access, but they'll still be able to talk to other devices on your LAN.)

Be warned too that, while the smartphone app is quite capable, it's slow: as you tap around its various pages, you're frequently left staring at a spinning wheel for five seconds or more while the app queries the nodes for whatever information it needs. You can't even work around the issue by using the web interface, because there isn't one. Visit the gateway in your web browser and you will be greeted with a terse "not found" error.

A final caveat is that the Multy X doesn't operate as a true mesh network – it uses a star configuration in which all nodes talk directly to the router. An update is promised in March that will add support for daisy-chained configurations – but if you were thinking of investing in additional units then be warned that, as things stand, they may not extend the system's range by as much as you would hope.

For those of us who don't live in mansions, though, the Zyxel Multy X is a fantastic system. It may not be the most aesthetically beautiful networking kit on the block, but it delivers screamingly fast Wi-Fi over an impressively wide area, for a price that's extremely reasonable.

ABOVE Zyxel's nodes are chunky for a good reason: each one has a 4x4 antenna array
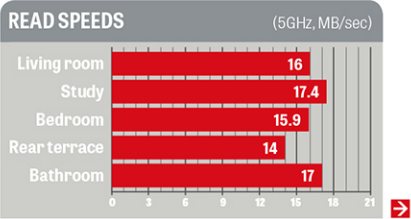
BELOW The Multy X shows how it should be done, with four Gigabit Ethernet ports on each node

READ SPEEDS (5GHz, MB/sec)

Location	Speed
Living room	16
Study	17.4
Bedroom	15.9
Rear terrace	14
Bathroom	17

	Asus Lyra	BT Whole Home Wi-Fi (RECOMMENDED)	Devolo GigaGate	Google Wifi	Linksys Velop	Netgear Orbi	Tenda Nova MW6	TP-Link Deco M5	Ubiquiti AmpliFi HD	Zyxel Multy X (LABS WINNER)
OVERALL SCORE	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★
Information										
Part code	MAP-AC2200	88269	DVL9969	GA3A00492-A04	WHW0303-UK	RBK50	MW6	DECO M5	AFI-HD	WSQ50-EU0201F
Price (inc VAT)	£318 (£380)	£158 (£189)	£158 (£189)	£190 (£229)	£333 (£400)	£267 (£320)	£142 (£170)	£192 (£230)	£300 (£360)	£224 (£269)
Supplier	currys.co.uk	shop.bt.com	ebuyer.com	store.google.com	apple.com/uk	currys.co.uk	novatech.co.uk	scan.co.uk	scan.co.uk	pcpro.link/282multy
Nodes (as reviewed)	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2
Other options (price inc VAT)	Single node and twin pack coming in H1 2018	Single node (£80); Twin pack (£100)	Single node (£120)	Single node (£129); Triple pack (£400)	Single node (£170); Twin pack (£250)	RBK40 twin pack, 370m² coverage (£250); RBK53 triple pack, 700m² coverage (£400)	None	Single node (£88)	Single node (£130); additional router (£157)	Single node pack coming in H1 2018
Dimensions (WDH)	150 x 150 x 50mm	165 x 77 x 165mm	75 x 120 x 95mm	104 x 104 x 69mm	79 x 79 x 185mm	163 x 79 x 203mm	100 x 100 x 100mm	120 x 120 x 38mm	Router: 96 x 98 x 100mm; nodes: 54 x 58 x 244mm	236 x 178 x 52mm
Warranty	3yr	2yr	3yr	1yr	3yr	1yr	3yr	3yr	1yr	2yr
Connectivity										
Claimed coverage (as reviewed)	560m²	420m²	Not stated	170m²	560m²	460m²	560m²	420m²	1,860m²	460m²
Maximum nodes supported	5	6	9	32	6	4	10	10	10	3
2.4GHz speed	400Mbits/sec	800Mbits/sec	300Mbits/sec	400Mbits/sec	400Mbits/sec	400Mbits/sec	300Mbits/sec	400Mbits/sec	450Mbits/sec	400Mbits/sec
5GHz speed	867Mbits/sec (client) + 867Mbits/sec (backhaul)	867Mbits/sec (client) + 867Mbits/sec (backhaul)	1733Mbits/sec (backhaul only)	867Mbits/sec (client) + 867Mbits/sec (backhaul)	867Mbits/sec (client) + 867Mbits/sec (backhaul)	867Mbits/sec (client) + 1,733Mbits/sec (backhaul)	867Mbits/sec (combined client & backhaul)	867Mbits/sec (combined client & backhaul)	1,300Mbits/sec	867Mbits/sec (client) + 1,733Mbits/sec (backhaul)
MIMO channels	2x2 on each band	4x4 on each band	2x2 (2.4GHz); 4x4 (5GHz)	2x2 on each band	Not stated	2x2 on client bands, 4x4 on backhaul	2x2 on each band	2x2 on each band	3x3 on each band	2x2 on client bands, 4x4 on backhaul
MU-MIMO	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Ethernet ports	2 x GbE per node	1 x GbE per node	1 x GbE per node; 4 x 100Mbits/sec (satellite only)	2 x GbE per node	2 x GbE per node	3 x GbE on router, 4 x GbE on satellite	2 x GbE per node	2 x GbE per node	5 x GbE on router; none on nodes	4 x GbE per node
Wired backhaul capable?	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (with second router)	✗
Features										
Router mode	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AP/Bridge mode	✓	✓	✓	Single node only	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
WPS	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Display	Multicolour LED on each unit	Multicolour LED on each unit	3 x LEDs on base; 8 x LEDs on satellite	Multicolour LED on each unit	Multicolour LED on each unit	Multicolour LED on each unit	Multicolour LED on each unit	Multicolour LED on each unit	40mm circular colour touchscreen on router; 5 x LEDs on nodes	Multicolour LED on each unit
App-based configuration	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Web-based configuration	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	Minimal	✗
Guest network	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parental controls	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Works with Alexa	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Advanced										
IPv6	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Custom IP range	✓	N/A	N/A	✗	✗	✓	Partial	✗	✗	✗
Client IP reservation	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	Via port forwarding	✗	✓	✓
Port forwarding	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.4GHz/5GHz band splitting	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	Unofficial	✗	✗	✓	✓