

Western Digital MyNet N900 Router Long Term Review

8/27/2012 by: Anshel Sag

The line of My Net products from Western Digital takes the company's new approach towards home networking and home entertainment and builds upon the evolution of the company's products from being simply a hard drive manufacturer to a full media solution provider.



Western Digital has slowly been evolving as a company away from being solely a hard drive manufacturer in the past few years. This was most evident with their media streaming line of products called WDTV. These little boxes provided the ability to make virtually any TV an internet connected TV and also allowed you to stream media off of devices that were already on the network. The evolution of this product eventually created the WDTV Live Hub which had a 1TB hard drive, which we reviewed, and created somewhat of an entertainment center of the home by being able to not only play back network content, but also to serve it to other devices on the network.

Needless to say, we do not doubt that Western Digital is always looking for ways to sell more hard drives. This is even more evident in the fact that the My Net line of networking products will hit all price ranges for consumers will still maintaining a plethora of features that are needed to deliver the best media experience in the household.

Introduction to MyNet

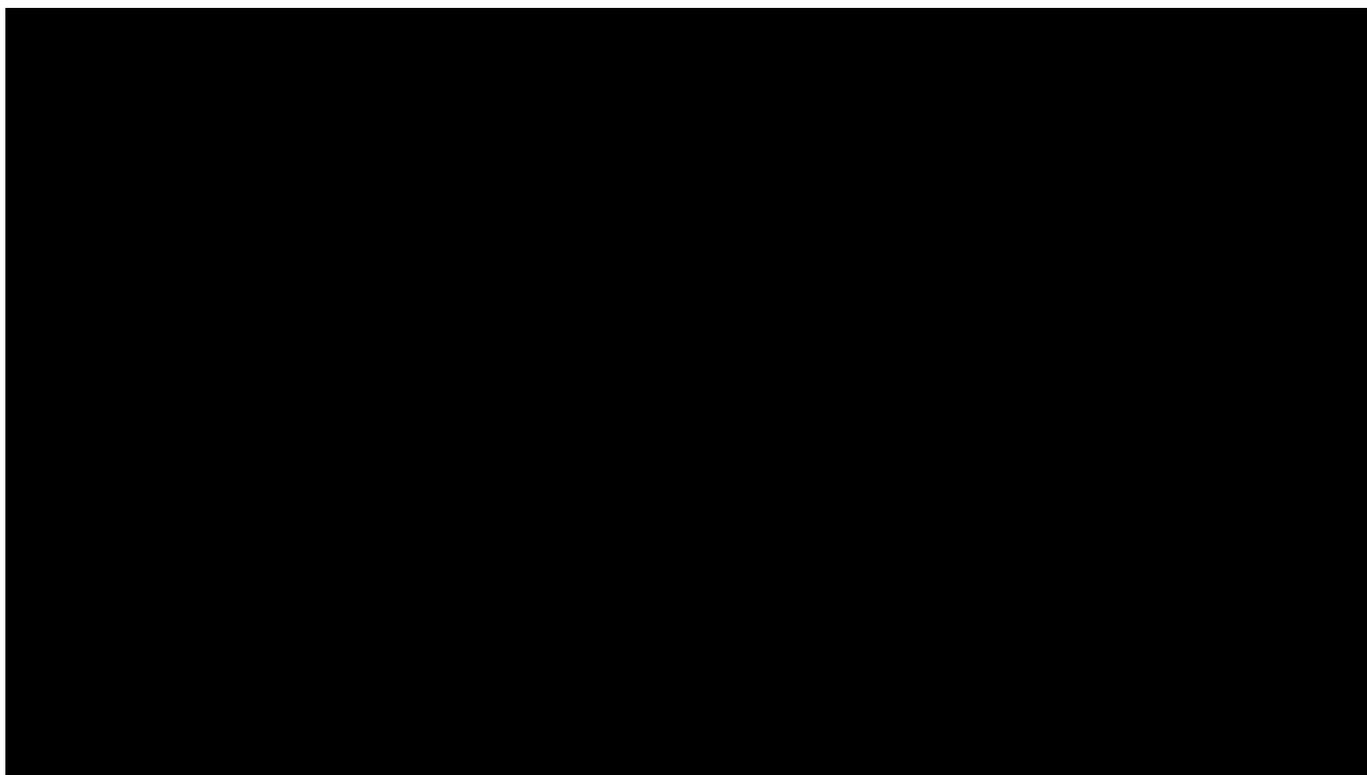
Western Digital's My Net line of products consists of a My Net Switch, My Net N600, My Net N750, My Net N900 and My Net N900 Central. All of these products are gigabit enabled and dual-band, with the My Net Switch being an 8-port gigabit switch. The one great feature that exists across all of Western Digital's routers is IPv6 support, which is really useful now that the internet is slowly shifting away from IPv4 which

is an antiquated standard and nearly resulted in a global shortage of IP addresses.



Furthermore, all of the routers will feature 802.11n wireless rather than the currently latest technology, 802.11ac. This is because there currently are close to no 802.11ac products on the market and most users would see no benefit from an 802.11ac solution Western Digital went with it. Since most users' devices are 802.11n today, it makes the most sense to give consumers what would fit their networks today, rather than in a year.

The biggest feature that makes the Western Digital My Net N900 and its brothers and sisters unique from other routers is their traffic shaping technology which is specifically designed to deliver the best absolute experience across the home. This technology is called FasTrack and comes in two flavors, FasTrack and FasTrack Plus.



FasTrack is also available on the My Net N600 and My Net N750. This technology provides for 21 open queues for service applications with 6 services coming pre-identified. The remaining queues can be defined by the customer once they've installed it themselves. FasTrack Plus has unlimited open queues for

service applications and requires no need for customization as the router will actively analyze all in-coming sessions. This feature will only be available on the My Net N900 and My Net N900 Central. In our testing, we will detail how this improves overall media consumption.

Another unique feature to Western Digital's My Net routers is the ability to create your own personal cloud with the My Net N900 routers. These routers will enable you to take any data on any USB-connected hard drive (since the router has two USB ports) or any internally built-in drives (My Net N900 Central) and allow you to access those files from your phone or tablet both inside and outside of your home. This feature is interoperable with all storage devices, which is good to know to if you don't own the latest external drives from Western Digital.

Additionally, the N900 series of routers with storage (internal or externally connected) allow you to do automatic backups of devices over the network with Time Machine compatibility and Time Machine functionality for PC through WD SmartWare.

Western Digital provides applications for both Android and iOS devices to enable you to set up the phone or tablet once with your router and to never have to set it up again in order to remotely connect to your router. You can also remotely configure your router as well and supports FTP.

User Experience and Testing

Since [the announcement](#) of the Western Digital MyNet line of Routers, we've spent over two months working on reviewing this router to make sure that it is indeed a worthy router.

In our testing, we decided to go the same route that any regular consumer would go. We decided to take our fully operational Linksys E2000 selectable dual-band router and to swap it for the WD MyNet N900 router to see how much it would improve the overall network functionality and speed. Our router is located in the attic where we have run all of our cables, network and phone cables which puts it in a central part of the house, but also two floors above the first floor causing for some signal issues.

Since our entire house is wired in every room, we were able to make the maximum use of the MyNet N900's 8 gigabit ports, freeing up some ports on the switch that sits next to the router. The E2000 only had four gigabit ethernet ports, so more native ports on the router is always welcome. Additionally, since there's been a boom of wireless devices in the past few years, we now have more wireless devices in the household than we do wired even though nearly every single wired port in the house is already occupied.

Setting up the router itself is probably one of the easiest processes I've ever encountered when setting up a router. This router is really designed with the layman in mind and Western Digital really makes that obvious. The setup for internet connectivity is straightforward and linear requiring you to follow specific steps to gain internet connectivity and helps you troubleshoot if there are problems. Once you set up the router, it prompts you to address certain notifications in the notification box which include registering the router (quick and easy), setting up guest wireless and many other things.

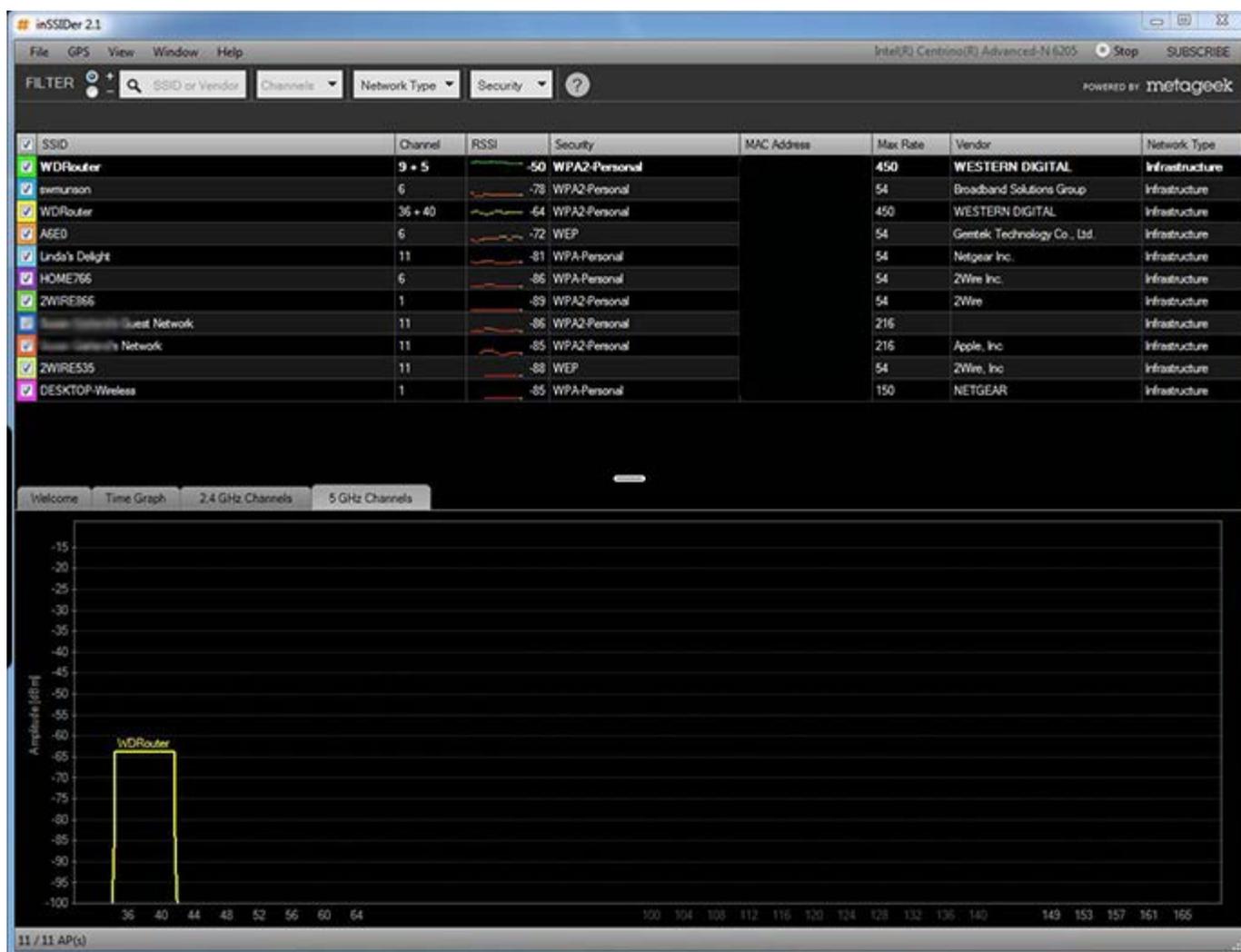
We first decided to set up the wireless to our liking and changed the router name from WesternDigital to WDRouter to make things easier on ourselves and so that we weren't using the default settings. We also opted to not go for the guest wireless option, however this option does exist for both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands and enables your friends and family to quickly and easily connect to the internet while at your place without having access to your actual network.

Upon setting up the wireless, we decided to go around the house and check if the signal had improved at all. In the past, with our E2000, we had poor signal strength in many parts of the downstairs and practically no signal outside in the backyard. In addition to that, with the E2000, we could not get our Logitech Revue (Google TV) to connect wirelessly to the network because the signal strength wasn't strong enough. Because of this, we were forced to use the wired port from our WD TV Live Hub for our Logitech Revue.



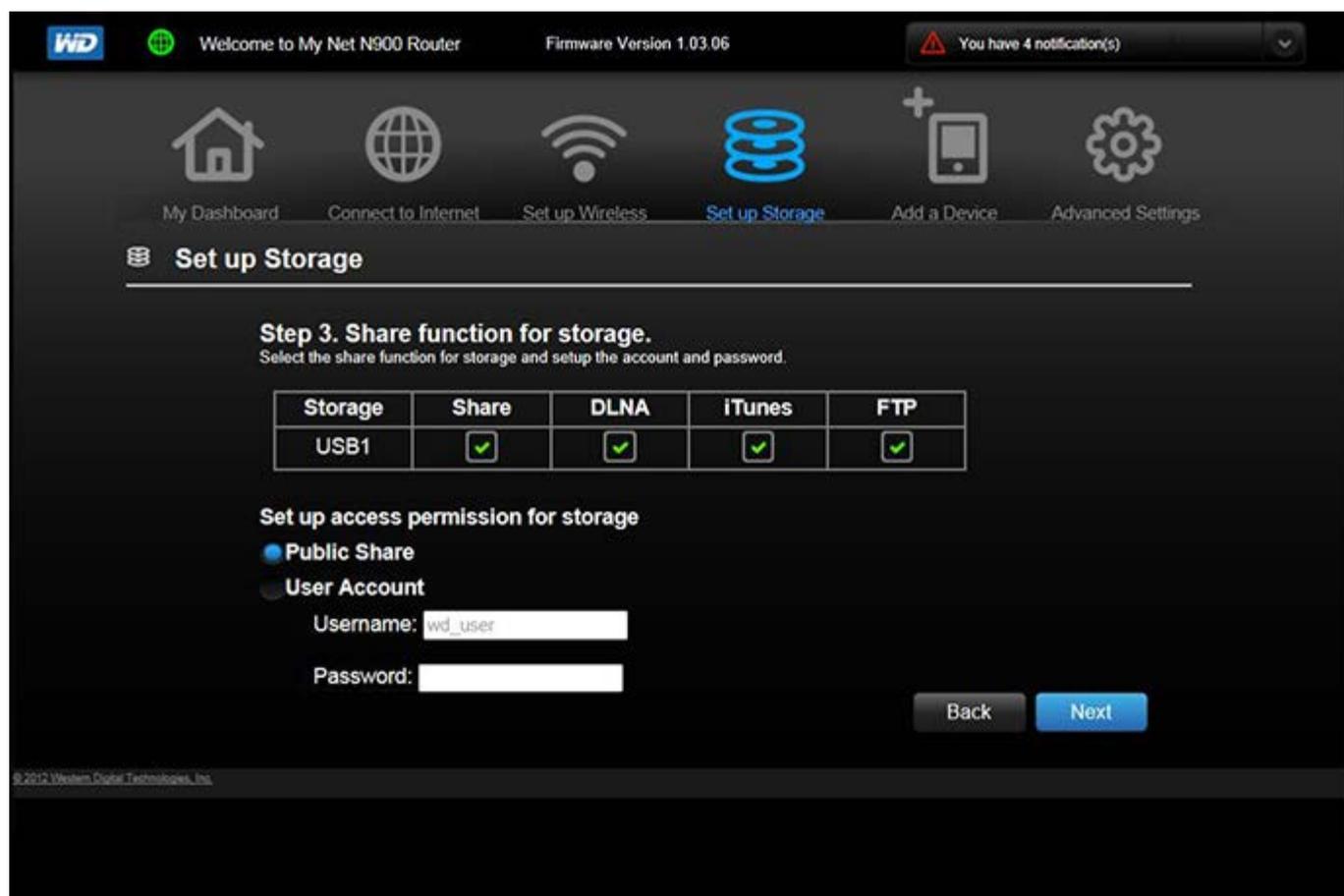
With the introduction of the WD MyNet N900, we were able to increase the range and speed of our network which resulted in better connectivity for all of our wireless devices. We were able to reconnect our WD TV Live Hub back into the network and we were able to install an internet radio in our backyard barbecue. We also saw an increase in our network speed from 300mbps on the E2000 to 450mbps per band on the MyNet N900 since both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands both operate at 450mbps. We currently only have two 5GHz wireless devices, and both of them are desktops, so we weren't able to effectively test the 5GHz range compared to the 2.4GHz range.

Even though we consider ourselves technology enthusiasts and have the latest phones, tablets and laptops, almost all of our 802.11n devices are still 2.4GHz. However, we do have a nice signal strength measurement from inSSIDer which shows a much weaker 5GHz signal strength compared to our 2.4GHz even though 5GHz should have much less interference as nobody else in the neighborhood is using 5GHz. We believe this to be because of the fact that the router is in the attic and 5GHz does a much poorer job of penetrating dense objects, like walls.



Our house is approximately 2,300 square feet and is a split level home. In the downstairs, we had previously mentioned that our entertainment center had issues getting a signal lock with the E2000 router. With the MyNet N900 we were able to get a solid signal with the router on the Logitech Revue and free up the wired port for the WD TV Live Hub once again. In addition to that, we actually started to get signal in the backyard of the house which resulted in being able to play internet radio in the backyard. Also, the router now reached across the street at the neighbor's house which further justifies the need for WPA2 PSK encryption. Overall, we were extremely satisfied with the 2.4GHz range of the MyNet N900, but found ourselves wanting more from the 5GHz signal strength.

Upon setting up wireless, we set up the USB attached storage, which was equally as simple as installing the router itself. You simply plug the USB based hard drive into the router and enable it as attached storage and that's it. You can also use the drive as a network drive on any computer and the router accommodates up to two different USB based drives, so you could theoretically have up to 8TB attached to your network via this router. Also, the Western Digital MyNet N900 is agnostic to hard drive manufacturers, so it does not have to be a Western Digital external USB drive in order to use FTP, iTunes or DLNA functionality. Kudos to Western Digital for not creating a closed system.



The router also has quite a few advanced settings including the ability to disable or enable the Western Digital FasTrac QoS (Quality of Service) among other QoS features like Enhanced WMM which also works to prioritize traffic over Wi-Fi. In our testing of Western Digital's FasTrac Plus traffic shaping technology, we certainly found that YouTube videos and Netflix videos over Wi-Fi noticeably loaded faster than over standard Wi-Fi connectivity. However, we also found that with FasTrac enabled, you almost entirely lose all your ability to torrent. All torrents are effectively blocked to 1kbps while FasTrack is enabled, which means you have to manually set the ports for your torrents in the advanced settings in order to get around the FasTrack QoS.

Judging by this feature alone, we wouldn't necessarily consider this router a good fit for anyone that does heavy torrenting since FasTrac is this router's crowning feature. This router is really designed for someone that is addicted to Netflix and Hulu and watching their videos online using some sort of streaming service on a wireless device. If you're a heavy torrenter, this router's FasTrack isn't necessarily for you, however, it is still a great router in every other respect.

The actual depth of the MyNet N900 in terms of features is also astonishing even though that this is considered to be a mostly mainstream user device. It enables parental controls, so that parents can control which sites their children can and can't go to. This can be done on a network-wide scale or by device. The WD MyNet N900 also offers a slew of features that any of the latest routers out there feature, including things like a Firewall, DMZ, Mac Filtering, Port forwarding, ALG, Routing, and UPnP IGD for easy network connectivity. The router also enables you to use it as a range extender if you buy more than one of them and have an extremely large house and want to have full signal everywhere.



We also could not write this review without mentioning the fact that during our testing of the Western Digital MyNet N900, we had initially encountered an issue that [other users on the internet had also experienced](#). This issue was that the router would experience a memory leak and over the course of four or five days would eventually lock up and drop all wired network connectivity while maintaining wireless connectivity without any problems. Other times it would simply drop connection altogether and the only way to remedy this issue was by restarting the router manually or through the web interface. We spent countless weeks working with Western Digital on this issue and they released a fix two weeks ago which has been working stable for us for over a week and a half now.

Western Digital had been extremely accommodating and did everything they could to help us troubleshoot the issue including replacing the router. The latest firmware did resolve the issue and that is why we are publishing the review now, because our issues have been permanently resolved. However, we find it extremely hard to believe that none of the other reviewers encountered this issue or perhaps none of them had been using this router long enough to encounter it since it took four to five days to manifest itself.

Value

Currently the Western Digital MyNet N900 retails for [\\$154.99 on Amazon.com](#). Based upon this price and the competing routers out there like Netgear, Linksys and ASUS, this router isn't necessarily the cheapest of the bunch with the Netgear N900 router having very similar features (minus media streaming QoS) and selling for \$149.99. Similarly, the Cisco Linksys E4200 sells for \$139.99. While we haven't had a chance to test the range of these routers in the exact same settings, there is no doubt our previous experiences with those routers do put their performance on par with the MyNet N900. If you do a lot of video streaming and do it wirelessly, this premium over their competition may be worth it. At this point, Western Digital is definitely competitive but they're not necessarily the price leader that they have shown themselves to be in hard drives.

To us, the most appealing router is actually [Western Digital's MyNet Central N900](#) which features a 2TB

hard drive inside of it in addition to having all the features of the MyNet N900. Having a hard drive inside of this router also enables some additional features that we mentioned before which we really believe will power the future with personal cloud functionality. The 1TB model sells for \$229 on amazon and the 2TB model for \$269. We believe that if you really want to get the full experience of the MyNet line of routers that you should go for the MyNet Central routers purely because of the backup functionality and the personal cloud features.



Conclusion

Based upon our own testing and use of this router, we can say that Western Digital has made high-performance networking extremely simple and easy to use while still giving you the opportunity to really tweak a lot of settings if you want to/know how to. At its current price point, this router is likely too expensive for some, but Western Digital also makes the more affordable N750 and N600 with obviously cut-down features from the N900. We cannot stress enough that having a good router is in many cases more important than having fast internet. Don't cheap out on your router and don't use the one that your internet service provider has given you (2Wire or Motorola Surfboard), because you'll regret it later on and ask why you didn't do it sooner. Also, as a side note we recommend everyone install [inSSIDer](#) on your wireless devices to evaluate the signal strength of your router as well as if your router is on the best possible channel.

We give the Western Digital MyNet N900 our Home Entertainment Award Innovation Award because of its home entertainment focus and the fact that it is designed with regular people in mind while still packing some serious future capabilities and performance.



Tags:

Western Digital, MyNet, Router, Review, Firmware, Issues, Update, FasTrac, WMM, QoS, Routing, 2.4GHz, 5GHz, Wireless, Streaming Media

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