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Miele Canister Vacuum: Callisto S5280 Canister Vacuum In the Test Lab

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Product: Callisto S5280 Canister Vacuum

Price: \$799

Rating: Simply Irresistible

Miele vacuums have always been on short list of "if we had the money" appliances, garnering praise from neat freaks and allergy sufferers all around. But unlike your Hoovers and Dysons, they tend to be as rare as a Prius parked at a monster truck rally. Aaron over at ATNY has recently tested the [Miele Pisces](#), being fortunate enough to call one his own and sung its praises. While we're not quite blessed yet to call one our own, we were loaned a [Miele Callisto S5280 Canister](#) model to use our around our apartment to test not only its cleaning prowess, but also to measure what sort of environmental impact the vacuum had while in use...



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As you can see from the introductory image, the first thing we did was to use an airborne laser particle reader (the same we used to test our beloved mechanical family member, the [IQAir Health Pro Plus](#)) to get a reading from the outgoing top vent while vacuuming our living room rug (which would give a reading of 2 million particles when rustled). Many HEPA branded vacuums actually pollute indoor air quality while in operation (we used to have an upright that would immediately create a small dust plume upon turning it on despite its HEPA labeled bags), so we were extremely impressed to see Miele's tight construction, stringent quality control and an active HEPA filtering unit resulted in an absolute "0" reading. For allergy sufferers, one should not accept anything less, justifying the Miele's premium price tag with its undeniable performance.



If we did have a criticism about the [Miele Callisto S5280](#) it would be its slightly awkward handle system. While using it, we'd occasionally encounter certain arm/wrist positions while maneuvering that strained comfortable use. This was mostly because the handle was constructed with huge hands in mind, so if you're petite in size, be sure to give the vacuum a test run before ordering. We'd also wish the floor cleaning heads would pivot just a little further for under-furniture access.



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Now to the good stuff, which was a laundry list of items: the vacuum simply performs like one would expect from a \$799 vacuum and then some. Upon immediate inspection, each and every component of the Miele Callisto reminds you where your money went. From the black hole suction strength, to the quality hand tools housed inside the unit, to the various power and noise settings available, the Callisto proved to be a well engineered product made with little compromise despite its mid-tier lineup placement. The large 4.76 qt vacuum bags themselves were reason enough to feel confidence about the vacuum's performance, looking less like a typical disposable bag and more like a carefully woven permanent receptacle possibly used by NASA astronauts.



Compartments open up for easy access to a selection of on-board tools that include a crevice tool, a dust brush and an upholstery brush which worked wonders on our living room, cat hair covered seating (it's shedding season). Floor cleaning options include both a hardwood floor brush and mid-sized 10.5" power brush that seemed to rejuvenate both our Target shag rug and our Flor tiles with equal hunger. I spent nearly 10 minutes just vacuuming the rug because I could continually hear the vacuum suctioning particles that our own vacuum must have missed, despite cleaning very often (and we're a no-shoes home). Only when I stopped hearing those small sounds of debris being suctioned inside the vacuum did I stop, imparting a confidence that the rug was genuinely clean.

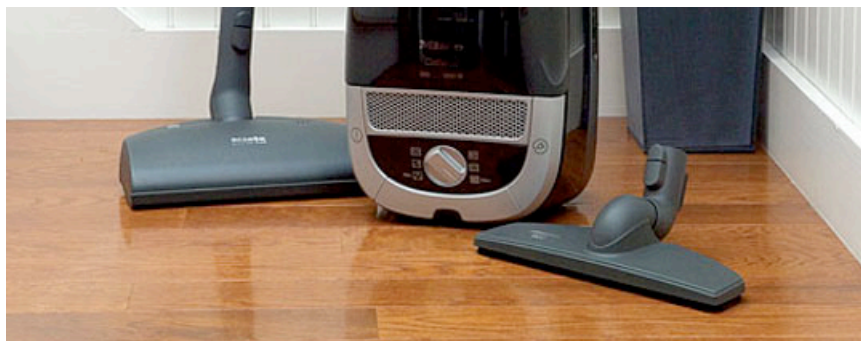


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At 13.5lbs, the Callisto is no light-weight, but neither would one call it heavy. Its handle made it easy enough to carry around the house, and we vacuumed up and down our stairway with a bit a care only because we didn't want to damage or ding its beautiful black exterior. Other details we've learned to appreciate with additional use is the quick, but controlled cable retraction action alongside the quieter/lower setting options for various surfaces around the house. At its highest setting, the Miele made for one powerful **gnat catcher** that literally sucked in flying bugs from afar, while also being gentle enough to clean curtains at a lower mark.

Unlike Aaron, I'd be completely fine for settling for Miele's mid tier offering (which isn't settling at all). Living in a small apartment, the Callisto is practically a howitzer at a rifle range. Coming with a 1-year limited warranty on vacuum parts and labor and a 7-year warranty on motor and labor, the Miele Callisto will likely be one of those one-time investments you could very well use well into your later years, not something we'd necessarily feel with most gimmicky cleaning units out there. Combine that with its air clean performance and compact form factor, and you've got one nice vacuum. Trust me, we're going to use this vacuum as much as possible before having to return it.

Pros:

- Active HEPA Air Filter emits "0" particle reading
- Impressive suction with variable strength
- Quiet to very quiet
- Large dust bag with indicator
- Excellent construction
- Long cord (29.5' cleaning radius!)

Cons:

- Slightly awkward handle
- On/Off button a little unresponsive
- Expensive

***Our Ratings:**

Simply Irresistible

- Recommend
- Weak Recommend
- Avoid!

Los Angeles Gregory April 29, 2008 07:05PM

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i think the major difference between this one and my pisces is that you have the upgraded power-wand. (and yours starts at \$150 more). yay for miele!

posted by [aaron](#) on 2008-04-29 19:32:11
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for paragraph 3:

its = possessive pronoun
it's = "it is"

I see this error a lot on this site, so I thought i'd mention it. :-)

posted by [le_sacre](#) on 2008-04-29 19:36:45
[view le_sacre's profile](#)

Sure, it's great - It had better be for equal to a BMW 7 Series monthly payment... (And I'd hate to have to keep the thing in bags - Notice how they're not simply glued together, but SEWN?)

As someone who recently struggled for months to choose a replacement vacuum in a more reasonable price-range, perhaps it would be more helpful to review housekeeping appliances for those of us in the sub-Dyson price range?

posted by [bepsf](#) on 2008-04-29 19:50:54
[view bepsf's profile](#)

i dont like bags either although Miele is very well known for being quite the front runner as far as appliances.

But if i could afford that, i'll rather buy a dyson. no bags allowed. and 200 less.

posted by [troz](#) on 2008-04-29 19:57:23
[view troz's profile](#)

First glance, I thought that initial picture was reading decibels... then I'd REALLY have to get one!

posted by [MattPDX](#) on 2008-04-29 20:12:25
[view MattPDX's profile](#)

bepsf: we'd certainly love to review more moderately priced vacuums (we recently reviewed a very [affordable unit](#) we use in our home currently). But as someone combating allergies and interior pollution, from all our own tests comparing what we currently own (a very affordable Hoover) to this type of allergen combating unit, we've noted you get what you pay for in regards to air quality and options. There's a reason people save up for these models (occasionally you can find them for a good discount on eBay or Craigslist). But to your point, we're hoping to get our hands on more appliances within the stratosphere of an affordable purchase (the [Electrolux](#)

Oxygen3 seems like a great mid-tier candidate)

BTW, bag models are most often **recommended** over bagless models if air quality/allergies are a concern. Bagless models provide convenience, but bags provide a much more contained and strict particle control. There's a reason Dyson and other bagless cyclonic models are never mentioned amongst allergy/healthcare recommendations. Here's a **great resource** comparing the two technologies.

posted by [gregory](#) on 2008-04-29 20:26:25
view [gregory's profile](#)

I love, love, love my miele flamenco II.

It's a very basic vacuum when compared to the latest models. It's over 10 years old, cleans like nothing else and well worth the \$300 spent.

It also has a nifty red body!

posted by [ilonastella](#) on 2008-04-29 20:26:38
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Bepsf –

The problem you might run into is that, in the sub-Dyson range, most vacuums aren't worth reviewing. That is to say that yes, some are better than others, but in the same way that some fast food is better for you than others, but none of it is actually healthy.

Buy a Dyson or better and (barring a disaster) you won't ever have to buy another replacement. And I'm willing to bet that the price of your first vacuum and your replacement vacuum added up to about the same as one Dyson. ;)

posted by [Allsunday](#) on 2008-04-29 20:36:13
view [Allsunday's profile](#)

I will second the recommendation of the Electrolux Oxygen3 model. We were able to pick one up at Sears for around \$425. It takes down cat hair without a second thought, and manages to get around our furniture without being awkward in the hands. Not sure how it does on the laser test, but it's got to be better than the cheap Hoover we had before (and at nearly half the price of the Miele I'd call it a better buy.)

posted by [jojippitydrum](#) on 2008-04-29 20:46:48
view [jojippitydrum's profile](#)

Before I surrendered and bought my Miele, I had purchased three under-\$100 vacuums in 5 years. They were all very disappointing after the initial few months. Now, I know I won't have to purchase another for a long, long time.

Dyson is ok if you want an upright (carpet) but if you have mostly hard surface floors, you'll want a canister.

posted by [aaron](#) on 2008-04-29 21:49:10
view [aaron's profile](#)

Dyson < Miele

Bagless is pointless if you care about small particles and lead dust, which is often unknowingly blown and dragged into your house.

You can get the same Miele vacuum (without all the extra options) for \$389. The HEPA filter costs you an extra \$40 or so bucks. All their canister vacuums are the same, only the option add dollars to the base price. But their entry level vacuum offers the same performance than their higher priced models, you just sacrifice the bells and whistles.

posted by [joebelt](#) on 2008-04-29 22:17:18
view [joebelt's profile](#)

I actually just purchased this vacuum last week. I've been doing extensive research over a vacuum that would pick up any and all hair from deep pile carpets. I almost bought a Dyson but the Callisto turns out to be quite the winner- check out the comparison test I found:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=mXA0N0V2uOQ>

I also ended up buying from this guy.

posted by [canutse](#) on 2008-04-29 22:32:48
[view canutse's profile](#)

I have a plain ole Sears kenmore canister vacuum. I paid probably no more than \$200. I prefer bags, too. I hate all the dust that gets kicked up when I have to change the bag. I can only imagine what it would be like emptying the bagless. I'm quite happy with sears.

posted by [JenPDX](#) on 2008-04-29 23:30:33
[view JenPDX's profile](#)

I have been looking into purchasing a better quality (and more expensive) vacuum as I do believe you get what you pay for in alot of instances. My cheapie (\$150) doesn't do the job properly and will likely need replaced. Also my cheapie is bagless, which I thought was a great idea when purchased, but in reality creates a mess and is frustrating. However, I really think \$799 plus tax is a bit much (so, around \$850). Well, unless it does my laundry, dishes, and yard-work too. Then, I'd be the first in line.

posted by [4ddh](#) on 2008-04-29 23:43:26
[view 4ddh's profile](#)

I love my Riccar. Canisters are the best, especially with hardwood.

posted by [hillgirl](#) on 2008-04-30 00:04:48
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My parents have had a Miele for years and I love it. It has most of the same features and pros that you listed here, which is interesting considering that it is about 14 years old! I guess they found a formula that works.

posted by [CanadianOlive](#) on 2008-04-30 00:44:12
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bepsf:

check Consumer Reports -- you'll find exhaustive reports on the sorts of vacuums you are looking for there.

Alas, Consumer Reports simply does not deal with this end of the market (European imports and high-end), so I am VERY grateful AT *does*, and very frustrated with the constant criticism when they do so.

posted by [monika1](#) on 2008-04-30 04:55:56
[view monika1's profile](#)

4ddh,

You can get the same Miele without all the accessories and extra controls on the handle and stuff for \$389. Same exact vacuum just stripped down to the essentials. No need to pay \$850.

posted by [joebelt](#) on 2008-04-30 09:57:35
[view joebelt's profile](#)

I got the electrolux ergorapido- the stick vac dustbuster thing- while it probably shouldn't replace my old mighty mite- it is amazing and I am already vacuuming more than before. it keeps a charge and has 2 suction speeds. Thank you apt

therapy for reviewing it. I really love it.

posted by [brooklynjennie](#) on 2008-04-30 10:17:22
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