

Scan White Cobra

The White Cobra is more awesome than an AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter

Price £6,923.68 inc VAT • Manufacturer www.scan.co.uk

Scan has been submitting systems to our annual Dream PC Labs test for longer than any other company that took part this year. Over the years, Scan's entries have sported heat-reactive paint, TEC coolers and even external water chillers. This year's entry, however, takes its inspiration from the UK's first SLI system – the awesomely fast (and expensive) Cobra (see Issue 15, p32).

There are more than a few similarities between the original Cobra and the White Cobra. Both PCs have Intel CPUs, SLI graphics, a pair of Raptor hard disks in RAID 0 and are built inside SilverStone cases. The similarities end there, however. Whereas the original Cobra had two physically separate NetBurst architecture Xeon CPUs running at 3.4GHz, the White Cobra has just one physical CPU, a quad-core 3GHz Core 2 Extreme QX6850 overclocked to 3.75GHz. As quad-core CPUs are so memory bandwidth-hungry, Scan has sensibly overclocked the CPU by raising its FSB from 333MHz (1,333MHz effective) to 417MHz (1,668MHz effective), allowing the CPU to access the main system RAM more quickly. However, the White Cobra not only has far more processing power than its predecessor, it's also far quieter, thanks to its fully customised water-cooling system.

The pearlescent white SilverStone TJ07 case is filled to the brim with cooling hardware, as the White Cobra is cooled by three separate cooling loops. The first of these cools the CPU by pumping coolant through a sizable Aqua Computer Cplex XT Di 775 waterblock and an enormous triple 120mm-fan radiator cut into the roof of the case. A second loop, also cooled by a



+ COBRA
Awesome gaming performance; quiet; superbly engineered

- ADDER
Power-hungry



triple 120mm-fan radiator, mounted in the bottom of the case, cools the mammoth Aqua Computer 8800GTX Silver 3XS waterblocks fitted to the two graphics cards, while a third loop cools the two VRMs, Northbridge and Southbridge waterblocks. All three loops have their own reservoirs, which are illuminated by blue LEDs and bubble away nicely in the 5.25in bays at the front of the case. In fact, the only part of the White Cobra not water-cooled is the RAM, although this is fitted with a Corsair DHX fan bracket that mounts three 40mm fans above the RAM.

Despite the enormous number of tubes required by the three separate cooling loops, dealing with the heat generated by the CPU and GPUs in this way ensures a quiet, stable and cool PC. To finish off the effect, Scan has cut out the silhouette of two cobras in each side panel, through which you can see the green and blue interior lighting. The optical drive, hard disk caddy, iMon system monitor and sides of the drive bays inside the case are

covered in snakeskin-patterned vinyl. While the White Cobra looks a little theatrical when it's switched off, it looks simply awesome when powered up and fully illuminated, with a quality that's hard to define, but makes you instantly know that you're sitting in front of something special – a Dream PC.

With two graphics cards running together in SLI, only one motherboard will suffice, the Asus Striker Extreme; as already mentioned, this is fully water-cooled. It's populated by 4GB of Corsair XMS2-8500C5D Dominator, some of the best DDR2 RAM money can buy. Meanwhile, the two 16x PCI-E slots are filled with XFX GeForce 8800 Ultra Cobra Edition cards. The Cobra Edition branding means that these hand-picked cards are insanely highly pre-overclocked, with the GPUs set to run at 650MHz and the RAM at 1.15GHz (2.3GHz effective).

While the original Cobra employed two 74GB Raptor hard disks in RAID 0, the White Cobra has two more modern Raptor 150 drives, also in RAID 0. However, as these drives are so small (150GB each), Scan has also fitted the titanic 1TB Hitachi Ultrastar AK71000, the enterprise version of the Deskstar 7K1000 found in this year's other Dream PCs. The Ultrastar differs by having a slightly lower seek time, so it's quicker at finding data than the Deskstar. Like the Gladiator and Vadim Dream PCs, Scan has bundled an HD optical drive with the White Cobra. However, the company has gone one step further by sourcing the first sample of the LG GGW-H10N in the UK – the first drive that can write Blu-ray discs and read HD-DVDs. As it's still unclear which, if either, of the competing HD optical disc standards will take off, this drive is a great choice, as it supports both.

The White Cobra's supporting cast is top-notch too, and includes the stunning 1,920 x 1,200 27in Samsung 275T monitor and 5.1 Logitech Z-5500 Digital speakers. The Logitech G15 keyboard and Logitech G5 mouse are also at the top of their game, alongside a SpeedLink Medusa 5.1 headset and Enermax Galaxy 1kW PSU. Despite the 4GB of RAM, Scan supplies the 32-bit version of Vista Ultimate with the White Cobra, which means a big chunk of this RAM will be unusable due to memory-mapped I/O requirements. Despite sporting more fans (9 x 120mm, 2 x 92mm,



