

1

Stuff
HOT BUY**3XS Triad 8800 SLI £3480**

0870 755 4731 | www.scan.co.uk

The relentless march of the desktop PC army forges ahead, with this Triad SLI system leading from the front. The Silverstone Black Widow Case houses an Asus Striker Extreme nForce 680i SLI Mainboard, 2.93GHz Intel Core 2 Quad QX6800 CPU, 2GB of air-cooled memory, two nVidia/AFX GeForce 8800 Ultra 768MB graphics cards (configured in SLI), a 150GB HDD for Vista and an additional 750GB HDD for everything else. Plus, a SoundBlaster X-Fi Xtreme sound card, UV lighting and a big window on the side for techie show-offs.

KILLER FEATURE Spec'd to the hilt with the best hardware available

Stuff says
Immense power and storage in a box that's tailor-made for techie show-offs

★★★★★

2

**Dell XPS 710 H2c £4450 ★★★★★**

Comes with a factory overclocked (3.2GHz) Core 2 Quad Extreme QX6700 CPU, dual nVidia GeForce 8800 GTX graphics, 2GB of dual-channel RAM, 2x160GB hard disks, Ageia PhysX card, Sound Blaster X-Fi Xtreme and 30in 3007WFP-HC monitor.

3

**Mesh Elite Extreme QX G80 £2000 ★★★★★**

This 2.66GHz quad-core beast has an nVidia GeForce 8800 GTX graphics card, supplying lightning-fast images to the bundled 22in monitor. For this price, you also get a 7.1 surround-sound system, Fatal1ty mouse and Logitech G15 keyboard.

4

**Chillblast Vento OC £1650 ★★★★★**

It's been said you need to spend two grand to get a powerhouse gaming PC. Chillblast disagrees. This Vento OC is stacked with a GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card, overclocked Core 2 Duo E6600 processor, 2GB RAM and 320GB of disk space. Serious grunt.

5

**Apple Mac Pro from £1700 ★★★★★**

Apple has completed the Intel-erisation of its range to create the Mac Pro. A pair of dual-core Xeon processors nestle inside a redesigned desktop; twin optical drives and more front ports are the only visual clues. The Apple Store offers multiple build options.

6

**Alienware Aurora ALX Quad SLI from £3000 ★★★★★**

Try as we might, we can't get the thought of quad SLI out of our heads; four graphics cards chuntering away under the sculpted hood of this beast; AMD Athlon 64 dual-core processor and up to 4GB of RAM. It's enough to keep you up at night, sweating.

7

**Apple Mac Mini from £400 ★★★★★**

The latest Mac Mini comes in two Intel flavours: one with a 1.66GHz Core Duo CPU, 512MB RAM and a 60GB drive, the other a 1.83GHz Core Duo with 512MB RAM and an 80GB drive. The latter has a SuperDrive. Both have Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 2.0.

8

**Apple iMac from £680 ★★★★★**

We're used to the constant spiral of PC obsolescence, but even we were surprised when, in the middle of shaking the new Intel iMac's hand, it was ripped away from us and replaced by a new 24in model to complement two 20inchers and a 17in one.

9

**Cyberpowersystem Gamer Infinity SLI £2030 ★★★★★**

This PC goes some way to justifying its garish paintjob and macho name with gaming prowess: Intel Core 2 Duo E6700 at 2.66GHz, GeForce 7950 GT graphics, 2GB RAM and 2x160GB drives. You could chop a chunk off the price by forfeiting the custom paint.

10

**HP Touchsmart IQ770 £1175 ★★★★★**

HP's media-savvy touchscreen creation dreams of living in an open-plan kitchen-diner, used as a giant digital Post-it note for busy families, running coffee-morning photo slideshows, recording TV and playing it back of an evening. Very cool, but costly.

Want to spruce up your computer a little? See our Top 10 peripherals at www.stuff.tv

INSTANT EXPERT DESKTOP PCs

TONY HORGAN Binary refined
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It looks very pretty, but **Windows Vista** can be a pig to use when you've spent years with a personalised XP set-up. Fortunately there are many ways to speed things up. The first thing I did was to ditch Norton, which won't go without a fight (you have to download an uninstaller to get rid of it). Next, I disabled Vista's eternal security alerts (asking for permission to do what you just told it to do) by launching the Security Centre from the Control Panels and turning off User Account Control to shut it up for good. Peace at last. Next, I disabled the Welcome Centre. That's one less window to close every time you boot up. Alternatively, a ReadyBoost-compatible USB stick, will speed up hard disk access. More useful tricks in the cover feature on p58.



"There are many tricks to speed up Windows Vista"

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- 1 Processor** Speeds of up to 3.8GHz are possible from PC chips. Look for at least 3GHz on a PC. Slower speeds on Macs equate to similar performance, complicating matters a little.
- 2 Storage** The key here is to spec your system depending on what you'll use it for. Basic word processing requires minimal memory and hard drive space. Complex multimedia requires much more.
- 3 Peripherals** There's little point in owning a cutting-edge machine if your peripherals make using it a chore. Look for high-quality components from the likes of Logitech and Creative.
- 4 Connectivity** Extra peripherals eat up USB ports. Ensure you have plenty of connection options. Look for plenty of USB 2.0 ports on new machines.

THE BEST RETRO INFLUENCES**Denon CX3 £2700**

There's a joyous minimalism to Denon's CX3 mini system. Not least the simple fact that you're paying so much for a stereo CD player, but the glowing red LED displays bring forgiveness in everyone.

Reminiscent of: LED calculators**Sony TZ-series from £1400**

There are few tricks that laptop makers haven't tried to make their keyboards more agreeable to the feverish road warrior. Making the keys smaller... well, that must've taken some explaining.

Reminiscent of: ZX Spectrum**Samsung F300 from £free**

Despite being perhaps one of the most frustrating phones ever, the F300's tiny-screened call-making side is a sight for eyes made gooey with the repeated viewing of similar-o-style phones.

Reminiscent of: Ericsson GA628**Tivoli Model DAB £200**

Despite being loaded with crispy DAB goodness that means you need never touch that gloriously heavy, damped tuning knob, it's good for the soul to go station-searching on FM now and again.

Reminiscent of: wartime wireless