



£1,499/GAMING PC

3XS CYCLONE

Less hot air than you'd think...

VITAL STATISTICS

Price £1499 **Manufacturer** Scan
Web www.scan.co.uk **CPU** Intel Core i7 920 @ 4GHz
Motherboard Asus P6X58D-E
GPU Asus GTX 480 **RAM** X6GB
Corsair 1,600MHz **Storage** 1TB
WD SATA 6Gbps **OS** Win7 Home Premium 64
Price check www.scan.co.uk

You know things have changed in the components world when you start to see machines where it's the graphics card that's getting the water-cooled loving and not the CPU. In this latest of Scan's 3XS systems it's the GTX 480 graphics card that has all the custom modifications in order to cope with the factory overclock, while the pre-overclocked CPU is more than happy to keep ticking over on air-cooling alone.

It's testament to the Intel architecture that even with a 50 per cent overclock slapped onto it's Core i7-920 it can cope purely on air-cooling, and even

then without sounding like a wind turbine at full load.

We're all aware of just how hot the Fermi GTX 480 cards from NVIDIA are on the other hand. The massive, monolithic chip beating away at the heart of it is more than capable of quickly overheating if you try cranking up the clocks, and even at stock speeds it will chow through flesh quicker than a case of necrotising fasciitis [Ed - NomNomNom].

So, water-cooled it is then, with this chunky GPU running a little over 20 per cent higher than its stock speeds. And that extra clockspeed means that this Cyclone is nipping at the heels of competitor Overclockers UK's Titan Viper (reviewed in *PCF* 240 page 39). That was a similarly-specced rig, with the Core i7 920 ramped up to the now standard 4GHz, but the Viper retained a twin-GPU HD 5970 to look after the graphical duties.

Scan's switch to the GTX 480 - even an overclocked, custom water-cooled one - means that with the option to avoid the SSD question, the Cyclone is cheaper

than the Overclockers rig by well over £100. Maybe Scan isn't sold on SSDs yet (see the SSD Supertest on page 10), but the choice of a SATA 6Gbps HDD with a full 1TB seems like a very good compromise to us.

A matter of frames

And even if it takes a wee while longer to load your games they're still going to be running blisteringly fast. The overclocked GTX 480 here is only fractions off the pace set by the Titan Viper's HD 5970. It drops 2fps in *Far Cry 2* and only 1fps in *DiRT 2*; not bad for a much cheaper, single-GPU card.

The brilliant Asus P6X58D-E motherboard coddling the cooked i7 920 also helps to keep the Cyclone's CPU performance ahead of the competing Overclockers' machine. Against Gigabyte's UD3R bargain X58 board the Asus mobo has definitely got the edge. Both machines are rated at 4GHz, but the P6X58D-E has just got that little extra in the locker to push things a wee bit quicker.

Technical analysis

In gaming terms the slightly faster HD 5970 gives the Titan Viper the edge, but only by a mere 2fps. With the single-GPU you don't have to wait a month after the latest game release for it to work with your PC... The CPU score does show the sense in opting for the Asus P6X58D-E which helps prop up the overclocked CPU.

DX 11 gaming performance

DiRT 2	FRAMES PER SECOND: HIGHER IS BETTER
CYCLONE	65
TITAN VIPER	66

DX 10 gaming performance

Far Cry 2	FRAMES PER SECOND: HIGHER IS BETTER
CYCLONE	71
TITAN VIPER	73

Multi-threaded CPU performance

Cinebench R10	SECONDS: QUICKER IS BETTER
CYCLONE	37
TITAN VIPER	38

There's also that spectre of warranty issues that surrounds the pre-overclocked machines from Overclockers. Update your BIOS and the warranty's invalidated - not so with Scan. It understands most of the people looking to spend this sort of cash are likely to want their rig up to date and don't punish you for staying current.

So the Cyclone is, in practical terms, just as lightning fast as the Titan Viper, but doesn't have to make do with the ball-ache of multi-GPU driver sets or those awkward warranty issues. And for a ton less cash. Easy win for Mr. Scan then. **Dave James**

PCFormat Verdict

- Great components
- Rock-solid overclock
- Cool and quiet
- No warranty issues

The Cyclone edges out the Viper thanks to the overclocked GTX 480 and i7 920 combo.

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