

● GRAPHICS CARD

Inno3D GeForce 7800 GT

PC PRO
A LIST

EXCLUSIVE

PRICE £238 (£280 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.lowestonweb.com

DELIVERY Free

INTERNET www.inno3d.com

VERDICT The smaller sibling of the all-conquering 7800 GTX, the 7800 GT offers very similar performance and, at this price, is an absolute bargain.

The 7800 GTX is undoubtedly the fastest graphics card around at the moment, and it's the star of this month's Labs (see p116). The GT variant is very similar to its big brother, with the same core GPU, but set to 400MHz, while the RAM is clocked to 500MHz; this compares to 430MHz and 600MHz respectively on the GTX. Four of the GTX's 24 pipelines are also closed off.

Nonetheless, our benchmark tests revealed the GT to be a gaming monster. In Far Cry at 1,280 x 1,024 with HDR rendering on, anisotropic filtering set to 16x and supersampling transparency anti-aliasing, the GT scored an astounding 52fps – about 3fps slower than the GTX. 1,600 x 1,200 at the same settings produced a more significant difference: 40fps for the GT is 5fps slower than a reference GTX board. At our standard benchmark settings of 4x anti-aliasing and 8x anisotropic filtering, the GT scored 55fps at 1,280 x 1,024 and 41fps at 1,600 x 1,200.

In Half-Life 2, 47fps at 1,280 x 1,024, with 16x anisotropic filtering and 8xS (supersampling) anti-aliasing, is around 7fps slower than the GTX. At 1,600 x 1,200, the score was 33fps – about a 5fps drop-off from the GTX.

Doom 3 remains one of the hardest tests you can throw at a graphics card, and the GT scored 22fps at 1,600 x 1,200 with 8x anti-aliasing, 16x anisotropic filtering and supersampling transparency anti-aliasing. This is hot on the heels of the 25fps scored by GTX cards. Dropping the resolution to 1,280 x 1,024 resulted in a score of 34fps, and changing the settings to the standard 4x anti-aliasing and 8x anisotropic filtering resulted in scores of 59fps and 44fps at 1,280 x 1,024 and 1,600 x 1,200 respectively. It's impressive stuff.

As with the 7800 GTX, the first batch of cards will share identical GPUs and cooling solutions. As such, a buying decision will be based on either the price of the card or

The 7800 GT provides unbelievable power for its price.



PC PRO
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the bundle that comes with it – in this case, the excellent Colin McRae's Rally 2004.

At this price, it's more than £80 cheaper than the cheapest GTX cards, and the price will likely drop when more GTs hit the shelves. Our benchmark results suggest that the extra money for a GTX doesn't buy a proportional performance increase; given all that, the GT compares very favourably with the GTX, and is the best graphics bargain this summer.

DAVE STEVENSON

PC PRO RATINGS

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES & DESIGN | ★★★★★ |
| VALUE FOR MONEY | ★★★★★ |
| OVERALL | ★★★★★ |

SPECIFICATIONS GeForce 7800 GT GPU; 400MHz core clock; 256MB 500MHz GDDR3 RAM; 256-bit memory interface; 2 x DVI-I; proprietary video in/out interface; 7 vertex and 20 pixel pipelines.

● SMARTPHONE

Orange SPV C550

PRICE From free, depending on contract

SUPPLIER Orange 0500 802 080

DELIVERY Free

INTERNET www.orange.co.uk

VERDICT The improved camera and screen are welcome updates, but they come at a cost. With the chunkier package, poor music playback and slower performance, it's an unconvincing refresh.

Orange's SPV smartphone range finally came of age with the C500 (see issue 122, p83), marrying great design with usable controls. The C550 bears a marked similarity to its predecessor, although tweaks have been made, and it's a chunkier, taller and weightier phone than the C500.

The difference is marginal though, and the extra 7g heft can be overlooked thanks to a much-improved 1.3-megapixel camera and a slightly larger, brighter 240 x 320 pixel screen. Disappointingly, that's partnered with notably sluggish performance, and we found ourselves becoming far too familiar with the wait graphic – a definite step backwards.

The addition of the media player control buttons has also led to a keyboard re-jig, with the Home, Enter and Back keys

unfortunately relegated to a tiny panel just under the screen. There's a reasonable joystick instead of the C500's larger joypad, and a more cramped number pad, which larger fingers will find occasionally frustrating.

But the case for using the C550 as a music player isn't terribly convincing: the keys only control the basic Windows Media Player 9, although Fireplayer and Orange's own Music Player are also onboard, and you'll be limited to the capacity of the miniSD card in the slot under the battery. Frustratingly, songs in one player don't automatically appear in the listings of another player, making it far less user-friendly than we'd expect.

Sound through the in-built speaker is impressively loud, if a bit tinny, but the headphones plug into a

Dedicated media buttons aim to make music playback easier than ever.



non-standard 2.5mm jack, ruling out using anything other than the otherwise reasonable bundled headphones. At least these feature a wired remote control, though.

Alongside the headphone jack, hidden unnecessarily under a limp rubber stopper, is the mini USB port for syncing with a PC. Bluetooth and infrared are also onboard, while a handy new quick-launch key on the side of the handset will activate the web browser.

This is still a decent smartphone, but the inelegant music playback facilities are a dubious trade-off for the more cramped controls and reduction in speed. Aside from the better camera, there's nothing really new inside, and no significant OS upgrades. As such, both new purchasers and existing SPV users may well want to stick with the C500 or wait for a more significant upgrade.

KATIE LEE

PC PRO RATINGS

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES & DESIGN | ★★★★★ |
| VALUE FOR MONEY | ★★★★★ |
| OVERALL | ★★★★★ |

SPECIFICATIONS 64MB RAM; 240 x 320 transreflective 65,536-colour TFT, miniSD (128MB included); Bluetooth; infrared; USB 2; tri-band phone; GPRS class 8; 4 hours' maximum talk time; 6 days' maximum standby time; Orange Backup, Pocket Outlook, Internet Explorer, File Manager; Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition. Dimensions: 48 x 18 x 109mm (WDH). Weight: 107g.