

● HIGH-END PC

Mesh Matrix Xtreme Pro

PRICE £1,499 (£1,761 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £39 (£46 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Mesh Computers 0870 046 4747

INTERNET www.meshcomputers.com

VERDICT The most powerful dual-core processor, the most powerful graphics card and hardly a sound from the whole thing. What more could you want?

As our dual-core PCs group test shows (see p94), there's no longer any need to spend thousands on a powerful system: £699 will buy you plenty of luxury, even if you'll have to stick to your current peripherals. So this Mesh Matrix has to go some way to justify its extra £800 – and that's without considering VAT. To say it succeeds is an understatement.

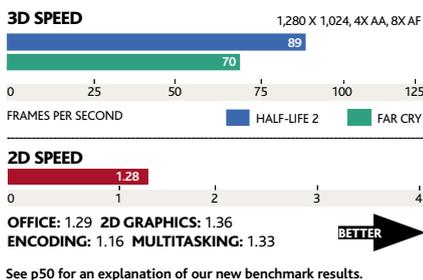
Everything about this system is shiny and new, including the adventurous Cooler Master aluminium case; at last, a case with control buttons on the outside rather than hidden away inside. They're placed on the top and join a spring-loaded flap hiding a FireWire and two USB 2 ports, plus convenient audio jacks. It may sound like a minor detail, but if you place this system on a floor it makes the PC so much easier to use.

Opening the door reveals metallic black mesh, backlit with blue LEDs. There's a DVD burner (which burns dual-layer +R and -R discs at 4x speed) and another DVD-ROM drive, as well as the Cooler Master Musketeer. This attractive front panel houses three blue dials, showing sound



The Athlon 64 4800+ dual-core processor and nVidia 7800 GTX make a powerful combination.

● RESULTS



Everything you ever wanted from a PC without having to take out a second mortgage.

pressure, the temperature of the thermistor placed on the CPU and exhaust fan voltage.

Placing the case on the floor isn't a necessity, as the front 120mm fan and twin rear 80mm fans keep quiet thanks to a speed-control knob at the rear. Cooling is helped by the gigantic Akasa AK913 Evo 33 CPU heatsink, which sucks air across the heatsink fins onto the exhaust fans. The heatsink itself never got more than lukewarm to the touch – an amazing feat considering there are two highly powerful processing cores beneath it.

The Athlon 64 X2 4800+ is a monster of a CPU; an overall score of 1.28 is the fastest we've yet seen. As our encoding and multitasking scores show, you can throw anything at this processing phenomenon and still browse the Internet or use Word with no hourglass in sight.

The same goes for gaming, with the nVidia 7800 GTX flexing its considerable rendering muscle in every one of our tests. The gorgeousness of Far Cry with HDR running at playable frame rates (59fps) is almost overwhelming, while Half-Life 2 produced a superb 70fps score (all at 1,280 x 1,024). Even in the most dynamically lit firefights, this PC won't falter for a second. There's even Saitek's excellent Cyborg Evo Force joystick bundled.

You're also catered for if you prefer your gaming online. These games tend to cache a lot of data to local system memory, and the 2GB of PC3200 RAM keeps these games going much more efficiently than 1GB. It's also handy given the multitasking nature of this system. Have as

many programs as you want open simultaneously – you'll never run out of RAM space or processing power. Usefully, the RAM comes as two sticks of 1GB, leaving two sockets free on the SLI motherboard. This will also let you double your graphics power at a later date with the second PCI Express 16x slot. Upgrading may look tricky with the chaotic wiring, but it's actually easy, as bundles of wire hover over or around non-upgradable areas of the motherboard.

Gaming, and indeed every task, is represented well on the 19in ViewSonic VX912 TFT. Colours are rich and vibrant, and the 8ms response time is indicative of its minimal lag. The only caveat is the 1,280 x 1,024 resolution. We'd want to unleash the 7800 GTX on a 1,600 x 1,200 screen. Thankfully, you can upgrade to the ViewSonic VP201B for £220.

The 7.1 speakers are also a slightly weak link in the chain. The sub may add punch to gunfire and motor sounds, but it's a soft, boomy punch rather than the clean, crisp one we'd prefer. Still, if you're not too fussy, the Creative Inspire T7900s are fine.

More than adequate is the hard disk. At 300GB, there's plenty of space for now, and you can add another four thanks to the free 3.5in bays – the Asus motherboard includes eight SATA connectors, all of which can be used for RAID setups. In keeping with the general quietness of the system, the Maxtor DiamondMax 10 rarely makes an audible rattle, and it's quick too. Check out our hard disks Labs (see issue 127, p122) for more reasons why this is our hard disk of choice.

As a further incentive to get your credit card out now, this system comes with the Mesh Premiere three-year on-site warranty. This is only available to the UK mainland, but it includes priority repairs and replacements as well as a free health check. If you live off the mainland, you can either revert to a return-to-base warranty for a £30 saving or pay a nominal fee to have the on-site support. To get all this power, all this latest technology and premium care and service for under £1,500 is incredible, and lands the Xtreme Pro a well-deserved spot on the A List.

CLIVE WEBSTER

PC PRO RATINGS

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

SPECIFICATIONS 2.4GHz AMD Athlon X2 4800+; 2GB PC3200 RAM; Asus A8N-SLI Deluxe motherboard; 300GB Maxtor DiamondMax 10 hard disk; Sony DW-Q28A DVD writer; Sony DDU1615 DVD-ROM; Asus nVidia GeForce 7800 GTX graphics; dual Gigabit Ethernet; 19in ViewSonic VX912 TFT; Creative Inspire T7900 7.1 speakers; Saitek Cyborg Evo Force Joystick; Windows XP Home SP 2; CyberLink DVD software bundle; Microsoft Works 8; 3yr on-site warranty.