

● ULTIMATE PC

Mesh X-Treme FX-60

PRICE £1,872 (£2,199 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £39 (£46 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Mesh Computers 0870 046 4747

INTERNET www.meshcomputers.com

VERDICT Amazingly powerful thanks to AMD's new flagship dual-core processor and a pair of 7800 GT graphics cards, yet Mesh still manages to keep the price under control.

AMD's dual-core processors took PC performance to new heights last year, but its flagship FX series clung on stubbornly to its single-core roots. The argument was that with so few games taking advantage of sophisticated multithreading, the key force behind high frame rates and smooth gameplay was to throw raw speed at the problem.

But with more and more applications geared towards multicore CPUs, the announcement of the dual-core FX-60 is timely. It's still primarily a chip aimed at gamers and ultra-power users, and so the benchmark score of 1.34 is of no surprise. With each core clocked at 2.6GHz, the FX-60 has lost 200MHz of clock speed compared to its single-cored predecessor, the FX-57, but each core retains 1MB of Level 2 cache.

Luckily, the Mesh is powered by a set of components that are of the same calibre as the CPU. There's 2GB of RAM, as well as a pair of hard disks: one 300GB unit for storing Windows and program files, and a 200GB unit for data. It's a slightly unbalanced arrangement, but 500GB of storage is nonetheless a generous proposition. A pair of optical drives grace the



Not only is the X-Treme FX-60 a supreme gaming PC, it also excels in demanding applications like video encoding.

front of the smart chassis, but for this price it's a slight disappointment that one is a DVD-ROM drive. Another minor drawback is that both drives share an IDE port on the motherboard, which could hold up operations when using both drives at once.

But it's one compromise in a machine that devoured every task we placed before it. If you work with RAW image files, or edit music or video, the X-Treme FX-60 has the potential to revolutionise the way you work – it simply didn't blink while we were using it. Photoshop CS 2 opened instantaneously, and we couldn't get it to slow down no matter how complex the effects we applied to an image.

And, as befits the FX series of processors, the X-Treme is also a superb choice for gamers. A pair of nVidia's GeForce 7800 GTs, coupled with the CPU and RAM, meant that the X-Treme FX-60 charged through our 3D benchmarks – even at the TFT's native resolution of 1,680 x 1,050 you'll get playable frame rates from the latest games. Half-Life 2 ran at the native resolution at an average of 110fps, while the HDR Lost Coast add-on ran at 66fps. Even the punishing Call of Duty 2, at the highest settings, 1,680 x 1,050 and with 4x anti-aliasing and 8x anisotropic filtering, managed an impressive 38fps. Far Cry, at 1,680 x 1,050 with 4x AA, 8x AF and HDR, ran at a smooth 38fps too.

Elsewhere, Mesh has gone all-out with the Philips' 200W6CS 20in widescreen TFT, which is currently enjoying a spell on our A List (see p42). A native resolution of 1,680 x 1,050

means that Windows remains legible while still allowing you to fit two A4 pages into Word at 80 per cent. There's little to gripe about with viewing angles – images take on a slight red caste towards the extreme edges, but not enough to notice during day-to-day use. There's also a single USB port, which will be handy for plugging in the base station for the

Logitech wireless keyboard and mouse. Colours were accurately reproduced in our technical rundown, and even the quoted 16ms response time wasn't a huge handicap in our tests. That said, consider specifying a TFT with a lower response time if gaming is your number one priority, as there is some visible lag.

Creative's Inspire 7900 7.1 surround speakers are overkill for most, but they're of reasonable quality and fine for gaming and movie watching. They're complemented well by a Creative X-Fi sound card occupying one of the PCI slots on the motherboard.

For the £1,872 you pay for the X-Treme, you get Mesh's Premier warranty, which provides three years of on-site parts and labour warranty, so if you encounter a diagnosable hardware problem Mesh will visit to fix or replace parts.

With a specification like this, the X-Treme couldn't fail to impress, but what really tops it off is the price. For example, the Scan 3XS SLi-512 (see issue 136, p48) doesn't include a monitor yet costs £978 more. Also, the X-Treme was faster in our application benchmarks and, although the Scan's twin 7800 GTX 512 graphics mean it has the theoretical edge in games, the scores in our tests were almost identical. Similarly, the Evesham Axis FX-60 Firestorm (see opposite) costs almost £600 more than the Mesh X-Treme with comparatively little to show for it.

Before you buy, you should consider the substantially cheaper Evesham Axis Blaze 1800 XL (see issue 134, p48), which is still more than a match for games and applications. But if you're looking for the last word in performance, the Mesh X-Treme is the obvious choice.

DAVE STEVENSON



The X-Treme FX-60 blitzed our benchmarks.

● RESULTS

3D SPEED 1,280 X 1,024, 4X AA, 8X AF

127 (Half-Life 2) / 86 (Far Cry)

FRAMES PER SECOND

2D SPEED 1.34

OFFICE: 1.45 2D GRAPHICS: 1.28
ENCODING: 1.24 MULTITASKING: 1.35

An explanation of our new benchmarks can be found on the cover disc.

PC PRO RATINGS

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

SPECIFICATIONS 2.6GHz AMD FX-60; 2GB PC3200 DDR RAM; Asus A8N SLI Deluxe motherboard; 300GB Maxtor hard disk; 200GB Maxtor hard disk; Sony DDU1615 DVD-ROM drive; Sony DW-3Q30A DVD-RW drive; dual Gigabit Ethernet; 2 x WinFast 256MB nVidia GeForce 7800 GT graphics; 20in Philips 200W6CS TFT; Creative X-Fi Extreme audio; Creative Inspire T7900 speakers; Microsoft Works 8.5; Windows XP Home; 3yr on-site warranty.