Connect3D All-in-Wonder Radeon 9800 Pro

PRICE £189 (£222 inc VAT) **SUPPLIER** www.savastore.com (code: 10268371)
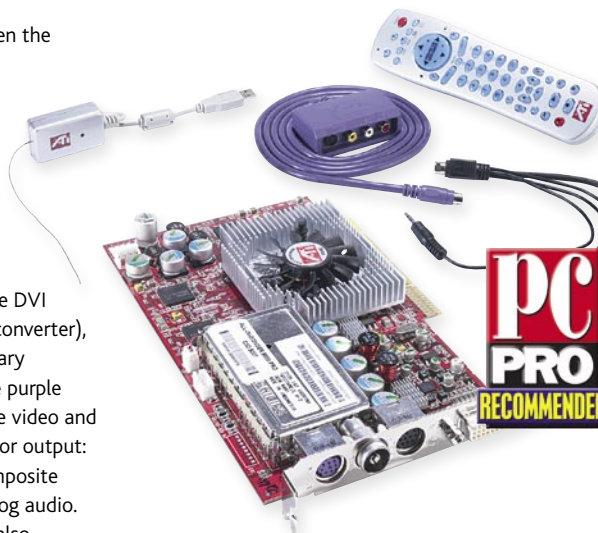
VERDICT The Swiss Army knife of graphics cards. With a TV tuner and plenty of other functions at a tempting price, only a lack of 3D grunt prevents it winning here.

ATi's All-in-Wonder has long been the benchmark for graphics cards with integrated TV and video capabilities. Connect3D's card is one of the first to offer the 9800 Pro GPU for minimal compromise on 3D performance.

Unlike XFX's Personal Cinema, Connect3D's card has a smaller backplate with room for only a single DVI connector (with supplied DVI/VGA converter), an RF aerial socket and two proprietary connectors. One is for A/V input; the purple breakout box has S-Video, composite video and RCA audio connectors. The other is for output: the short splitter offers S-Video, composite video, coaxial S/PDIF audio and analog audio.

The familiar Remote Wonder is also supplied: its receiver unit plugs into a USB port. As it uses radio frequency, you don't need line of sight for operation. Connect3D supplies ATi's own Multimedia Center 8.5 to complement the remote. This latest version has larger

icons than before, making it easier to control media playback from your armchair. There's also EasyLaunch which brings up a menu like Windows Media Center's front end – options include TV, DVD, photos and music.

In fact, it's the Multimedia Center that sets the Connect3D apart from XFX's Personal Cinema. The games bundle, video-editing and DVD-writing software might be missing, but Multimedia Center is far more advanced and easier to use than the XFX's InterVideo suite. And, of course, the XFX costs £20 more.

As we know from previous experience, the Radeon 9800 Pro is still a fine performer in 3D. In our tests, it sailed through Unreal Tournament 2004 and Halo, only dipping to 29fps at 1,600 x 1,200 in the latter. Far Cry brought the card to its knees though, with it only just breaking the 30fps barrier at 1,280 x 1,024 and then failing to make the grade at 1,600 x 1,200.

It's fair to say that the Radeon X800 and GeForce 6800 Ultra are both significantly faster GPUs, and will give slightly better future proofing (at a price), but the Radeon 9800 Pro is still perfectly good unless you desperately want to run 1,600 x 1,200 resolutions with all the effects on.

The lack of power means the Connect3D doesn't win here, but all the features at this price make it a great-value card.

PC**PRO** RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★☆