

# EXPERIENCE PAYS OFF

## Falcon Northwest sets the bar

MANUFACTURER: Falcon Northwest PRODUCT: Mach V PRICE: \$12,000 URL: www.falcon-nw.com

### REVIEW



**Falcon Northwest practically** invented boutique high-end PCs specifically aimed at gaming enthusiasts about 15 years ago—they've been at it longer than almost any similar company. This experience shows in nearly every facet of this excellent Mach V machine.

Surprisingly, the Mach V wasn't essentially tied for first place in our benchmarks, as has usually been the case with past UGM submissions from Falcon. A delay in Nvidia's nForce 780i chipset forced them to ship an entry with a Core 2 Extreme QX6850 and nForce 680i board instead of using Intel's very latest "Yorkfield" CPU—but they still managed to push the machine to 3.8GHz while remaining totally stable. And with three GeForce 8800 Ultra cards in triple-SLI mode, the gaming benchmarks are great. The OS resides on a pair of 32GB solid state drives in a RAID array, with a pair of 1TB Hitachi Deskstar drives in a RAID array for storage and game installs. Even if it's not the benchmark *winner*, it's safe to say that this blazing-fast computer delivers the kind of elite performance we expect from UGM competitors. (Since our deadline for machine submissions, Falcon NW has made Penryn- and 780i-based systems available.)

While we consider game performance to be of the utmost importance, it's not the beginning and end of the UGM competition. When you spend this kind of money on a no-holds-barred gaming PC, you expect more than just high-end components and overclocking. Falcon's custom paint jobs are of exquisite quality, glossy and smooth to the touch, like a brand-new exotic car. The mouse and keyboard get the same treatment to match. The inside of the machine shows expert craftsmanship and attention to detail—each cable is hidden from sight, crimped and clipped and folded to be exactly as long as it needs to be, and no more. It's clean, smooth, neat, and attractive. Maybe it's the automotive-quality paint job, but there's a "new computer smell" when taking this system out of its box that's like driving a new car off the lot. An embossed leather binder holds all your install and recovery discs, support documentation, machine specs, and testing checklist. Falcon throws in some nice little extras like a rigid mouse pad, T-shirt, hat, and even a coffee mug and a pound of grounds so you can "break in" your new gaming PC with a caffeine-fueled 16-hour fragfest. Should you ever need to call Falcon's tech support, you'll actually call the office that built your machine, not a third-party tech support agency or an outsourced rep from India.

If we had a message for Falcon, it would be this: It's time to "update the excellence," perhaps with a Mach VI line. The custom case is nice, but we've seen it for a couple of years now. The extras are good, but it's time to change them up. We're not saying that you should stop making these kick-ass computers—just make newer, fresher, even *more* kick-ass machines. ●

### VERDICT

➤ **Excellent craftsmanship; beautiful paint job; fantastic performance; quiet.**

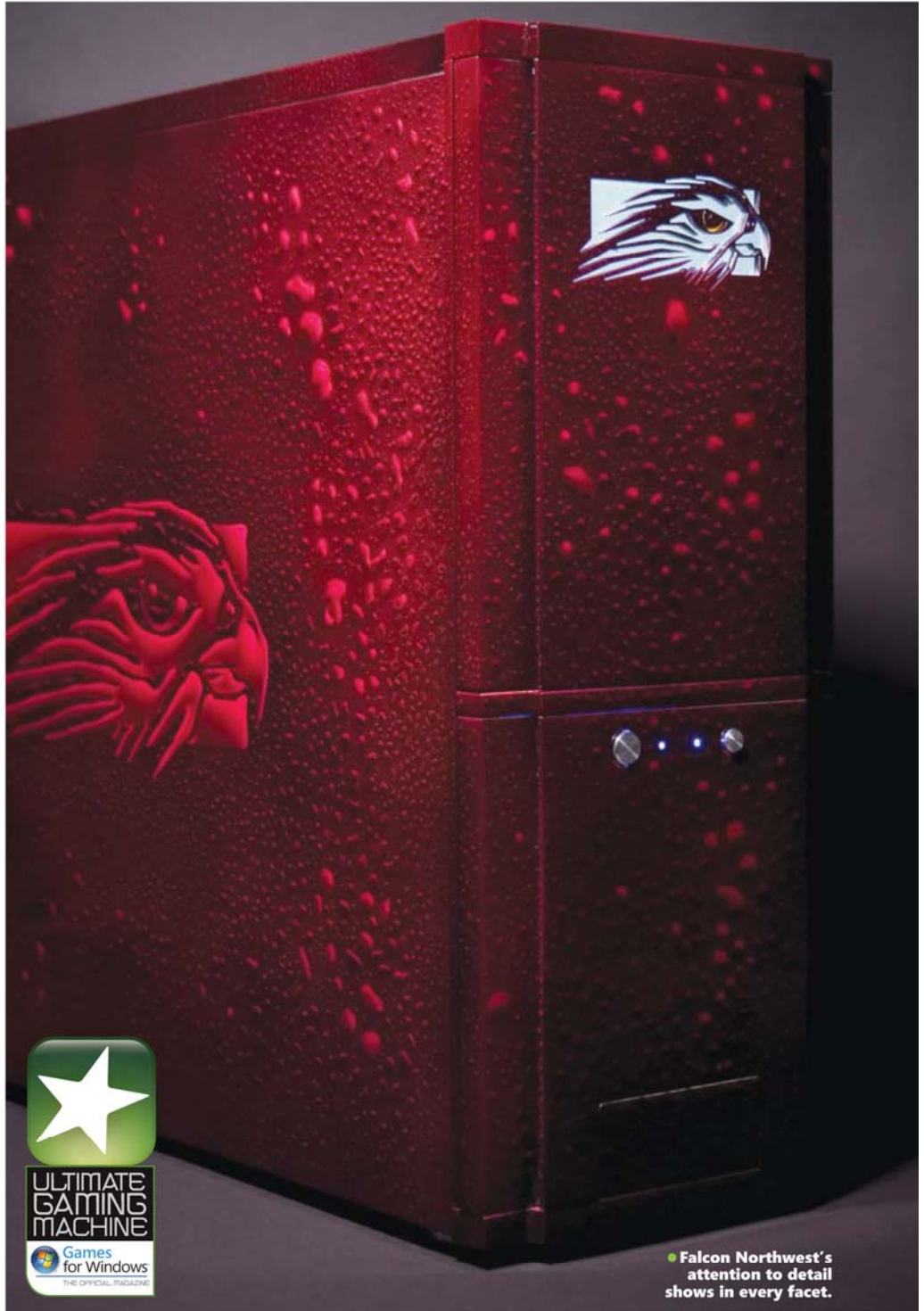
❑ **Doesn't contain latest CPU and motherboard, so didn't lead in benchmarks.**

9/10

EXCELLENT



**WINNER:**  
2007  
**CHAMP!**



● Falcon Northwest's attention to detail shows in every facet.