

Falcon Northwest Mach V

An overclocked FX-60 and two 512MB 7800 GTX cards make the Mach V a record smasher, again

It's the worst-kept secret in the PC business: All of the manufacturers have access to the exact same parts. So can a brand A machine really be any faster than a PC from brand B?

You bet your sweet ass it can. At least, that's what we discovered when we fired up Falcon's latest iteration of the famous Mach V. We'll just go ahead and tell you now: This is the fastest PC we've ever tested.

Falcon didn't simply settle for the fast-as-hell Athlon 64 FX-60, which is basically a dual-core FX-55 CPU. Instead, Falcon took AMD's flagship proc, water-cooled it, then overclocked the CPU from 2.6GHz to a stable 2.9GHz. In effect, that makes this rig slightly faster than a single-core Athlon 64

FX-57 in single-threaded apps. And for anything multithreaded, you better hit the deck.

To add a little more pain to its game, Falcon snagged a pair of BFG GeForce 7800 GTX OC cards with 512MB frame buffers—cards so fast, they should really be called GeForce 8000 GTXes—and plugged them into an Asus A8N32-SLI Deluxe board, which features two x16 lanes for the graphics cards.

All this, kiddies, adds up to the fastest PC we've laid hands on since, well, the last Falcon Northwest Mach V box we reviewed in May 2005. That in itself is quite a feat considering the caliber of machines we get on a monthly basis.

Sure, others have chipped away at the previous Mach V's records. In September, Monarch's FX-57 box took top honors in *3DMark05* and tied the old Mach V in *Photoshop CS*. A month later HyperSonic's FX-57 snagged the *Doom 3* title. Still, the older Mach V held onto the record for *SYSmark2004*, *Premiere Pro*, *Photoshop CS*, and our Divx test—until now.

The new Mach V blew into the Lab and grabbed records in five out of six benchmarks. The sole exception being the Divx Encode test—that record remains in the clutches of, wouldn't you know it, the old Mach V. Particularly astounding is this Mach's *SYSmark2004* score. Falcon sent us the Mach V with the caveat that a bug in the nForce drivers dropped performance scores in that one benchmark. (We confirmed the bug's existence on our own hardware—our FX-60 performed like an Athlon 64 X2 4400+.) Thus, by all rights, the Mach V's already-stellar *SYSmark* score should be even faster.

Last month we asserted that gaming performance is a little more important than application performance, but with the Mach V you get both. The Mach V's FX-60 and pair of 512MB 7800 GTXs are roughly 19 percent faster than the previous record holder in *3DMark*. In *Doom 3*, the Mach V is a whopping 34 percent faster than the old record.

All this goodness doesn't come cheap, of course. With its exotic-car-quality paint job and bounty of powerful gear, the Mach V rings in at a jaw-dropping \$7,700 (sans



The Mach V slices and dices through the benchmarks, but the wiring job is a little sub par.

monitor and speakers!). Think about it: The two 512MB graphics parts street for about \$1,500 all on their own. Some of the cash is for the tech support (as with any OEM), some is for bragging rights, and the rest is for brand. What's in a brand? For Falcon, pure speed, apparently.

—GORDON MAH UNG



A testament to pure PC power, the Mach V's paint job might be a little off-putting in the Bible Belt.

UNDER THE HOOD

BRAINS

CPU	AMD Athlon 64 FX-60
MOBO	ASUS A8N32-SLI Deluxe
RAM	2GB Corsair Micro TwinX DDR400
I/O PORTS	8 USB, 1 FireWire, 1 EX-SATA
LAN	Dual Gigabit Ethernet
HARD DRIVES	Two Seagate Barracuda 7200.8 7200rpm 400GB in RAID 0
OPTICAL	Sony 16X Speed DVD-ROM, Lite-On 16X Dual Layer DVD+/-RW

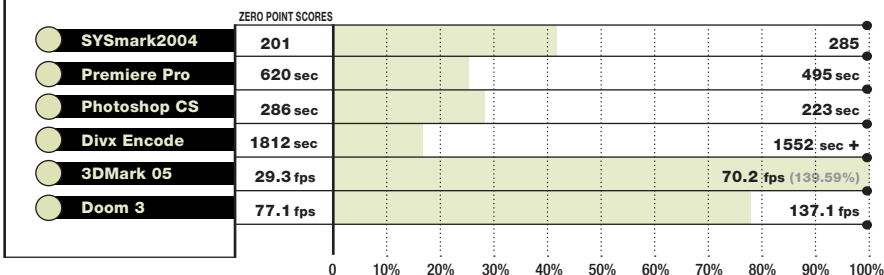
BEAUTY

VIDEOCARD	Dual BFG GeForce 7800GTX OC 512MB
SOUNDCARD	Creative Labs Xtreme Music X-Fi
CASE	Silverstone TJ03 with Exotix paint job, ICON water cooling, Silverstone 600 watt modular PSU
MOUSE	Logitech G7
KEYBOARD	Logitech Elite and Ergodex DX-1 Falcon Edition

BOOT: 50 sec

DOWN: 13 sec

BENCHMARKS



Our zero-point reference system uses a 2.6GHz Athlon 64 FX-55, 2GB of DDR400 Crucial Ballistix RAM, two nVidia GeForce 6800 Ultra cards in SLI, a Maxtor 250GB DiamondMax10, a Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS, a PC Power and Cooling TurboCool 510 Deluxe Express, and Windows XP Pro with SP2.

FALCON NORTHWEST MACH V



LITHIUM ION

Performance with a capital P and show-car-quality paint job.



NICAD

A price that would make Bill Gates wince. Unpainted drive bezels?!



\$7,745, www.falcon-nw.com