£3,480 GRAPHICS PC

3XS Z87 CYCLONE SLI

The first step on the PC's road to 4K gaming?

VITAL STATISTICS

Price £3,480
Manufacturer Scan Computers
Web www.scan.co.uk
CPU Intel Core i7-4770K @ 4.4GHz
Motherboard Asus RoG Maximus VI Formula
Memory 16GB Corsair Vengeance Pro @ 2,133MHz
Graphics 2x EVGA GTX 780 SLI
Storage 500GB Samsung 840 Evo SSD, 2TB Seagate HDD
OS Windows 8 64-bit

Reviewing machines such as this Cyclone SLI from Scan is tricky. At nearly £3,500 it's hugely expensive, but there's no denying that it's one hell of a desirable rig. The 3XS Z87 Cyclone SLI is the sort of machine you'll see at shows; a PC built to highlight all the versatility and strength in PC gaming. As such, there's not a hint of compromise in this water-cooled, multi-GPU, Haswell-powered monster.

That liquid-chilling setup really shows off its positioning at the top of the PC tech tree. We're not just talking about a closed-loop CPU cooler here – the Cyclone SLI is water-cooled from top to bottom. Literally. There's a triple-fan radiator in the roof of the monolithic Corsair Obsidian 750D chassis and a water pump in the base. In between, plastic pipes pull the expended heat from motherboard, CPU and both graphics cards.

It's a beautifully laid out and well built setup, all bubbling tubing and red lighting. This is what the Perspex viewing panel in the side of the chassis was made for.

Cool customer

This setup isn't just for show. The most impressive feat is how, despite being connected to the same cooling loop, the twin EVGA GTX 780 graphics cards are kept cool. Even when fully loaded, the SLI pairing was topping out at around 56°C, enabling Scan to push the power and temperature targets of Nvidia's GPU Boost 2.0 as high as the overclocking software would allow.

Scan hasn't touched the GPU clock offset, though, leaving the silicon to determine its own overclock.

Historically such multi-GPU behemoths have been pretty and expensive, but ultimately irrelevant for us gamers. After all, even if you're running a top-end 2,560 x 1,600 panel, you can get fantastic gaming performance from a single premium graphics card, and you can pick up rigs with those specs for half the price of this Cyclone SLI. But now we're potentially getting to a time where our graphics hardware is going to take the biggest performance hit we've seen in a decade.

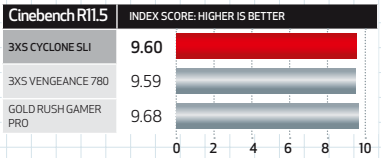
The move to ultra high-def is going to demand a serious jump in GPU power to game at those rarefied resolutions. Right now, single GPU setups struggle at 4K, so you need the sort of power these twin GTX 780s can muster to get a really good gaming experience at 3,840 x 2,160. We're not saying that 4K gaming is something you need to worry about right now – those screens are a long, hard road from being anywhere near mainstream – but this is the sort of machine 4K's early adopters are going to want to get the most out of their beautiful panels.

Looking back at the £1,600 Vengeance 780, Scan has almost doubled the specs for the Cyclone SLI. Obviously, there's the second 780, but there's also double the RAM and twice the solid state storage. Performance hasn't quite doubled, though, and that feels like a sticking point, but until it hits the mainstream there's going to be a price premium on both 4K panels and the machines you need to plug in to them. ■ **Dave James**

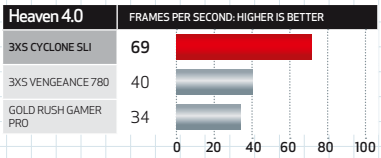
Technical analysis

The CPU performance is the only area where the Cyclone doesn't take a significant lead on the competition. At 2,560 x 1,600, this machine's extra GTX 780 gives it between an extra 50 and 75 per cent performance boost in-game, and when you switch up to 4K it becomes the difference between playable and non-playable.

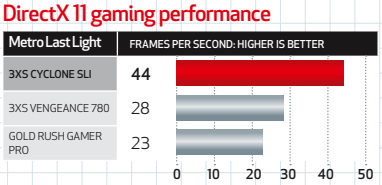
CPU rendering performance



DirectX 11 tessellation performance



DirectX 11 gaming performance



PCFormat Verdict

Features	★★★★½
Performance	★★★★½
Value	★★★☆☆

A beautifully built, blazingly fast rig for the early 4K adopters willing to get their hands dirty.

★★★★☆