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Presenting you a complete gaming system, MSI NX6800 won Editor's Choice award from DESIGNTECHNICA.com

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For those looking to upgrade their video card, the NX6800 should be at the top of your list. If money is no object and you would prefer the top-of-the-line 6800 Ultra video card, we recommend you still stay with the MSI brand. MSI has taken a regular video card and presented it in such a way that you feel like you are getting a complete gaming system. The NX6800 is a solid performing card for its price range. If you have a 5700, Radeon 9600 or slower video card, then you should see a significant increase in your gaming performance when upgrading to the NX6800.

Pros: Excellent software package, solid performance, quality construction

"MSI has taken a regular video card and presented it in such a way that you feel like you are getting a complete gaming system."

MSI's NX6800 video card is based on the 6800 chipset and with it, the company is out to prove that you can get more for your money.

Feature and Design

MSI's NX6800 video card is a regular 6800 based video card which bridges the gap between the GeForce 6800 GT and GeForce 5900/5950 video cards. Nvidia's 6800 series of cards are based on their new NV40 graphics processing unit and features support for the latest DirectX API, DirectX

MSI has gone to great lengths to make this card a solid value. The packaging that the NX6800 comes in gives you the feeling you are buying something important. The box is larger than normal and the look and overall presentation are top-notch.

MSI has used some colorful acrylic with fancy graphics to make the card look very high-end. On the card itself, MSI has gone with their traditional red PCB and has added a very stylish and high quality copper heat sink and cooling system. Fortunately the design of the NX6800 allows it to be in a single slot. The 6800 Ultra card featuring cooling hardware that is so large that is takes up two PCI slots in your computer -- not to mention two separate power supply connectors. The copper cooler on the NX6800 features an embedded 70mm cooling fan just to the left of the GPU and is designed to help vent the air away from the card. MSI includes a slider lever which allows you to manually adjust the speed of the GPU fan.

MSI includes three video outputs connectors, a traditional analog VGA output, a Digital DVI output and S-video output so you can hook up the card to various monitors. The real treat to the NX6800 package however is the amount of software which MSI includes with it. Prince of Persia, XIII, Splinter Cell, and Uru are just a few of the 17 games which come with the NX6800. Add to that 20 utility programs and MSI's own Media Center Deluxe II software and you have several hundred dollars worth of software on 14 CD's; and these are full versions, not trial versions of these popular games.

Setup and Performance

Installing the NX6800 only requires a few steps more than normally associated with a regular video card. First of all, because the NX6800 is based on Nvidia's 6800 chipset, it has system requirements that are a little more demanding than older cards. This means you will need to have a 600MHz or faster computer which at least 64MB of RAM and a 350Watt power supply. The power supply requirement itself is a huge deal. You may be able to get away with your 250 or 300 watt power supply as long as it's from a well known brand, but we recommend upgrading your power supply just to be safe. Honestly, if you're going to be purchasing this card, you really should have a system significantly better than its listed minimum requirements.

MSI uses a software utility which automatically updates the video cards drivers. We had no problem running the NX6800 using the Nvidia drivers. The NX6800 installed without a hitch and posed no problems with any of the games we benchmarked it with.

This is the part of the review that is probably the most

9.0c. What this means is that the 6800 series supports Pixel Shader and Vertex Shader 3.0. Because this appears to be the only difference between 9.0c and previous versions of DirectX 9, Microsoft has opted to keep this incremental update as version "c" rather than calling it DirectX 9.1 altogether. ATI's new X800 series of graphics cards do not support this new version of DirectX. Is this that big of a deal? The answer is yes and no. A few months ago we probably would have said no, but with new updates for games like Far Cry, Battlefield Vietnam, Pain Killer, Serious Sam 2 and more which adds DirectX 9.0c capabilities, hardcore gamers may be looking for their video cards to support the new version.

Based on the NV40 architecture, the NX6800 bears a similar resemblance to the 6800 GT and Ultra series of cards, but is "crippled" so as to perform on par with its price. This means the NX6800 has a core clock speed of 325MHz compared to 350MHz for the GT version and 400MHZ for the Ultra version. The pixel pipelines on the NX6800 are limited to 12 pipelines versus 16 for the two other versions. The graph below will show the differences between the three 6800 cards:

important: just how fast is the NX6800, and is it worth upgrading your current video card? In our benchmarks the NX6800 was on par with the Radeon 9800PRO on most of the lower end resolution settings, but where the NX6800 started to pull away was in the higher resolution benchmarks which feature anti-aliasing. In all of our benchmarks the 6800 Ultra card led the pack, but where it separated itself from the NX6800 was again in the higher resolution benchmarks. So, if you have an Nvidia Geforce FX 5700 or 5900 video card, then upgrading to the NX6800 should yield better performance.

Source from the DESIGNTECHNICA.com
(http://reviews.designtechnica.com/review1807_intro9042.html)