

Alienware vs Rockdirect vs Dell : Finding the Best Gaming Laptop

So you want to buy a gaming laptop. But not just any old gaming laptop, you want to buy the best gaming machine on the planet, the best gaming machine money can buy -- the fastest, the most powerful, the ultimate kick-ass, take no prisoners, meanest motherboard of all gaming laptops. Well, there's some good news for you, things have really changed in the laptop world. No doubt you are probably aware there have been some major developments in laptop construction and technology in the last year or so. Technology that puts the gaming laptop on par or near par with its main rival, the desktop PC. Recent changes in technology have really brought gaming laptops into the spotlight with a whole list of new Technologies: PCI Express, Sonoma Chipset, SLI, Hyper-Threading, Dual Graphics, Better RAM, and now Dual Core gaming laptops. Gaming notebooks are just now entering the specs and performance arena which was exclusively reserved for the bulky yet much more powerful desktop PC. Just in case you have had your head buried in term papers and study sheets lately -- hey, it happens! Here's a brief rundown of these new technologies that will give you the fastest gaming laptop: Graphics Cards: these are the real heart of any gaming machine. They are getting faster and more powerful. We also see the use of dual graphics cards and better transfer of data with new pipelines and buses. PCI Express: is a new standard for expansion cards that comes in different versions. Presently, we have the x16 and x1 lanes, they offer increased bandwidth. For example, x1 lane offers 500MB/sec instead of just 133MB/sec for PCI. NVIDIA SLI: SLI stands for Scalable Link Interface, technology that lets you use a couple of GeForce 6800 graphics cards together with PCI Express X16. Basically, SLI will speed up graphics on a single monitor by deploying two graphics cards. It also lets you combine 4 GPUs in one system for the fastest graphics yet. An alternative system would be ATI's CrossFire which is a SLI-like configuration using 'Master' and 'Slave' cards to combine two Radeon GPUs for improved and faster graphics. Hyper-Threading: Gives processors better performance especially when combined with dual-core processors, capable of handling four software threads which will put a smile on any gamer's face. Better RAM: DDR3 SDRAM (Double Data Rate Three Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory) this new DDR memory standard will use 40% less power and run at speeds up to 800 MHz. Don't confuse this with GDDR3 (in Graphics Cards) which is a totally different technology. Dual Core: just as the name says, you put two CPUs into a laptop for more power and faster computing. Rockdirect's Xtreme 64 was one of the world's first dual core notebooks to hit the market. Also be on the lookout for Intel's Dual Core Notebook Chip dubbed Yonah, it will be somewhat different in that this notebook chip will not only have two cores but these cores will share a 2MB cache which will greatly boost performance. In most cases, keeping ahead of all these developments and improvements can be a pleasurable chore for most gamers but it can sure eat into your gaming time. And as the notebook technology evolves, the gaming laptop will get even more smaller and more powerful, offering a real alternative to the gaming desktop PC even for the most die-hard Power Junkies. Serious gamers will also know laptop or notebook gaming technology is constantly evolving and mutating. Therefore, most gamers will only purchase a fully upgradeable open architecture notebook, they look for a laptop design which can be easily upgraded with the newest and latest technology, if at all possible. Despite this option, as laptop gaming technology steadily improves, gamers are still left with the choice of which gaming system to buy. Just in case you have been hibernating for last five years -- hey, it happens. Here's a quick rundown of the different systems on the market ...Voodoo, Alienware, Mayhem, Vigor, Sager, ASUS, Rockdirect, M-Tech, Dell... Despite the fancy labels, serious gamers know that most laptops are made by the same two or three companies in Taiwan! The same components and mainframes are assembled under different brand names and marketed to the public. Not to get too cynical, but sometimes it's the laptop with the better paint job or the better advertising that will win your purchasing dollar. Not that savvy gamers are easily fooled, perish the thought, but packaging may rule the day, performance may be the same or negligible in gaming machines with basically all the same components and specs. Regardless of this sober reality, gamers are still left with the choice of which gaming manufacturer has tweaked these components into the best gaming laptop on the market. There are numerous gaming specialists that make high quality machines well worth your consideration but because of limited space here we will only examine three major gaming manufacturers, sometimes for entirely different reasons. These three are Alienware, Rockdirect and Dell. All produce serious contenders for the ultimate gaming laptop. Here's a brief rundown on all three makers and their gaming laptops which may be of some help to anyone looking to purchase a high-end gaming monster. Alienware Laptops First, we will start with the most distinctive looking gaming laptops on the market. Those coming from Alienware, a company founded by two avid gamers, Nelson Gonzalez and Alex Aguila, in 1996. It has become one of the leading producers of revolutionary gaming PCs and Notebooks. It has also won raves and rewards from such top industry publications as CNET, PC Gamer, Computer Games and many more. Their flagship model is the Area-51m 7700. This scary monster can be outfitted with an Intel Pentium 4 Processor with Hyper-Threading Technology - (2.8GHz - 3.8GHz, 800MHz FSB, 1MB Cache, Socket 775) Intel 915P + ICH6 chipset with NVIDIA GeForce GO 6800 ULTRA with 256MB DDR3. It has a 17 inch WideUXGA 1920x1200 LCD Display and 4 dedicated SO-DIMM slots for Dual-Channel DDR2 Memory. Warranties can be purchased for up to 4 years. The Alienware Area-51m 7700's base price starts at around \$2000 but if you want to max out this system, be prepared to double that amount. High price for high performance. Runs quiet and cool. This one is dressed to kill. Rockdirect Laptops Next, we go across the pond, for a company that produces some high priced yet powerful gaming machines. Rockdirect gaming notebooks are another group of machines that many gamers should consider. Rockdirect, formerly known as Rock, is a British company that's on the cutting edge of notebook technology. They have had a long history of making high quality laptops for business and gaming. Rockdirect laptops are expensive, there's no way to get around that fact. Rockdirect's Xtreme 64 is one of the world's first dual core notebooks using AMD Athlon 64 X2 4800+ processors and twin 100GB 7,200RPM hard drives. With NVIDIA GeForce Go 7800 GTX graphics and a 17 inch WSXGA+ (1680x1050) display with X-Glass for better viewing. Around 2,300 pounds or \$4,000 USD. Three Year Collect and Return Warranty. Dell Laptops Hey dude, this can't be a Dell Dell with the introduction of its XPS second generation gaming laptops has to be considered by the serious gamer. Don't laugh! With the introduction of the XPS Gen2 laptops, Dell entered the gaming market for real. A lot of people stood up and took notice. Even more people stood up

when Dell introduced the XPS Renegade 600 desktop gaming system with 4 NVIDIA 7800GTX GPUs at the CES this year. Now that's putting SLI to some good use! Dell's top Notebook Model is the XPS M170 powered by Intel Pentium M Processor 780 (2.26 GHz/2MB Cache/533MHz FSB) and 2GB1 Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz 2 Dimm Memory on a 100GB 7200rpm Hard Drive. It uses 256MB NVIDIA GeForce Go 7800 GTX and has a 17 inch UltraSharp Wide Screen UXGA Display. Priced at around \$3,896 with a two year warranty and longer warranties may be purchased. Show me the Facts! Anyone can pick a top gaming notebook and say its the fastest in the world. However, you have to prove it or back it up. That's where benchmark testing enters the picture, these are standard tests that rate the performance level of your gaming laptop. Hey, tests are good for something! One good site that has performed a whole slue of tests on the gaming laptops mentioned above is <http://www.hexus.net>. You can see the different Benchmark tests here: <http://www.hexus.net/content/item.phpitem=4188> Testing for memory bandwidth and latency, picfast, cryptography, raytracing, realistic render, encoding and so on. The dual core Rock XTreme 64 showed impressive numbers, even beating out an Athlon 4000+ Desktop in many areas. WildCard Entry: M-TECH! There's another laptop maker many novice gamers don't consider when buying their ultimate gaming machine. It may not be as well known as the ones above but the real wildcard entry is M-TECH. This is basically the American equivalent of Rockdirect, although the companies are in no way connected. They just have a similar philosophy of working with and using cutting-edge technology and firms to produce some superior gaming machines. M-TECH, a Michigan company, started in 1995 and has close strategic partnerships with Tech firms in Silicon Valley. It is favorably reviewed by many industry magazines such as Laptops, Mobile Computing, CNET, PC TODAY and others. M-TECH produces some powerful low priced (relatively speaking) gaming laptops such as the D900K and the D900T: You can configure your D900T with two 100GB (7200RPM) SATA HDD Hard Drives with Pentium 4 3.8GHz 2MB L2Cache with a RAID setup. With Nvidia GeForce Go 7800 GTX w/256MB DDR3 and a 17 inch TFT WSXGA+ Glassview LCD display for around \$3500 USD. One year warranty, longer warranties may be purchased. When buying your laptop, keep in mind, just because a gaming laptop has a lot of style doesn't mean it has sacrificed performance. It is not a matter of style over substance, it just means you have to pay highly for all that style/advertising/packaging. If you can afford it, go for a higher priced gaming laptop. People buy Ferraries don't they There's no accounting for how people spend their money, if you want one of these dual core laptops from Rockdirect and you can take a little bit of heat and noise with your games, go for a Rockdirect Xtreme 64 or the older Xtreme Ti. If you want a dressed to kill Alienware laptop, go for the Area-51m 7700. If you're on a budget, look closely at the Dell XPS M170 or the other XPS systems and watch for special Dell coupons and discounts. Dell is known for giving some great discounts so keep your eyes peeled. And if you really want to go against the mainstream, why not check out M-TECH. Especially the M-TECH D900K or the D900T, ultimate performance at a good price. No matter which gaming system you go with, try to pick one that has a fully upgradeable open architecture structure so you can easily upgrade when the time comes. Keep in mind, laptop technology is changing so fast by the time your dream machine is configured, it is probably already out of date. Sobering thought but more true than any of us would like to believe.

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