

# Polywell Poly 976SLI

nForce and GeForce join, er, forces

**W**e've always liked Polywell's attitude about systems: professional and relaxed. While some vendors tweak their PCs until the last possible second—swapping out hardware and updating drivers until the bitter end—Polywell delivers its systems with a Cal Ripken-like reliability, which says volumes about the company and its products.

The Poly 976SLI featured here, for example, arrived a full two weeks before the deadline for this roundup. You might think that those two weeks would translate into old, moldy hardware, but Polywell's config is respectable and stable.

The CPU is Intel's \$500 Core 2 Duo



**Don't rub your eyes, the Poly 976SLI has 22-inch rims and spinners.**

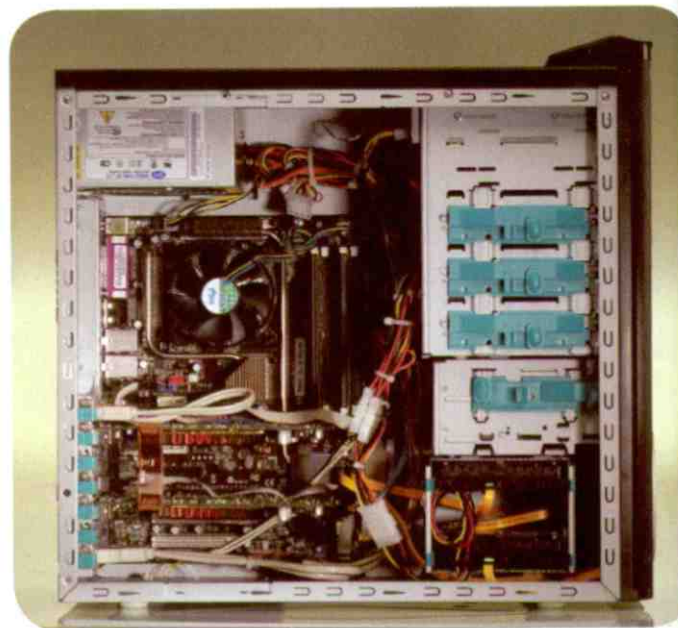
E6700, which gets you 80 percent the performance of the Core 2 Extreme X6800 at half the price. Polywell teams the CPU with an nForce4 chipset and a pair of Nvidia's midrange GeForce 7950 GT cards in SLI.

If you're wondering why Polywell didn't go for the more cutting-edge, faster X1950 XT CrossFire cards, as seen in three of the other systems here, consider that all three of those systems arrived in our Lab with "issues."

Polywell's rig rolls gansta-style, with an all-black enclosure that boasts a 9-inch fan embedded in the side—surely the PC equivalent of spinning rims. Fortunately, the mammoth fan is quiet, thanks to its low RPM, and a switch lets you reverse the flow of air or shut it off entirely. (We ran our tests with the fan set to suck air in from the outside.) The enclosure is also unique in featuring a front-mounted eSATA port.

Although the 976SLI is the very definition of midrange, Polywell does slip in a few tricks. While the majority of vendors here went with a single 7,200rpm drive for storage, the Poly 976SLI features a pair of 150GB Raptors in RAID 0. That strategy paid dividends in our *Photoshop* test, with Polywell nabbing the best score, beating out even the highly overclocked Overdrive system.

This rig's dual 7950 GT cards are no slouches in our game tests, either. The Poly 976SLI didn't ace any of the gaming benchmarks, but it certainly held its own. It was the third-fastest rig in our *FEAR 1.07* test and finished just a few frames



**A pair of GeForce 7950 GT cards in SLI hold their own against an onslaught of CrossFire cards.**

behind the Overdrive in *3DMark's* Deep Freeze. Still, those \$300 single-slotters couldn't outrun the others in *Quake 4* and *Company of Heroes*. It wasn't the slowest in those games—that title goes to Alienware—but it was bringing up the rear.

That made us wonder: Was Polywell's strategy to forego first-place aspirations and the stiff resistance it would face from boutique vendors such as Overdrive, and instead attempt to capture the middle ground. If so, the company succeeded in its goals. The machine places a solid third in our roundup behind the overclocked Overdrive system and the well-spec'd, but slightly wonky CyberPower rig. Certainly everybody in the Olympics wants a gold or silver medal, but to stand up with this crowd of competitors and get a bronze is an achievement in its own right.

**POLY 976SLI**  
\$2,500, [www.polywell.com](http://www.polywell.com)

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## HOW POLYWELL SPENT \$2,500

CPU/MOBO 29.2%

STORAGE 18%

GRAPHICS 24%

OTHER 28.8%