

GAMING PC

Oblivion Gladiator / £1,200 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.oblivionsystems.co.uk

Newcomer Oblivion has opted for an eye-catching black and orange colour scheme for the Gladiator, and it looks attractive with its large swathes of colour and little details. The pipes that flow down from the Raijintek Triton's 240mm reservoir are filled with orange coolant. Meanwhile, the Gigabyte motherboard mixes its black PCB with orange heatsinks, and the trio of intake fans and single exhaust spinner have all been replaced with orange-bordered Alpenföhn models. It's a great effort at colour coordination.

Likewise, the motherboard and graphics power cables are individually sleeved in orange, and the memory has been chosen for its heatsinks. Oblivion has fitted a smart nameplate to the shroud that covers the PSU at the base of the chassis as well, and a strip of orange LEDs illuminates the interior through the side panel's sizeable window.

It's all built into an NZXT H440 case, which is a great chassis in terms of both looks and features. It has four drive bays free behind the metal plate on the right, which does a great job of hiding cable clutter, but also means you have to remove the right side panel to access the bays. There are also two free 2.5in bays on the top of the PSU shroud, which also does a great job of hiding cable clutter. The end result is a tidy-looking machine.

The Gigabyte motherboard is a decent model too. The top-right corner sports a POST code display, and buttons that handle power, reset and overclocking, with buttons to toggle the CPU ratio and base clock level on the board itself. It also has toggles for activating or switching off memory slots and PCI-E slots. Elsewhere, the board has three spare 16x PCI-E slots, a free PCI slot and one vacant 1x PCI-E slot, along with plenty of empty SATA and USB connectors. There's a PCI-E power plug above the graphics card for giving multi-GPU setups added current too. There's no M.2 port on-board, but the Z97 chipset won't get the most out of an NVMe M.2 SSD anyway.

The quad-core Core i5-4690K CPU is overclocked to 4.3GHz. It's a last-gen chip, with Skylake silicon taking over, but it's still powerful enough for most people's needs. The overclock isn't that ambitious, though, considering that other system builders have extracted 4.5GHz or 4.6GHz from the

same silicon. It's paired with an Asus GeForce GTX 970 Strix graphics card, with two large fans, and a factory overclock, taking the GPU core from 1050MHz to 1114MHz.

There's also a solid allocation of 16GB of DDR3 memory, which is plenty for most people. It's only clocked at 1600MHz, though, when much faster memory is available for not much more money. That said, memory speed doesn't make a massive difference to overall performance. The 250GB Samsung 850 Evo SSD is a good SATA model too, but it seems pretty ordinary when compared with the quicker M.2 drives arriving with Skylake systems.

The specification doesn't look as strong when lined up against rivals though. The Overclockers Titan Riptide (see Issue 146, p68), for example, costs a similar price to this machine but includes a 6-core Intel processor and 16GB of memory clocked to 2400MHz, although it lacks the fancy liquid-cooling system. Scan's 3XS Z170 Vengeance system is a little more expensive than Oblivion's machine, but it justifies the extra pennies with a lightning-quick SSD and GTX 980 graphics.

Oblivion packages this PC with a two year return-to-base warranty that also includes parts and labour coverage for the same amount of time.

Performance

The Oblivion's key competitor is the Overclockers Titan Riptide, and the two machines make for an interesting comparison in our application benchmarks. The overclocked Core i5 part inside the Gladiator has a big clock speed advantage over the Haswell-E chip inside the Riptide, giving it the edge in our mostly single-threaded image editing test.

However, the six cores inside the Overclockers machine and the lack of Hyper-Threading inside the Gladiator saw the Riptide pull ahead in our heavily multi-threaded H.264 video encoding test. The Gladiator's end system score of 102,419 shows that it will be fine for most tasks and gaming, but it's a little underwhelming from a system that costs £1,200 inc VAT.

The Gladiator was great in gaming at both 1080p and 2,560 x 1,440 too, never dropping below 30fps in any of our game tests. However, the machine arrived as pictured with the card installed in the second 16x PCI-E slot down, which only allocates eight lanes to it – an odd move, but Oblivion says it allows more room for tubing, pointing out that the GTX 970 won't saturate the bandwidth of eight lanes anyway. It isn't an optimal situation, but it does indeed have little effect on the GTX 970's performance. The 240GB Samsung SSD returned sequential read and write speeds of 497MB/sec



/SPECIFICATIONS

CPU 3.5GHz Intel Core i5-4690K
overclocked to 4.3GHz

Motherboard Gigabyte GA-Z97X-SOC

Memory 16GB Team Vulcan
1600MHz DDR3

Graphics Asus GeForce GTX
970 4GB

Storage 250GB Samsung 850 Evo
SSD; 1TB Western Digital hard disk

Case NZXT H440

Cooling CPU: Raijintek Triton with 2
x 120mm fans; GPU: 2 x 92mm
fans; front: 3 x 120mm fans; rear:
1 x 120mm fan

PSU 650W SuperFlower Golden
Green HX

Ports Front: 2 x USB 3, 2 x USB 2, 2
x audio; Rear: 4 x USB 3, 4 x USB 2,
1 x Gigabit Ethernet, 1 x PS/2, 1 x
optical S/PDIF, 6 x audio

Operating system Windows 10
Home 64-bit

Warranty Two year parts and
labour return to base

1

The Raijintek Triton all-in-one liquid cooler is filled with orange coolant

2

A smart Oblivion nameplate adorns the shroud covering the PSU area

3

The MSI GeForce GTX 970 graphics card plays all games at 2,560 x 1,440

and 478MB/sec, which are fine for a SATA SSD, but there's an obvious speed benefit from the M.2 NVMe drives we're seeing with Skylake and X99 machines now.

We didn't encounter any thermal issues with the Oblivion either. Its CPU and GPU delta Ts of 54°C and 52°C are fine, and noise levels were consistent – when idle, the machine churned out a low hum, and that noise only increased a little when we played games – you won't notice the rumble if you use speakers or a headset. There's also a fan controller on the back, but it just ramped up the fan noise to uncomfortable levels, and our tests indicated that the CPU didn't overheat with the fans running at a more modest pace anyway.

Conclusion

The Gladiator system has clearly been built carefully. The orange and black colour scheme has been cleverly applied throughout virtually every component, and the little touches show that Oblivion has really thought about the looks and build of its first review machine.

The Core i5 CPU and overclocked GPU offer decent enough gaming and application performance, and the motherboard is packed with features as well. It's a shame, then, that this PC is let down in some other departments. The reliance on a last-generation motherboard and CPU, comparatively slow memory and SATA storage all make it



look uncompetitive next to similarly priced X99 and Skylake machines. Nevertheless, Oblivion is clearly a company to watch in the enthusiast system arena, and we look forward to seeing what else it can do.

MIKE JENNINGS

CPC REALBENCH 2015 GIMP IMAGE EDITING



HANDBRAKE H.264 VIDEO ENCODING



LUXMARK OPENCL



HEAVY MULTITASKING



SYSTEM SCORE



INTEL REFERENCE: 89.49%

SPEED
20/25

DESIGN
23/25

HARDWARE
20/25

VALUE
21/25

OVERALL SCORE
84%

BATTLEFIELD 4

1,920 x 1,080, Ultra Detail, 4x AA



2,560 x 1,440, Ultra Detail, 4x AA



SHADOW OF MORDOR

1,920 x 1,080, Ultra Detail, FXAA



2,560 x 1,440, Ultra Detail, FXAA

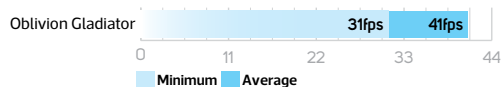


CRYSIS 3

1,920 x 1,080, Very High Detail, 0x AA



2,560 x 1,440, Very High Detail, 0x AA



Minimum Average

VERDICT

Great looks and reasonable power, but the specification is a little too inconsistent to earn a wholehearted recommendation.