

3DBOXX 8550 Xtreme review

Updated 12:36 21 Nov 2011 by T3 Online

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T3 got its hands on the world's most powerful workstation to give you a glimpse of what your PC will be stuffed with in the future

Unless you're starting your own Hollywood visual effects company, you'll never need anything as obscenely powerful as the Boston Dynamics CAD Workstation. If, however, you're interested in what might one day filter down to the inside of your own PC, read on...

Manufactured in the US, the Boxx 3DBOxx 8550 Xtreme is a solid block of pure, unrestrained power masquerading as a desktop PC. Recently featured in a head to head showdown in T3, the 8550 Xtreme will set you back a heart-stopping £11,514. Not so difficult to understand once you take a look inside.

Developed for use primarily by graphical and visual artists in the movie and video game industry, it's unsurprising that the 8550 Xtreme packs a ton of processing and graphical power, with plenty of options for customization.

3DBOXX 8550 Xtreme review

Love

- ✓ Blisteringly fast
- ✓ Plenty of connections
- ✓ Space for upgrades

Hate

- ✗ We can't afford it

Boston Dynamic CAD Workstation: Design

The metal silver grill adorning the front of the 8550 Xtreme's tower and the metal plate held in place on top with screws give a distinctly industrial appearance. Which is kind of the point; this is an industrial machine built for some serious grunt work.

The simple Power and Reset buttons are mounted high up next to four USB ports and two 3.5mm jacks for headphones and a mic. These, and the DVD RW drive, make up the only detail on the front panel of the machine. The rear part of the tower is a sea of connections including: One microphone, one line in, one speaker, three surround channel, four USB 2.0, two USB 3.0, two ESATA, two USB Mouse and Keyboard, two HDMI, one DVI and two RJ-45 Integrated Gigabit LANport. Not to mention space above these for six additional GPUs to be added.

Inside, the Xtreme features a liquid cooling system with seven internal fans - one on the Nvidia GPU - keeping the heat in check.

Boston Dynamic CAD Workstation: Features

The Boston CAD Workstation is marked out as a professional design machine by several key features focusing on visual effects. 3D and 2D design, animation, advanced visualization, desktop rendering, VFX compositing, video editing (compressed and uncompressed HD and DPX), and digital intermediate – the process of digitizing motion picture film and checking the colour gradient is all well within this machines capabilities.

The hardcore features are backed up with 1.5TB of standard hard disk space, which is upgradeable to over 2TB if you feel the need to add more.

Boston Dynamic CAD Workstation: Screen

The full effect of the Xtreme 8550 is best enjoyed on a 3D screen and comes with a DVI port for connection. But, of course, for the ultimate setup we recommend taking advantage of the dual HDMI ports with two monitors. Or better yet, slam a few more GPUs in there and go for six or eight. Included in the box is a DVI-to-VGA converter, so even a dated screen can suffice.

Boston Dynamic CAD Workstation: Performance

Speed is the name of the game here and the performance of the 3DBOXX 8550 Xtreme Base unit is unlike anything you will see on a conventional desktop.

Rocking two six-core [Intel Xeon X5690](#) chipsets, the 8550 will hit speeds of 3.47GHz over clocked to 4.2GHz. It's built for professional designers and coders to multi-thread (in which the processors alternate between threads of execution for added speed) multiple applications of any type they care to throw at it. There's 24GB of RAM packed in to keep the blistering speed up, and an NVIDIA Quadro 4000 GPU along with the additional

GPU slots mentioned earlier. Although the specs on the 8550 Xtreme descend somewhat into the realm of meaningless numbers – essentially this is the kind of machine you'd stumble across at Nasa or Pixar.

We ran the 8550 Xtreme with one of the side panels removed and unsurprisingly, the seven internal fans kicked out a bit of noise - although there wasn't a peep from the rest of the internal components. It's also thanks to the grill design (front and back) that the 8550 Xtreme keeps cool during performance - as the air-flow is particularly well managed.

Boston CAD Workstation: Verdict

We were blown away by the sheer power of the 8550 Xtreme workstation as well as impressed by the design and ability to tinker and upgrade as you saw fit.

As a business or design machine the 8550 is up there with the best of the best and could work as a creative workspace or a server for hosting your website or databases. It's gloriously powerful and would chew up and spit out anything short of source code for the next Large Hadron Collider.

Boston CAD Workstation availability: Out now on order from [Boston](#) or UK reseller [Escape Studio](#)

Boston CAD Workstation price: £11, 514