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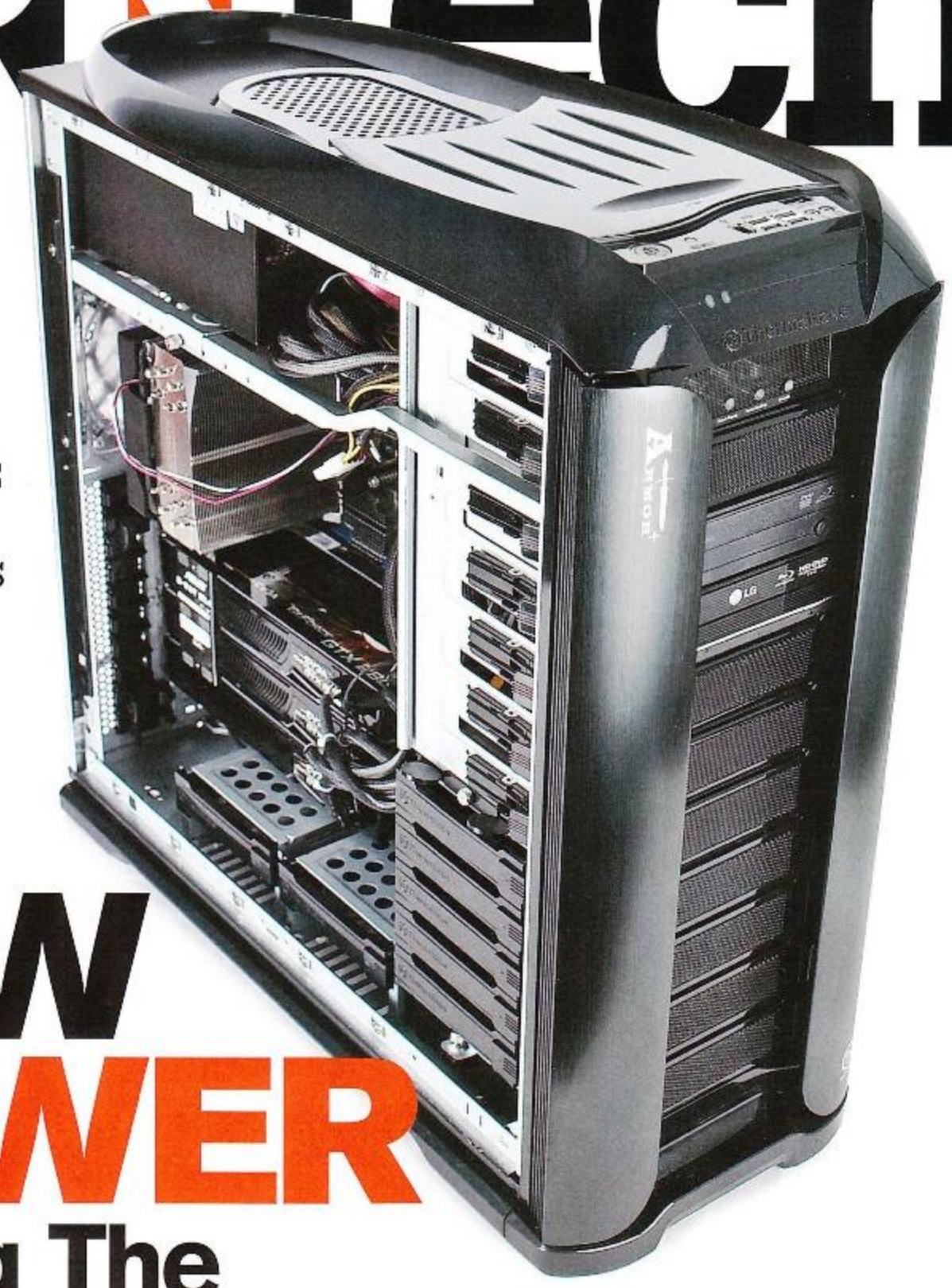
THE IT CHANNEL'S HANDBOOK FOR TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES

# CRNtech



## Bake-Off

### OFFICE APPS IN THE CLOUD:

Four online productivity suites battle it out for market share

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# RAW POWER

## Building The ULTIMATE PC

The *CRN* Test Center has a look at what it takes to build the highest-performing desktop system using industry-standard components, with Intel's Core i7 processor as its centerpiece. SEE PAGE 12

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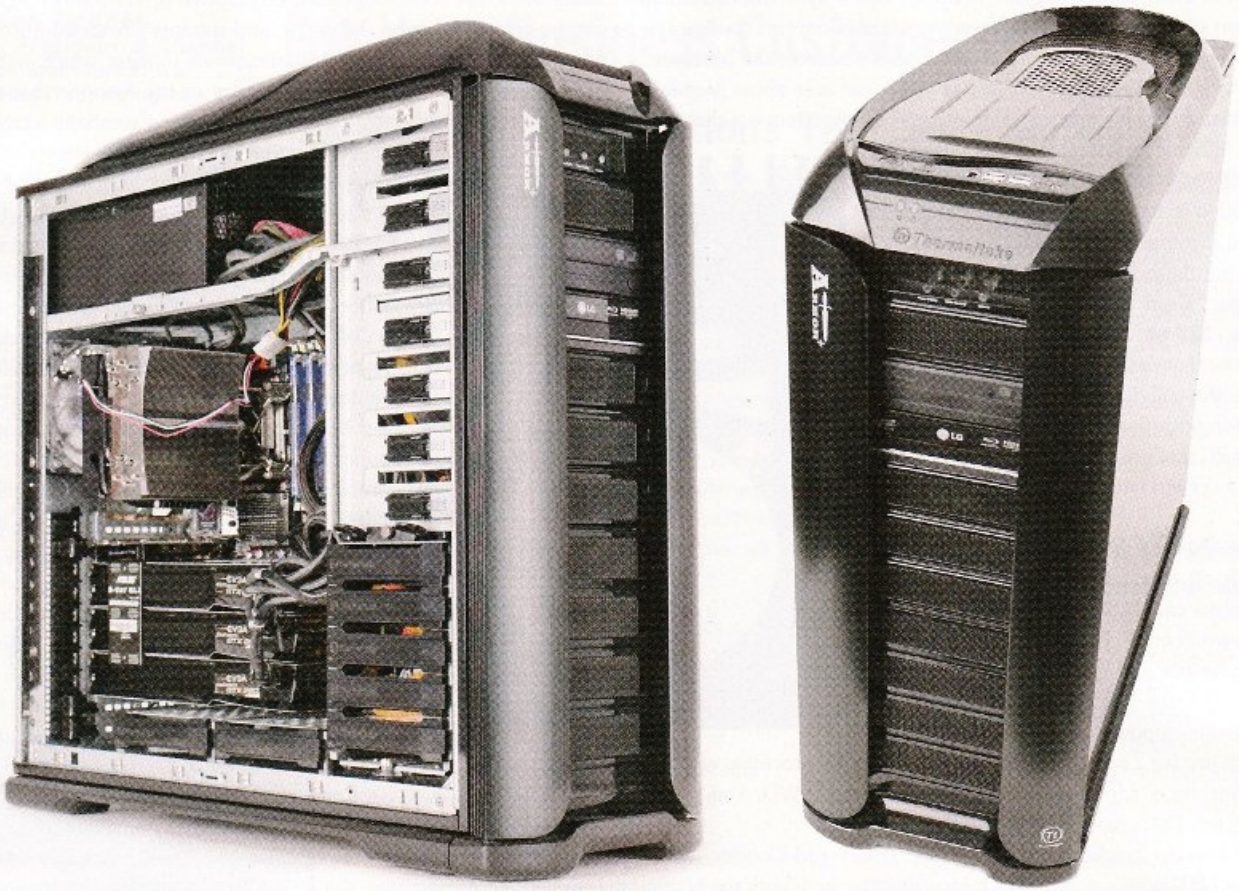
# BUILDING THE ULTIMATE PC



Aside from the enthusiast aspect, the Rampage II Extreme has many of the features we've come to expect from Asus, such as a lighted onboard power button, and the EPU (Energy Processing Unit) engine, now up to version 6, which analyzes the CPU load and automatically regulates the power draw and performance of various components to get optimum energy savings. Finally, the board supports three-way configuration for both Nvidia's SLI, as well as ATI's CrossFireX technologies.

With elegant-looking heat pipes and LEDs, a nice side effect of choosing this board was the techie appearance it gives off through the side window of the case. The Rampage II Extreme provided a nice foundation for the rest of the PC.

## Graphics

Since the advent of Nvidia's three-way, SLI configuration for graphics, it's been a configuration we'd always wanted to see at work for ourselves. We chose three EVGA-built Nvidia GeForce GTX280 cards for the Ultimate PC. At the time, the GTX280 was the top of Nvidia's high-end offerings, and may have even been a little ahead of its time, as some of its features weren't able to be taken advantage of yet. Built with a PhysX Ready processor, the card has built-in support for the PhysX physics engine, making realtime physics processing possible. In addition, the GTX280 has a CUDA-capable GPU, which enables it to take advantage of Nvidia's CUDA Instruction Set Architecture (ISA). Using the standard C programming language (and others to follow), developers can write applications that take advantage of the extra processor power of the GPU and use it in parallel with the CPU.

With all that power, the GTX280 also supports all the "standard" features one would expect from a card of its caliber, such as full 1,080p high-definition video and, as mentioned earlier, two- and three-way SLI, which allows you to bridge up to three graphics cards together to "pool" their resources.

The sheer size of the cards, especially in a three-way config-

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