



*A box as tall as a dishwasher*



*Muscle Machine vs. Muscleman*



*Saucer Silver Predator*

### **Meet Your Maker**

Alienware. As the name rolls off your tongue, the dribble is usually not far behind. Alienware. The mere mention of the word elicits respect, impeccable build quality, and a knack for custom building potent PC's. Whether you're a discriminating computer aficionado such as The Muscleman of Technology, or just seeking a computer with a little extra wallop, the extremely talented Alienware sales team can put together a system to match any budget or need. I have been buying Alienware computers since 1998 (Alienware was founded in 1996). Alienware in 1996 was not only an originator, but an instrumental influence creating the "custom PC gaming market." Alienware today is now the largest manufacturer of these crowning systems. The keyword here is manufacturer. Because Alienware is the largest company in their category, they contract the best prices on premium components. Their competitors can't match this feat—they don't sell enough units. Even those exquisitely sculpted Alien cases (called the Predator) are uniquely designed and made by Alienware—you have an original!

### **Justify Your Obsession**

As many who know me can attest, each year I order a new computer for reviewing the most recent software releases, testing the latest peripherals, and playing the greatest games (not necessarily in that order ☺). This is a particularly good time of year to order a new Alienware computer. Why? ATI and NVIDIA just released their latest cream of the crop video cards (9800XT & FX 5950Ultra). Even if you don't spec out one of these monsters, you'll still save big bucks by picking a mid-range card which drops in price due to the new releases. In addition, Intel and AMD released their new "souped-up" processors (Intel Extreme Edition & AMD FX-51), again same scenario—either get state of the art, or save big bucks on the predecessor models. DVD 8x recorders are now available at great prices. DDR memory and fully equipped systems have never been so affordable.

### **Extra Side Dishes with Your Order?**

Needless to say, I ordered my *Area-51 Extreme* configuration from Alienware in November. A week later, I nearly passed out—the sight of the behemoth black box at my front door brought visions of Alien abductions. Exhilaration abounds opening the main box only to be greeted by the equally enormous Accessory Box. The explanation is straightforward. Alienware jam packs the box with pertinent computer accompaniments. Here you will find your customized Alienware Autopsy 3-ring black binder with order configuration details, a few sample benchmarks, personalized warranty ID card (your

name & account imprinted in silver), and applicable OS CD's including drivers and recovery disks. Finally, there is brief documentation for getting started and warranty data. Yeah, that's just the binder. Rounding out the accessory box is your custom painted Microsoft Internet Keyboard and IntelliMouse Explorer 3 (to match the case color you choose), the Alienware Cable Management Cage to keep those cables tidy, extra adapters, parts and other CD's from your chosen components. The two remaining items are my favorites. The infamous Alienware branded black T-Shirt (the only mod I'm doing is to the "T"...converting to a Muscle-T!), and the deluxe Alienware Mousepad called "sUrface 1030"—very classy!



*Frontal view of the Predator case*



*The door is now ajar*



*A backside view - nice fans*

### **Muscle Machine vs. Muscleman!**

Sure, it takes a lot to outgun The MMOT—I never stood a chance against my hand culled Area-51. But when you're packing 2Gigs of Corsair XMS DDR memory, add a touch of ATI's 256MB 9800 XT sovereign video card, mix profusely with an Intel P4 HT 3.2Gig 800 MHz FSB processor, sprinkle liberally with a Plextor 8x DVD recorder, add a smidgen of an 8-in-1 USB 2.0 Internal Card Reader (next to the SATA Seagate 160Gig Barracuda HD) and finally garnish with a Klipsch ProMedia Ultra 500 Watt 5.1 speaker system, you've got a guaranteed eviction notice under the door in less than 20 milliseconds! Did I mention I'm spending the first quarter of 2004 in the doghouse? Yeah, I'm working on getting an Access Point hooked up in there. I benchmarked some numbers with Futuremark to showcase the beast. After nine runs with 3DMark03 (build 340) at the default 1024x768 x32 my rig pulled an average score of 6577...don't worry, I'll be crying in a few months when the latest offerings appear in magazines. Not to rub salt in the wound, but my factory benchmark for Quake III is 340 FPS! After spending countless days of sleep deprivation since my Saucer Silver case with Fusion Red AlienIce entered my life, my jaw is permanently unhinged.

### **Final Thoughts**

This is my 4<sup>th</sup> Alienware computer since 1998 and I can honestly say like fine wine, the Alienware magicians manage to one up themselves every year. You don't have to go overboard like my rig, but even on a \$1500 budget Alienware represents the very best value for your money (check out the *Area-51 Performance* model). I urge you to visit Alienware.com and see for yourself the quality and pride this institution incorporates into every computer. Their motto "Build it as if it were your own" is so precisely true. It's the little things Alienware does which sets them apart from everyone else, from the glowing bioluminescent logo alien eyes (the same colors which light up the fans—all part of the AlienIce Cooling System), to the dozen extra screws included in the case, the 200-point quality checklist, and the awesome standard issue 420 Watt Power Supply. Even

unlocking the case reveals high quality craftsmanship throughout. The neatly exposed innards are firmly anchored and wired tidily with a pro's caring touch. A remarkable level of pre and post sales support backs up every Alienware system which includes 24/7 Toll-Free technical support. The AlienCare advanced Technical Support and warranty is the best way to protect your "Ultimate Gaming Machine" which lets you choose between one and three years of coverage with Onsite Service. Alienware's site even features a dynamic support page chock full of resources including interactive customer forums, driver downloads, instructional upgrade videos, game patches, FAQ's and much more. It's the "out of this world" Alienware treatment...from "First Contact" through "Lift-Off" that will have you permanently abducted into the Alienware family!