

# The Two Towers

A pair of new PC case enclosures submit to the *Maximum PC* gauntlet

**T**hink you can judge a case by its appearance? Take a quick peek at the two enclosures featured here and try to predict which is better. We think you'll be surprised.

—JOSH NOREM

## Viper Extreme Gamer

Despite its overtly cheesy exterior, the Viper is quite respectable. It's a surprisingly sturdy, well-built structure that proves once and for all that a case can't be judged by its cover. (Gotcha, didn't we?)

This mid-tower enclosure uses steel construction, giving it a solid, rigid feel, and its built-in handles for LAN party travel impressed us with their sturdiness and reliability. The plastic front bezel comes straight from the pages of Falcon Northwest's design book, with a backlit snake

prominently featured on the swinging bay door. Below the door sits a swanky LCD display that also features a snake logo as well as info on HDD activity, case temperature, uptime, and power status.

Inside the case's roomy interior are 10 drive bays, which should satisfy even storage-hungry junkies. Unfortunately, the drive bays aren't tool-less, requiring old-fashioned screws. Cooling consists of an 80mm fan in front of the drive bays

(which can be upgraded to a 120mm fan) and another 80mm fan attached to the case door. Two extra 80mm fan mounts reside above the AGP slot, but are empty in stock trim. The included 500W PSU has two 80mm fans that can be adjusted via a "fan speed" knob. The power leads, which include SATA connectors, are UV blue, making them a

colorful complement to the UV reactive case window. On the downside, the mobo tray is not removable, which makes PC assembly a more laborious process.

Overall, the Viper Extreme is an impressive case despite the "cheap" character its design implies. Indeed, it's a killer rig for the money.

**MAXIMUM PC VERDICT** **9**

**ESKIMO KISS**  
Ample cooling, slick LCD display, and well-stocked.

**— SNAKE BITE**  
Requires tools for drive and PCI card installation.

\$100, [www.xgbox.com](http://www.xgbox.com)

## Devanni Nitrous 7105 Silver

Although the Apple G5 isn't as fast as a high-end PC, its clever design is certainly worth mimicking, which is why we're now seeing PC cases follow in its footsteps. The Nitrous 7105 is one such imitator, and while it does an OK job of recreating the G5's sexy brushed aluminum exterior, it's not without a few semi-serious flaws.

As you can see, the entire exterior is made of aluminum mesh. Both the sides and top are ventilated, as is the front bezel. However, the front bezel has a solid aluminum backing, so no airflow is possible through the front of the case. Compounding this overheating disaster-waiting-to-happen is the lack of any fan mount in the lower portion of the case. Instead of allowing room for a fan, you get a nifty LCD display that shows the temperature of an included probe (you can mount it wherever you like), as well as digital displays for hard drive activity and power. It's a cool-looking display, for sure, but it's only legible when you're directly in front of it, meaning that if your case is on the floor you'll have to get down on your knees to read it. The two handles you see atop the case are removable via thumb screws, and make transporting the case a lot easier.

Thankfully, building a PC in this



**This case looks darn close to a G5, right down to the aluminum handles and feet thingamajigs. But its cooling capabilities are lacking.**

case is a snap. All of the drive bays are easy to work with and use plastic locks to keep drives secure. We also like that the top two 5.25-inch bays include folding doors that are part of the bezel; when you hit the button to open the drive, the bezel door slides down and the optical tray slides out from behind.

Front I/O is perfect, with FireWire, audio, and two USB 2.0 ports. Unfortunately, there is no motherboard tray, and the only cooling apparatus is a mount for an 80mm fan near the AGP slot. No power supply is included.

The Nitrous 7105 is a decent enclosure that's lightweight and easy to work with. Unfortunately, the lack of any cooling whatsoever for the hard drives is a glaring flaw—there may be enough bays for six hard drives, but heat concerns would make us wary of running more than one.

**MAXIMUM PC VERDICT** **7**

**+ SNAPPLE**  
Tool-less drive bays, and very light.

**— APPLE**  
Only one fan mount, and LCD display is largely unreadable.

\$88, [www.ditcorp.com](http://www.ditcorp.com)



**The door that covers the Viper's drive bay is adorned with a backlit logo a la Falcon Northwest.**