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Cadalyst All-Star Awards 2008

1 Nov, 2008
By: Nancy Spurling Johnson

Editors honor year's top CAD products.

Cadalyst All-Star awards honor the best of the best — the most outstanding among all hardware and software products that earned Highly Recommended ratings from *Cadalyst* Labs over the past year. Here we present the editors' picks for 2008.

When we encountered more than one standout in a particular product category, special consideration was given to value (performance for the price) and relevance to a broad range of CAD users. For reference, all *Cadalyst* Labs Reviews are available online at www.cadalyst.com/reviews.

Hardware

HP • HP xw4600 and LP3065 30" LCD workstation/display combo • $3,775 • www.hp.com

The HP xw4600 workstation is based on a proprietary Foxconn motherboard that uses the Intel X38 Express chipset; the system *Cadalyst* tested had an Intel Core 2 Duo E6850 processor rated at 3.0 GHz with a front-side bus speed of 1,333 MHz. In June, reviewer Ron LaFon found the LP3065 30" LCD monitor to be "both pleasing and very useful" and judged the pricing, performance, and overall quality of the combo system to be ideal for a broad range of work.

@Xi Computer • PowerGo Duo XT mobile workstation • $3,299 • www.xicomputer.com

@Xi Computer is no stranger to speedy computers, and the Xi PowerGo Duo XT mobile workstation that we reviewed in July is no exception. Based on an Intel Core 2 Duo E6850 processor rated at 3.0 GHz with a 4-MB L2 cache, the system arrived with 2 GB of DDR2 800 MHz RAM installed and a capable NVIDIA Quadro FX 1600M card. The Xi PowerGo Duo XT mobile workstation is decidedly on the large and heavy size, but if it's performance you want, this system delivers.

NVIDIA • NVIDIA FX 3700 graphics card • $1,599 (MSRP), $825–$899 (street) • www.nvidia.com

The NVIDIA FX 3700 is a high-performance, PCIe2-compliant graphics card with support for both DirectX 9 and DirectX 10, making it suitable for Windows XP and Vista CAD and engineering systems. In the tests we reported in our June issue, this card produced great performance numbers, and LaFon anticipated seeing even better performance as the card becomes available in speedy new workstations.

Software

Autodesk • Autodesk Design Review 2009 • Free • www.autodesk.com/designreview

Autodesk combined the best of its DWF Viewer and Autodesk Design Review software into Autodesk Design Review 2009 — and it's free of charge and comes with all major Autodesk releases. Reviewed in April, Design Review 2009 provides tools for you to view, mark up, print, and republish DWF files to share with others or to return to the publisher of the original DWF for revision.

Autodsys • AutoLINE 2009 • $99; upgrades, $75 • www.autodsys.com

AutoLINE from Autodsys is an extremely useful, easy-to-use, and flexible application for those who need more complex linetypes than what AutoCAD provides out of the box. As reported in August, AutoLINE offers a lot for the price, and there's little wonder that it has been called a must-have application for AutoCAD users.

Dassault Systemes SolidWorks • SolidWorks 2009 • $3,995–$7,995 • www.solidworks.com

SolidWorks 2009 includes several hundred changes, many of which are designed to improve overall speed. In this issue, reviewer Bill Fane finds the SpeedPak file-sharing functionality to be a significant improvement that lets users contain file size by suppressing assembly components.

Vico Software • Vico Virtual Construction Suite 2008 • $895–$8,000+ • www.vicosoftware.com

The six components of Vico Software's Virtual Construction Suite 2008 represent the most comprehensive, best integrated, and most highly evolved VC applications currently available on the world market, according to Jerry Laiserin's review in the July issue. He describes the BIM (building information modeling) software as "a new-generation way of looking at and managing construction process and progress . . . with a totally integrated and completely construction-centric way of working."
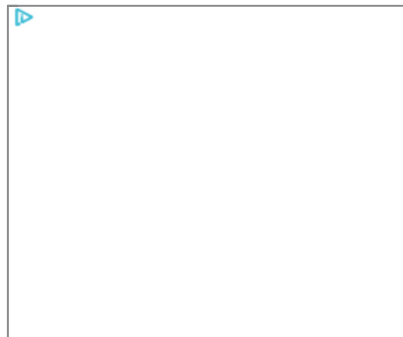
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