

Asus Extreme N6600GT TOP Limited Edition Video Card

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With every new generation of video cards come many iterations of the new technology. With nVidia's introduction of the 6 series of GPUs, there have come multiple cards based on similar families of GPUs. Most notably the 6800 family brought to the table the 6800, 6800GT and 6800 Ultra. Likewise with the midrange 6 series card(s) I'll be looking at today, the Asus Extreme N6600GT/TOP/TD. With the Extreme N6600GT/TOP/TD we have what is one of the most expensive 6600GTs on the market, but include Asus' reputation for ultra high quality components, build quality, and with this model, equipped with 128 MB of Samsung 1.6ns DDR3. Follow along on my evaluation to see if this Limited Edition card provides the performance to go along with it's higher than average price tag.

I have to say that despite the price, I was quite interested in these particular cards. Having been an avid 3DMark bencher for many years, and finding the cost of the top end cards prohibitively high, (especially if you want to enjoy the current SLI configuration for gaming), I decided that for the cost of one high end card I could have 2 of these. Combined with the DFI UT LP NF4 SLI-D and a good clocking AMD 3500+ Winchester we might be able to set some marks or at least match some of the top 3D benchers in this card class. Having owned and set records previously with Asus video card products, in particular their outstanding Ti4800/Ti4200 class, I was hoping for something a tad more special than the rest of the crowd.

I had a major concern with cooling efficiency with this unit. It not only uses a thermal pad, but also white thermal paste. My initial overclocking exploits were definitely hindered by this method of thermal transfer, as it was acting more as an insulator than a transfer mechanism.

When I bought these cards for review, they were initially advertised at 550 MHz clock for the GPU. They are now advertised at 520 MHz GPU clock, and I understand why. Though mine defaulted at 520 MHz, any attempt to run the

card at the then advertised 550 MHz GPU clock failed in benching with a solid freeze after a minute or so, from overheating.

<fast forward>

ASUS has again produced a well built, high quality and stable platform in the Extreme N6600GT/TOP. It's very pricey compared to cards from other manufacturers, even compared to their own Extreme N6600GT/TD version. Its package is not spectacular compared to others either, offering up one game and several other pieces of software. It's also a Limited Edition card with only 5,000 being manufactured.

But I have to be honest, this card when cooled better, whether via water cooling or as I did with phase changed chilled coolant, seems to clock higher than others in its class without modifications to increase voltages.

These are the finest 6600GTs you can buy in my honest opinion despite the price premium, even without having tested others. That doesn't mean you won't find some great price/performance bargains out there I'm sure.

If the \$250 price tag is a bit much, check out the Extreme N6600GT/TD. They look identical but run at the reference clocks, and I'm told they clock pretty well too. Considering the cost and performance of the Asus Extreme N6600GT TOP Limited Edition, I give these cards a solid...

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