

review by Erica J. Marceau

.0 stars — 1 Star Poor, 5 Stars Excellent

Product: Power3D

Distributor: TechWorks

List Price: \$249.95

Contact Info: <http://www.techworks.com/>

Genre: Graphics Accelerator Card

System Requirements: PowerPC with at least one available PCI slot, 32MB RAM, System 7.5.3+, CD-ROM,

640x480 or greater

multi-sync color monitor and a

hard drive.

Overview

Power3D is a graphics accelerator card that greatly enhances full-screen 3D games such as Quake, Myth, MechWarrior 2, Carmageddon and many others. What it doesn't do is enhance 2D games or other graphics programs such as Photoshop. TechWorks says that Power3D will turn your PowerPC into a power arcade and this isn't an idle boast. Power3D supports QuickDraw 3DRAVE games and has native 3Dfx support. With an impressive list of features and a growing number of games, this is the card to get if you're serious about gaming.

Installation

If you don't know how to install PCI cards, I recommend reading the manual that came with your computer. The procedure is very straightforward and only takes a few minutes, but you don't want to make a mistake that you'll regret later.

After the PCI card is installed, the TechWorks pamphlet describes how to connect the card to your monitor. This is a 3-step process and every cable that you will need is included. After restarting, all you need to do is insert the CD, drag the few extensions and libraries into the System Folder and restart again. That's all you need to do.

Quake Graphics

The level of improvement in Quake with Power3D is absolutely amazing. Unfortunately, due to space limitations, I am unable to include before and after pictures. However, if you go to <http://www.applewizards.net/power3d/>, you will find some pictures that will illustrate what I will be describing.

The first thing I noticed was a greater variety in the colors, textures, and detail of the graphics. If a wall was a one-tone beige before, it now includes a brown section with rivets. Everything seems to have more depth and substance. The amount of colors that are displayed seems to have increased even though I didn't change the monitor resolution.

The true test lies in getting close to an object. In 3D games, if you get close to an object then it turns into a giant mess of pixels. The same thing, although to a lesser extent, happens in Quake. Not so with the Power3D card. No matter how close I got to an object, the texture still remained smooth and realistic.

The Power3D card doesn't just improve static images, but moving images as well. All sources of light (i.e. explosions, lava rocks) have glows around them. The effect is really quite beautiful. The enemies also appear much smoother and detailed. The moving water, lava, sludge, and clouds are much deeper looking. Even the flame is improved.

I could talk all day about how much better the graphics are in Quake with the addition of the Power3D card, but seeing is believing. I recommend you head over to the URL above and take a look for yourself. I'm sure you'll be impressed with the amount of improvement that you'll see with the

Power3D card.

Quake Performance

The framerate approximately doubled with the Power3D card installed. How is that possible? The software lets the card handle most of the graphics, which allows the software to handle running the game more efficiently. Below is a table of the performance I saw while testing the three included demos. I am running Quake on a PowerMac 7300/200 with 32 MB of RAM and RAM Doubler 2 set to double the memory to 64 MB. I allocated Quake 20000 KB of memory and Quake 3Dfx 25000 KB of memory. Performance will improve with RAM Doubler or Virtual Memory disabled.

Other Games

Some games just need hardware acceleration for the best performance possible, and the games included with the Power3D prove that. Included with the Power 3D card are MechWarrior 2, Virtual Soccer, Weekend Warrior, and the first level of Quake. The graphics in these games are absolutely breathtaking. Don't just take my word for it though. Head over to

<http://www.techworks.com/products/power3d/games3d.html> for a list and sample pictures of games that support Power3D.

Games with Power3D support that are either currently available or coming soon are MYTH™ by Bungie Software at <http://www.bungie.com/>, Fighter Squadron™ Screamin Demons Over Europe by Parsoft at <http://www.parsoft.com/>, Shattered Steel™ by LogicWare at <http://www.logicware.com/>, F18 3.0 Korea Crisis™ by Graphics Simulations at <http://www.graphsim.com/>, Unreal™ by Epic Megagames at <http://www.unreal.com/>, Galapagos™ by Anark at <http://www.anark.com/>, Carmageddon™ by SCI at http://www.sci.co.uk/carmageddon/index_mac.html, Shadow Warrior 3Dfx patch and Falcon 4.0, both by MacSoft at <http://www.wizworks.com/macsoft/>, Malice by Quantum Axxess at <http://www.qamalice.com/index.cgi>, Virtual Wings by Cat III Systems at <http://www.cat3.com/>, MDK by Playmates Interactive at <http://www.playmatestoy.com/pie/>. For screenshots of these games enhanced with the Power3D card, go to <http://www.techworks.com/products/power3d/games3d.html>.

inal Analysis

to have. It does
delivers breath-
full-screen 3D games.
this card definitely needs
wish list. The benefits
cost along with the
to an unbeatable

This card is an absolute joy
what it promises to do;
taking performance for
If you're a gamer then
to be on your holiday
that it brings and the low
great free games add up
combination.

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