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We've sat a beautiful actress (can't tell you who) in sexy one-piece swimsuits (can tell you whose - see above!) I've seen the Eres costume before, but still love it, and I live for Michael Kors Rolex-inspired watch straps, as well as Thomas Mayer's sexy strapless ribbon suit. Think black, white and pink come swimsuit season. Or is it too early for you? What are you doing with that soft, beige computer sitting under you on the table? Why not tear it apart, chop the case, put in the window, light up the inside, add a few fans, disperse it and make it into an amazing piece of technique that can take pride of place on top of your desk where people can see and admire it? This is exactly what is happening in the world of computer modding, once an underground kingdom that is gradually moving into the mainstream. Modding, in fact, takes the computer and makes it more impressive. While a simple update can be considered a modding, the term is used to refer to pushing your PC to the limits of performance by breaking up the processor, graphics card, and other components. This also means adding the necessary cooling to keep the acceleration system from firing its transistors, and visually enhancing the case and peripherals by adding or changing the lights, adding windows, painting them and otherwise adding flair. Modders are a wild breed, and will do everything from cutting simple shapes from standard PC cases to creating all-themed cases of their own, such as a motorcycle PC or a glowing PC. Geeks just want to have fun and they will go to extremes to have it. Why mod? When I invite those who are uninitiated into the world of modding to my computer room and show them, say, a water-cooling Pentium 4 system with a large window, four fans and ultraviolet light inside, the first question is almost always: why? The Modnessit method all started with wanting to get more out of our systems than the average web surfer. With the explosion-dispersing phenomenon (flexing components such as processors, GPUs, memory and other gears, so they work faster than they are specified for work), gearheads jumped goose components of their PCs. It turns out that making chips run faster makes them generate more heat than their stock coolers were designed to dissipate, so overclockers began to claim (and often develop their own) aftermarket coolers. They also cut out additional fan holes in their cases to keep the insides cold. Pandora's PC box was open. Here they were cutting our cases where someone (I have no idea who) came up with the idea of cutting the actual box in the box so that people could peek into the case while it was working. Soon the modders were going to auto parts stores and getting 12V fluorescent tubes to light up their systems. Why would they do that? Why not? Why do people put racing lanes and ground effects on their cars? Why do people paint their houses? The simple answer is to create something visually stunning, undoubtedly cool, and something unique. Most modders of modders gamers and gamers participate in the LAN (Local Area Network). LAN festivals exist so that gamers can come together and play multiplayer games with each other or against each other on a local network area free of the delay that often haunts internet games. Participants tow their computers in agreed-upon locations (often hotel banquet halls) where they sit side by side and often compare PC specifications. Bringing a visually modded box is a great way to start conversations, wu fans and stand out from the crowd. For a full low down on LAN parties, check out Extreme Tech having a LAN Party. Typical ModsThere has two mod types: functional fashion and visual fashion. Functional modifications change the performance or performance of the computer and include settings such as acceleration and cooling of the system. Some people even consider tweaking the BIOS computer settings and optimizing the settings of Windows XP (or any operating system installed) for maximum performance as a form of modding. Specific functional fashions include: Air cooling of the case. Adding holes and fans to the body increases the flow of air through the structure, lowering the ambient temperature in the case. After-sales air coolers are widely available to bring much more efficient cooling processors and GPUs, allowing you to re-remember the bejeezus of them without burning them. Adding a liquid cooling system to either the kit or grabbing the hose parts and doing it yourself is a great guarantee against the heat caused by the acceleration. A typical liquid cooling system includes a radiator, pump and water blocks attached to the processor and sometimes to the GPU and the north bridge. This is done with the Peltier element, which is a flat pad that uses electronics to quickly transfer heat from the cold side to the hot side, where the air cooler scatters it into the air in case. Modular power sources allow you to use only the power cables that your system absolutely needs, reducing the number of cables in the system and improving the airflow. Getting rid of these flat tape cables for IDE and SCSI drives and replacing them with rounded cables increases the flow of air through the enclosure. Visual modding is tons of fun and consists of doing everything that increases the aesthetic appeal of the system, turning it into a hot rod. Adding windows, illuminated fans, strobes that respond to sound or UV-reactive data cables, or building a kind of mind-blowing case from scratch, are visual mods. Visual fashions include: Cut a window into the system. Modders literally cut a hole in the side of the computer case, buy a sheet of pure plastic, such as plexiglass, and use it to create a window in the computer's recess. Some modders carve rectangles, while others create amazingly complex and intricate patterns. All Lights exist to add lighting inside the enclosure, from cold cathodes to LEDs, from blue power sources to glowing fans. The makers of the motherboard and manufacturers of other components now serve modders, using printed boards of various colors and even bright, UV-reactive colors of things like pci and AGP slots and other outlets. Modders build cases out of all sorts of things. I've seen cases built entirely of clear plastic, or built from old stereo components, hamster cases, aquarium or wood. And I even saw non-cutelephone computers, the components of which were installed on the walls! Why settle for beige when you can strip your computer naked and paint the case any color you like? Modders paint solid colors, create cool marble patterns and even make some amazing silkscreen work. Modding Goes MainstreamThere was a time when modders had to pretty much invent everything they needed themselves. Cooling water required jurors to dig their own pump and pipe network; if you wanted a grill for your new fan case, you cut out one of the metal screen windows. How things have changed. Today, building a modern system is as easy as shopping (see sidebar: Buying spare parts). You can provide pre-modded cases of all shapes and sizes, from tiny, cubic, mini-PC cases to striking towers with amazing windows and front panels that look like alien heads. Accessories are also easy to find. You no longer need to do your own splicing to add lighting to the event; Lights are now available with Molex connectors for standard PC power sources. Water cooling systems come in kits with everything you need at the ready. Fans come pre-lit, with an amazing assortment of fan grills available. Creating a fashion PC is a simple matter of assembling such parts. Now, whether it's cheating depends on how you look at it. If you buy and collect a showcase, illuminated fans, a cold cathode light tube and a water cooling kit, you're really nothing modded; However, you have created a system that looks and functions much better than the average office workstation. But for many hardcore PC fans, modding means doing it yourself. Amazing Modding CommunityIf you want to learn a lot more about modding, the best thing to do is check out modding websites as well as hiding and eventually join the modders of the message boards. The modding community is a wonderful, turbulent, friendly group, amazingly accepting newcomers until they ask questions that are covered by dozens of previously topics. In addition to ExtremeTech, you can also check out sites such as Bit-Tech and GideonTech.Modding is a stunningly challenging and ultimately rewarding pastime for people passionate about their PCs. Hunt down the simplest case you can find and hack and draw it into something amazing. Tap your computer to the max, cool the heck out of it, and make it look like a stunning work of art. After the first first You'll be hooked. Joel Durham Jr. is a freelance writer and editor. He is also a game columnist for Microsoft Windows XP expert zone, and has written books on the creation and optimization of PCs, including the upcoming title of Dummies. Joel was the senior technical editor of gamecenter CNET, the victim of a dot-com explosion. He has written hundreds of features like K, news articles, columns and reviews that focus on the technical side of PCs specializing in multimedia and gaming. Joel lives in upstate New York with his wife and children. Children.

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