

Extremely Functional

CH Products' **Multi Function Panel** may sound bland, but gamers could find it the most useful controller they own

MANUFACTURER CH Products MSRP \$189 RATING ★★★★★½

CH Products' Multi Function Panel may sound like the most boring piece of hardware ever created, but it may also be the most useful one. Based on the Ergodex DX1 (which we reviewed last year), it's basically a blank slate for creating your own custom key interface and layout.

It's also amazing technology. The main MFP unit is just a giant piece of plastic with a clear cover and a USB cable. The base unit comes with 25 keys, and you can purchase additional ones (another 25 cost over \$70; ouch). Once you install the driver and software, you attach the keys to the surface using its remarkable "sticky" key technology. You can't pull the keys off the thing directly; in fact, you can pick the entire device up by grabbing one of the attached keys. Yet, by some sort of voodoo magic, all it takes is a simple twist to remove a key.

CH Products is smartly targeting the device at flight sim buyers, who can place templates behind the keys to help make it look more like actual flight controls. And Lord knows planes have plenty of buttons. But MMO players will find it equally useful,



since they're nearly as obsessive-compulsive about their keyboard layouts and macros as sim fans.

Though pricey, this is a perfect controller for anyone who's into creating macros for games and applications alike. Whether you're using it to increase your radar range or cast a spell, it's more than functional; it's essential. —Steve Bauman

3D Game O' SANDIO/\$79.95 ★★★

If you can get beyond its dumb name and a box that's full of wonderful broken English statements like "Brings gamers to a whole new level of fun" and "gain an unfair advantage; free up the left hand," the 3D Game O' is actually an interesting input device. It's a standard high-performance laser mouse with on-the-fly scaling between 400 and 2,000 DPI, but it's also equipped with three mini-joysticks that can be mapped to keyboard input. For example, you can set the one between the two mouse buttons to be WASD in a first-person shooter, freeing up that left hand for, er, "other things." True, it's hard to imagine any hardcore first-person shooter fan warming to a controller like this. Although the middle stick is in an ideal location for movement, it takes a lot of practice to use it with any precision with your middle finger while using your index finger to fire and ring finger on the right mouse button. The device works better with game actions that rely less on precise motion, like scrolling a map in a real-time strategy game or moving around in an MMO. It's also a decent choice for a game like *Grand Theft Auto San Andreas*, which switches between on-foot, driving, and flying. In any case, there's a learning curve here, and it's hard to say if the benefits are worth it. But if you're already overloading your left hand with keyboard shortcuts, getting more out of your right hand may not be a terrible idea. —SB



Spot Cool ANTEC/\$21.99 ★★★★★

Has it really come to this? Cooling is so important to all of your high-speed computer parts that Antec has seen fit to create this "spot cooler" called, er, the Spot Cool. It's a pretty nifty idea: a well-built, good-looking, nearly silent three-speed blue-illuminated fan attached to a bendable stalk that attaches to your motherboard mounts or any other screw in your case. In most systems, your RAM or chipset may be a good candidate for some "spot cooling." This isn't a permanent solution for someone with an overheating system, but it's a good way to target specific parts of your computer for additional cooling. —SB

