Readers' Drives
The Dark Knight

A long-time Batman fan, Ali Abbas converted a 19in server into this incredible-looking Dark Knight-themed case mod, which has been taking the German modding scene by storm

CPC: What was the original inspiration for the Dark Knight?

Ali Abbas: I still remember how I used to sing the Batman TV series theme song as a kid. Many years later, I really started noticing this antihero again, after he was reincarnated in the Dark Knight series of films, where he is dark, sinister and menacing. I like a dark, bad-ass look when it comes to PC mods, so the Dark Knight was a theme I just simply had to utilise in a build.

I contacted Warner Bros in Germany to get consent to use the name, and the folks there were really enthusiastic about what I was making; they were more than happy for it to be called The Dark Knight. They even sent me some Batman merchandise to go with my presentation at the DCMM case mod competition and the Schwabacher City Museum. I wanted to incorporate a lot of details, such as the Batsuit, but all painted in a menacing black matt. I thank AIXIT for the server inside the system, which was the final kick-off as far as the inspiring sleek and slim form is concerned.

CPC: What specs did you choose?

Ali Abbas: I was always sure that I didn't want to use a standard case for this build, and when AIXIT gave me a 1HU AIXIT-Dell PowerEdge 19in R300 server, my ideas just went haywire and I had a clear dynamic picture in my mind of the basic form. The server is based on a quad-core Xeon CPU with two Kingston HyperX 128 SDDs and 8GB of RAM. I also found a USB sound card that works fine with the server, so I integrated some speakers into the side guns too, which also enhance and amplify the sound of the stroboscopic gun effects.

As it was a server, rather than a standard PC, I had greater freedom to integrate my own self made Dark Knight-style elements on it. When you look closely at the case, you'll find accents, design elements and little secret gimmicks that can be found in various Batman and Dark Knight films.

CPC: What other mods have you built?

Ali Abbas: Being a practical artist and a very successful, passionate case modder has spurred me on to building over 28 mods now, as well as other smaller projects and inventions that can all be seen at the Schwabacher City Museum near Nürnberg in Germany. I want to use my handiwork skills to prove to the case-modding community that they can beat 3D printers, CAD, CNC and laser cuts – it's all a matter of your creativity and loving what you do.

CPC: What difficulties did you come across?

Ali Abbas: One of the biggest problems was keeping the 19in server vertically fixed. I eventually made a base for the excess wires and transformers that I planned to use, and the server stands vertically on this base. I turned the side guns (see the Batbike in The Dark Knight) into speaker cases, and wedged the 19in case in between them.

Also, even though the case has front and back covers, I still wanted to be able to unplug the covers and slide the server back out of the chassis, so I had to fix a plugging system between the covers and the case – that was a hell of a close-spaced chore.

CPC: What materials did you use?

Ali Abbas: You wouldn't believe some of the materials I used! I used an orange juice pulp tray on both sides for the Enermax fan covers, and I used the paper feeds from a broken paper shredder as front air inlets. I also used tap filters for the front bat eyes, which are based on the headlights of the Dark Knight

/MEET THY MAKER

Name Ali Abbas (Alan Lee)

Age 47

Location Schwabach, Germany

Occupation Self-employed IT service technician

Main uses for PC Online forums such as bit-tech, email, researching new ideas and themes to build

Likes Being creative, murdering restrictions and the diversity of unthought-of designs

Dislikes German folk music, the straightforward PC block form and criticism from non-creative, inexperienced people

SYSTEM SPECS

Foundation system AIXIT-Dell PowerEdge 19in R300 server

CPU 2.66GHz Intel quad-core Xeon

GPU On-board 32MB ATI ES1000

Memory 8GB Kingston HyperX

Motherboard Intel 3400 chipset

Storage 2 x 128GB Kingston HyperX SSDs

PSU 400W

Cooling 2 x Enermax 120mm Vegas Duo fans and 2 x Sanyo Dell 400mm fans