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Leo Laporte's 2004 Technology Almanac for February 2004: Games and Entertainment

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By [Leo Laporte](#), [Megan Morrone](#).
Sample Chapter is provided courtesy of [New Riders](#).
Date: Dec 12, 2003.

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Friday, February 13: Ultimate Gaming Machine 6.0

Roman Loyola

In case you're not familiar with the Ultimate Gaming Machine (UGM, for short—we pronounce it "ugh-um" on the show), it's a PC we've put together for the best gaming performance and experience.

Core Components

We didn't go for the most expensive, fastest parts. Instead, we considered price as well as performance. Here's a parts list:

- 1 **CPU:** AMD Athlon XP 2800 (<http://www.amd.com>)
- 1 **Motherboard:** Asus A7N8X (<http://www.asus.com>)
- 1 **RAM:** Corsair (<http://www.corsairmicro.com>) XMS 3500 DDR 433 MHz (two 512MB sticks)

Storage

Storage gets more affordable every day, so why hold back? What might seem gluttonous now will be the norm in six months.

- 1 **Hard drive:** Western Digital Caviar 200GB (<http://www.westerndigital.com>). A 7,200 rpm drive with an 8MB buffer. You have to partition it to properly use it.
- 1 **CD burner:** Lite-On LTR-52246S (<http://www.liteonit.com.tw>). The fastest CD burner in the world: 52X write, 24X rewrite, and 52X read speeds.
- 1 **DVD-ROM:** Toshiba SD-M1612 (<http://sdmswb01.config.toshiba.com>). 16x DVD playback.

Optional Hardware



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Although we didn't include the following items in UGM, we did consider them and had them in for benchmarking:

- 1 **Hard drive:** Fujitsu MAN3367MP (<http://www.buyfcpa.com>). A 36.7GB SCSI drive rated at 10,000 rpm.
- 1 **SCSI card:** Adaptec 29160 SCSI card (<http://www.adaptec.com>). A single-channel Ultra160 SCSI card that uses a 64-bit PCI interface. This is for our Fujitsu drive, plus future expansion options.

Sound and Input Devices

People often try to save money when buying these components. But because gaming is an interactive activity, it makes better sense to get good input devices and sound components. When sound draws you in and the controls work smoothly, you've got a great gaming experience.

We picked products that offer good price and performance. Picking input devices comes down to how they feel in your hands, so what's comfortable to us might not work for you.

- 1 **Mouse:** Logitech MX700 Cordless Optical Mouse (<http://www.logitech.com>). No dirty mouse ball or cable to slow us down.
- 1 **Keyboard:** Logitech Elite USB Keyboard (<http://www.logitech.com>). Instant access buttons for quick access.
- 1 **Joystick:** X45 digital joystick and throttle (<http://www.saitekusa.com>). For when we feel like flying.
- 1 **Gamepad:** Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad Pro (<http://www.microsoft.com>). It's comfortable and it looks cool.
- 1 **Sound card:** Turtle Beach Santa Cruz (<http://www.turtlebeach.com>). Offers six-speaker support.
- 1 **Speakers:** Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 (<http://www.klipsch.com>). These are the speakers we used with UGM 5.0. We liked them so much that we decided not to change them.

Video

The video card is a crucial component for the gaming PC's performance. Here's what we picked:

- 1 **Video card:** ATI Radeon 9700 Pro (<http://mirror.ati.com/products>). According to TechTV Labs, it's the fastest card on the market.
- 1 **Monitor:** Princeton Arcadia AR3.2FTX (<http://www.princetongraphics.com>). Combines XGA-computer compatibility, HDTV compatibility, and a built-in NTSC TV tuner in one monitor.

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