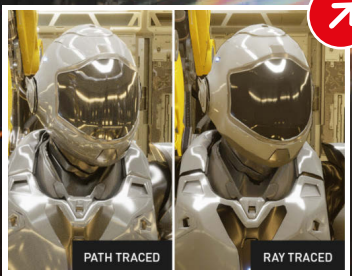
GIGAPIXEL

The bigger picture in games



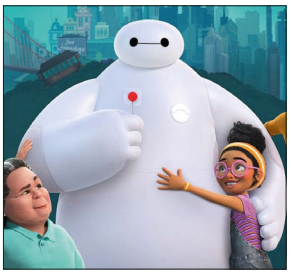
WHAT IS PATH TRACING?

Right then, what's the deal with path tracing? Think of it as ray tracing's brainy older sibling that went to art school. Instead of tracing a few light rays for shiny reflections, this tech traces the whole wild journey of countless rays as they bounce around a scene. It's been the secret sauce in CGI films for yonks, and now it's making games like Cyberpunk 2077 look spookily realistic by killing 'videogamey' shadows. The catch? It'll absolutely melt your GPU.



THE PERFORMANCE PUNCH

Be warned: this level of realism comes at a cost. Path tracing is a graphical beast that will absolutely gut your frame rate. It's in such an early stage that you'll need a seriously top-shelf GPU to make sense of the performance in current titles.



HOLLYWOOD TO YOUR HARD DRIVE

This tech isn't brand new; it's just new to gaming. Path tracing has been the secret ingredient in big-budget CGI movies and animations for years, used to generate incredibly realistic lighting and shadows that fool the eye.



A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Don't expect path tracing to be everywhere overnight. Ray tracing took a good decade to really catch on, and this more advanced method may have the same slow-burn fate. It's a tantalising glimpse of gaming's future, but one that's still a few years away from the mainstream.

A budget battler

Intel's GPU is here to shake up the mainstream market, but as we've found, its genius is maddeningly conditional.

₹28,890 / amazon.in



■ The model that landed in the Stuff labs was Intel's own Limited Edition, a gorgeous slab of minimalist tech that won't be for sale. Think stealth bomber, not souped-up boy racer. It's all matte black and clean lines, a sophisticated look.

■ The B580 is built on the new Xe2 architecture and TSMC's 5nm process. The headline spec that'll make your eyebrows do a little dance is the whopping 12GB of GDDR6 VRAM on a 192-bit bus. That's more memory than its main rival, the Nvidia RTX 5060.

A good mistake
The Arc B580 enters the ring with a disruptive ₹28,890-ish price tag and specs that look like a typo at first glance.

■ In the right conditions, the Arc B580 is an absolute giant-killer. At a 1440p resolution, it frequently matches or even outperforms the pricier RTX 5060. Our testing showed some properly impressive results. It's better because of the 12GB VRAM headroom.

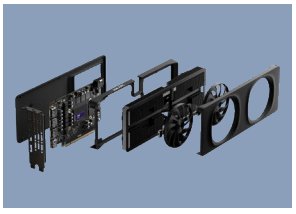
■ But at 1080p, things start to get even. It's abundantly clear that this card is for 1080p gaming and sometimes 1440p games, but for games that Intel has proper driver support. You don't get the maturity of Nvidia and AMD GPUs and their Ray Tracing and upscaling tech, but Intel is catching up fast.

Tech specs

Architecture Battlemage (Xe2-HPG) **Compute Units** 20 Xe-cores **GPU Clock** 2670 MHz **Memory** 12GB GDDR6 on a 192-bit interface **Total Board Power** 190W



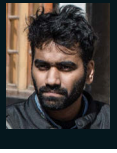
■ **Impressive indeed**
Doom: The Dark Ages at 1080p with Xess upscaling on Native resolution and Ultra Nightmare graphic preset, we got 60 FPS. I see that FPS can go higher in low demon density areas, but doesn't hit lower than 55!



■ **Fake frames are not here**
Cyberpunk 2077 and Black Myth Wukong show no frame rate uplift with Frame Generation enabled on Intel. Although Cyberpunk is one of the few titles where Intel performs much better with Xess.

STUFF SAYS A budget GPU that punches high, but only with modern CPU! ★★★★☆

This fits my budget, should I buy it?
khumailthakur



If you are building a brand-new gaming PC on a tight budget and pairing this card with a modern, mid-range CPU (think AMD Ryzen 9000 or Intel 13th or 14th-gen), then the B580 is a spectacular choice. For around ₹28,890, you're getting a card that chews through 1080p games, offers a generous 12GB of VRAM for the future, and even has thermal efficiency.

Are you a gaming fan?

This isn't just a phone that's good for games; it's a fully committed gaming phone with a fan inside it.



₹39,999 / oppo.com

■ Now, we've seen fans on phones before, but they've typically been chunky external accessories, like the ones for the Asus ROG Phone series. What Oppo has done here is cram the entire cooling system inside the main body. It's called the Storm Engine, and somehow, the whole contraption is fully IPX6, IPX8 and IPX9 waterproof.

■ The Storm Engine isn't just a gimmick; it's a miniature fan system with 0.1mm blades that spin up to 18,000rpm. It works with an L-shaped air duct and a massive 7000mm^2 vapour chamber to actively cool the processor. The result? In our testing, it genuinely works to keep the temperature down.

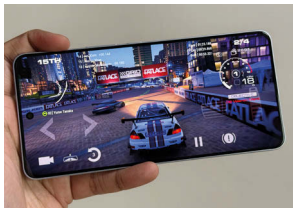
■ That clever design is inextricably linked to performance, because that little fan is directly responsible for keeping the Snapdragon 8s Gen 4 chipset cool under pressure. Firing up Grid Legends, the phone held a stable 30FPS at high settings without the chassis getting remotely toasty.

■ That's a good deal for anyone looking to spend all their waking hours gaming. The phone also packs some neat software and hardware tricks for gaming. Like the Bypass Charging that doesn't age your battery.



■ More room to play

A gaming phone is only as good as the window you stare into, and thankfully, Oppo hasn't skimped here. You're getting a huge 6.8-inch AMOLED panel that's flat as a tack, perfect for placing all your fingers.



■ Gamers take notice

You can hear the fan when it's at full tilt. It's not a jet engine, but if you're playing something like PUBG or CODM where audio cues are the difference between chicken dinner and digital death, you'll want to pop on TWS.

Tech specs

Display 6.8in 2800x1280 120Hz **Processor** Qualcomm Snapdragon7 Gen 4 **Memory** 8GB/12GB LPDDR5X **Camera** rear: 50+2MP, front: 16MP **Battery** 7000mAh **Weight** 208g

STUFF SAYS A genuinely cool phone that nails its gaming brief for hardcore fans ★★★★☆

Is this the best gaming phone?

khumailthakur



Oppo doesn't really break any new records in terms of benchmark scores or gaming performance; it's only the heat management aspect of it that brings value. By that I mean, you will only see the benefits of this fan once you've passed the 40 to 50-minute mark of gaming and are well into the thermal throttling zone, where the competition might drop in performance by a few FPS compared to this.



PS5, XSX, PC / mafia.2k.com

Mafia: The Old Country

Set on the idyllic Italian island of Sicily in 1904, this is a cinematic yarn that puts story and character first, and gameplay a distant second.

Some games are like a shot of cheap tequila, all frantic action and a nasty headache afterwards. Mafia: The Old Country is more like a bottle of table wine. It might not have the most sophisticated notes, and the finish can be a bit rough, but sink into the sofa with it, and you'll find a rich, story-driven experience that's worth savouring. It's a game that asks you to have the patience of a saint and the morals of, well, a mobster.

The game's opening is pure cinema, with sweeping shots of the Italian landscape that set a gorgeous, movie-esque tone for the 13-or-so-hour story to come. You fill the well-worn shoes of Enzo, a chap who escapes from a mine and lands squarely in the employ of a local Don. The pacing is, let's say, deliberate. You'll spend the early hours running errands and getting to know the family before you're even trusted with a shooter. This slow burn is intentional, letting you soak in the atmosphere and witness Enzo's gradual indoctrination into the family business. It's less of a power fantasy and more like being a fly on the wall of a Scorsese flick.

Where the game truly shines, however, is its cast. In over two decades of gaming, I've rarely encountered such a memorable crew of characters. From the brash Cesare to the villainous Il Merlo and the defiant Isabella, every character is distinct and brilliantly realised. A special mention has to go to Don Torrisi's voice actor, who delivers a phenomenal performance with an imposing presence in every scene he graces. The game's cutscenes are a masterclass in tension, often using silence, sharp dialogue, and clever camera angles rather than music to create gravitas, just like the mob movies of old.

Khumail Thakur

STUFF SAYS Memorable characters and atmosphere make up for gameplay ★★★★☆



"My friends think I should run towards you with a sawed-off shotgun"



Interior design so good, you wish your passport had a Schegen visa.





It's not all about the tailored suits

Be warned: this game is roughly 50% cutscenes, 40% gameplay, and 10% schmoozing your way from A to B. The moment-to-moment action is, frankly, a bit barebones. It's your standard third-person cover shooter, but the enemy AI is daft as a brush, often staring at walls and posing very little challenge. Stealth is equally bland; you toss a bottle, sneak up, and it's goodnight, wise guy.

The gunplay itself is a mixed bag. The firearms have a satisfying kick, but most feel identical, and the hit detection is wonky at best. You'll miss shots that are dead-on and land headshots by accident. The game does try to shake things up with knife fights, a unique addition that gives it a distinct identity away from the usual boss-battle bullet ballets.

Thankfully, getting around is more interesting. There's no distracting mini-map on your screen. Instead, the game uses charming red and white signposts at intersections to point you in the right direction. This is a brilliant, immersion-friendly touch. It's a good thing, too, because the cars handle like a wet bar of soap on a cheese grater.