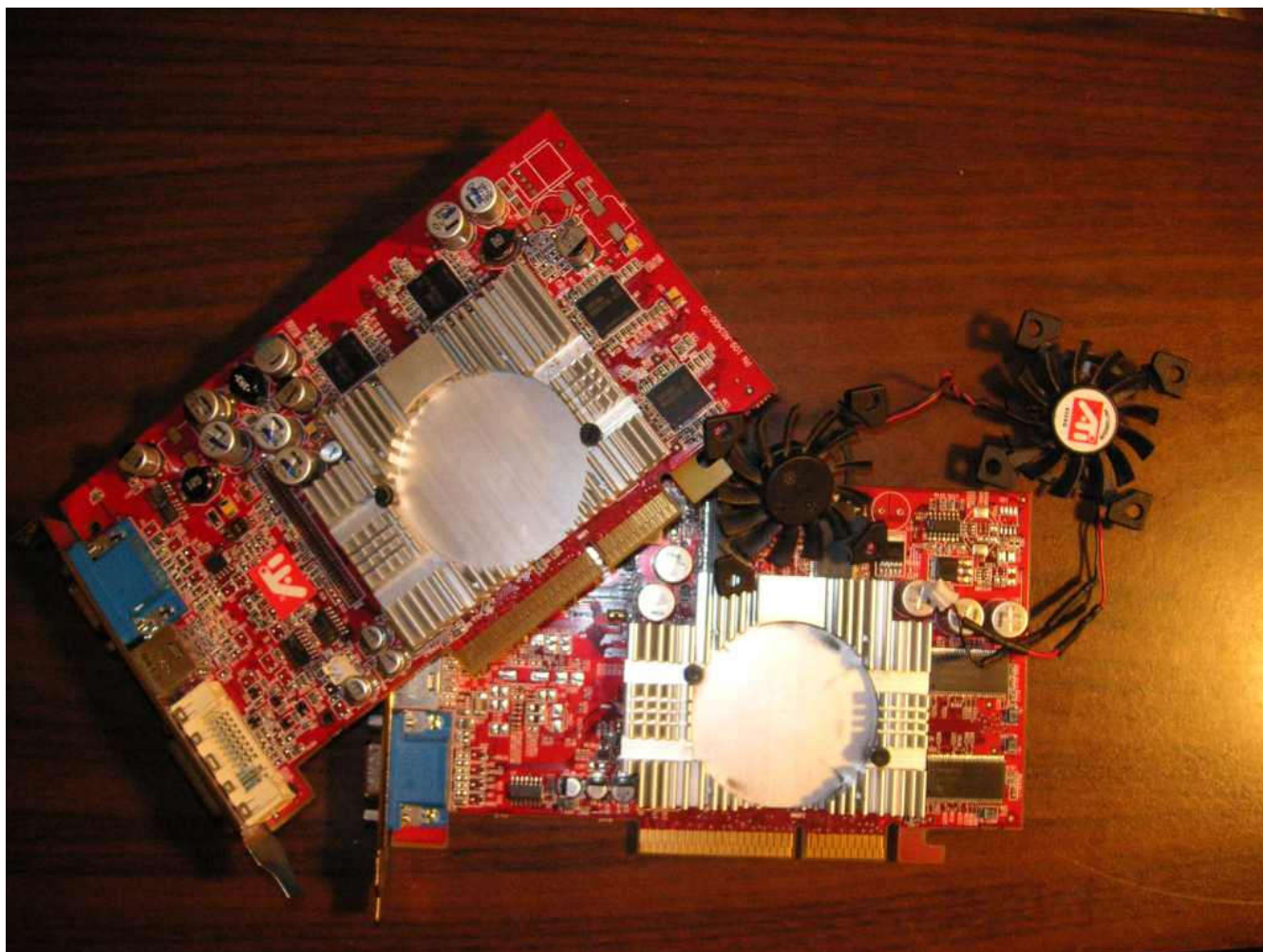




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## ATI 9600XT video card

**A cheeze alert, but not quite blatant incompetence with oak leaf cluster.**



A cheeze alert, but not quite blatant incompetence with oak leaf cluster, just your plain old everyday unserviceable consumer electronics crap.

OK, fans suck. In case you are a blithering idiot, you might also consider that batteries, radios, especially cell phones, and anything cheap and mechanical that wears out also sucks. Film at 11:00, live at 5:00. Bad enough this PC video card uses a fan.

Even a new fan is noisy. In my HTPC (home theater PC) I don't want any fans if possible. But fans are also the least reliable part on the card, followed by the electrolytic capacitors. So the fan in my ATI 9600 XT 256mb video card started making noise. That was a clustershuck of troubleshooting, since I did not realize the video card even had a fan. So I did all kinds of research about replacement fans for the Dell 8300 that the card is in.

I bought the whole PC for 150 bucks on Craigslist, and it has served pretty well to run the 46 inch Samsung and 47 inch Olevia I use as dual monitors when they are not being TVs. Good thing I opened up the PC before ordering a new case fan.

After seeing the rumbley grindey noise was not the case fan, I stuck a pen in the power supply fan. No, not there either. So I am going crazy, thinking it might be a noisy hard drive. A rubber hose held to my ear while moving the other end around inside the PC finally pinpoints the noise as being from the video card.

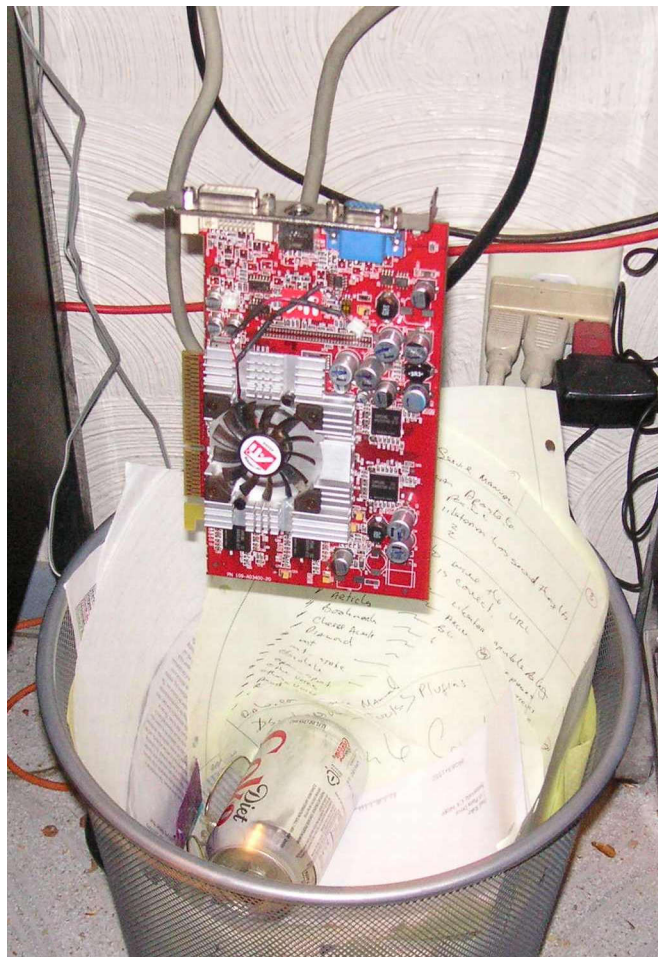
So I dread installing new video drivers, so I just buy a 128mb card on eBay for 23 bucks. Its fan is even worse. That would get ATI a normal incompetence cheeze alert. What gets them the blatant incompetence cheeze alert is that they had to design some goofy craptastic one-of-a-kind custom fan for the card.

Now this card is similar to the nVidia 6200. That card is great since it is a fast AGP bus card that has no fan. It makes a pretty good HTPC, but is not suitable for HD video on YouTube and such.

So I put the old fan back in my 256mb card and tossed the eBay card in the trash. I had to since in another world-class episode of incompetence, ATI used different pigtail lengths on the fans.

I had to splice an inch of wire into the fan I got off the eBay card, to get it to work with the 256mb card. So the eBay card goes into the trash, I don't even want to sell it at the eFlea, it would just screw the next guy in line.

Here is the card dropping into the garbage. That is where it and the mechanical engineers that designed it belong.



Now my conundrum. Do I switch to a nVidia 6200 with no fan? Or do I upgrade to a still-available brand new ATI HD 4650 card that has what looks like a nosier fan? Or do I get a big slab of aluminum and make a passive fanless heatsink for the ATI 9600XT? Or do I toss the whole PC in the trash and spend 400 bucks on a modern machine?

I am tempted to switch to the newer ATI card since it has HDCP and I could use the Blu-ray player that I bought for this PC last year. But putting in the new ATI card means new software, and it might suck so much power I would need a new power supply. Gosh I hate this crap. For lack of a three-dollar replacement part a couple hundred-thousand dollars of engineering goes in the trash. As Frank Zappa would say, "If there is a Hell, it waits for them."