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The Skulltrail, the only non-server platform to sport two processors  
Hot Hardware

## **Intel's Skulltrail Strikes Back Before the CES**

*Intel's platform lacks competition, as AMD will not release their FASN8 alternative*

Back in autumn, at the Intel Developer's Forum, Intel has announced that it is working on a dual processor platform. At that time, Skulltrail was more of a project than functional and Intel had to perform a few essential modifications. However, the platform proved solid enough to be shown off. Intel's Skulltrail platform is built using an Intel server-class motherboard dedicated to the enthusiast market. The motherboard can host two 45-nanometer quad-core processors, that would result in an eight-core "engine". The computing power is not the only feature worth mentioning: the motherboard is rigged with Nvidia's latest chips that allow SLI configurations as well. The platform's motherboard is an Intel D5400XS ATX, that feature active cooling for both the Southbridge and the dual NVIDIA nForce 100 MCP chips. The large fan-sink cooler covers the hot area and ensures an optimal airflow. Cooling is a crucial aspect when talking about a high-end system, and Intel knows that. The previous design was a little different: the motherboards had three smaller coolers covering the Southbridge and the two NVIDIA nForce 100 MCP chips. The motherboard features four PCI Express x16 slots and dual standard PCI slots, so there's plenty of room for Nvidia's graphics cards. The motherboard also supports Tri-SLI links for increased graphics computing power. The Northbridge is cooled with aluminum heatsinks, as well as some of the components around both LGA771 Xeon CPU sockets. The motherboard sports six SATA connectors and a single IDE port, with headers for additional USB and Firewire ports. The legacy connectors (LPT, COM and PS/2) have been stripped down and replaced with six USB 2.0 ports and two eSATA connectors. The rear panel also features a single FireWire port and Gigabit Ethernet jacks, along with analog and digital HD audio inputs/outputs. These are the first rock-solid details to emerge about Intel's Skulltrail platform. More goodies are expected to follow the Consumer Electronics Show, that will take place in Las Vegas starting January the 7th.