386DX/33 PCs

The 386DX PCs that met the requirements for the PC/Computing 200 are 33MHz desktop
ISA machines with at least 4MB of RAM, a 64K cache, an 80MB or larger IDE drive, and graphics
circuitry (motherboard or card-based) capable of displaying at least 800-by-60-pixel
resolution with 16 colors. All the systems have six expansion slots free with video, hard disk,
and I/O cards installed.

Product

386/33C
Gateway 2000
610 Gateway Dr.
N. Sioux City, SD 57049
(800) 523-2000
(605) 232-2000
Price: $1,695

ACT 386/33c
Automated Computer Technology Corp.
10849 Kinghurst
Houston, TX 77099
(800) 521-9237
(713) 568-1778
Price: $1,770slot.

386DX/33
Zeos International
530 5th Ave. NW
St. Paul, MN 55112
(800) 423-5891
(612) 633-5877
Price: $2,345

CSS Preferred 333GA
CSS Laboratories
1641 McGaw Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 852-8161
Price: $2,278

386/33 Cache
PC Brand system.
405 Science Dr.
Moorpark, CA 93021
(800) 722-7263
(805) 523-0340
Price: $1,863

Altec 386/33 Cache
Altec Technology Corp.
18555 E. Gale Ave.
Industry, CA 91748
(800) 255-9971
(818) 912-8688
Price: $1,550

Austin 386/33U WinStation
Austin Computer Systems
10300 Metric Blvd.
Austin, TX 78758
(800) 545-6037
(512) 339-3500
Price: $1,645

Tempo 386/33
Everex Systems
48431 Milmont Dr.
Fremont, CA 94538
(800) 992-3839
(510) 498-1111
Price: $3,077

ME 386-33
Micro Express
1801 Carnegie Ave.
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(800) 989-9900
(714) 852-1400
Price: $1,739

Model 333C
BitWise Designs
Building 50
Rotterdam Industrial Park
Schenectady, NY 12306
(800) 367-5906
(518) 356-9740
Price: $1,625

Evaluation	Score
Our top 386DX/33 is Gateway's 386/33Cit offers fine performance and expandability at a decent price. For $1,695, you get a fast Western Digital 81MB IDE drive, 4MB of RAM (expandable to 32MB), a Diamond SpeedStar Super VGA card with 1MB of RAM, and six free 16-bit ISA slots after the video and I/O cards are installed. The system's generous design makes it easy to upgrade memory and storage devices. The system also offers an excellent programmable keyboard and great documentation.	87.70
A bargain at $1,770, ACT's 386/33c PC turned in better-than-average performance in disk, memory, and graphics speed, and it offers plenty of extras. You can replace its hard disk and floppy drives without so much as picking up a screwdriverjust snap off the front panel and pop the drives from their bays. One of its eight slots is a 32-bit proprietary slot for the PC's 32-bit memory board, but it can also be used as an 8- or a 16-bit The Fujitsu keyboard comes with a wrist rest.	85.90
Zeos's upgradable 386DX/33 came equipped with 4MB of RAM, a 128K cache, and a 1,024-by-768 Diamond SpeedStar card with 1MB of RAM. Graphics and CPU/memory performance were predictably good, but the Zeos's 130MB Seagate IDE drive slowed things down. You can always order a faster hard disk, though, and you'll have trouble beating this machine's roomy, expandable design. Replacing its CPU, memory, and storage devices is a cinch.	82.40
The CSS led the pack in graphics performanceno other system matched its proprietary local-bus graphics design. The 333GA's S3-based MaxGraphics card plugs into a proprietary 32-bit slot and runs at roughly the same 33MHz speed of the PC's processor. Equipped with 1MB of RAM, the card displays resolutions of up to 1,280 by 960 pixels. The system lost points for a shoddy keyboard and so-so Conner 116MB IDE hard disk, but if graphics is your bag, check it out.	81.40
CPU upgradability is a fine art with the PC Brand 386/33 Cache Swapping the CPU and hard disk is outrageously easy: Just slide the Nintendo-style cartridges that enclose the components out the front panel and pop new ones in. That's the real attraction of this system. Its hard disk, graphics, and memory performance were respectable but not exceptional. The price is right, though, and the system had six free slots with its Orchid ProDesigner II card installed.	80.90

The Altec PC was an impressive performer: Its memory speed was   80.40
sterling, the 122MB IDE Quantum ProDrive with 256K cache was one of the
fastest drives we tested, and the 1MB Diamond SpeedStar Super VGA card
was no slouch, either. Another plus was its roomy design and expandability
potential: The system has eight slots, including a proprietary 32-bit slot for
a memory card that doubles as a regular ISA slot. If there's a catch, it's
the incomplete documentation.

Though it had the fastest hard disk of any system we tested (a 130MB   80.20
Maxtor IDE with a 64K cache), the Austin 386/33U WinStation had the
slowest graphics under Windows. Replace its sluggish Diamond Turbo 1MB
video card with something more capable, however, and you'll actually get
the fast Windows system the PC's name promises. Memory performance
was first-rate; you can easily replace memory and storage devices. You can
replace the CPU, too, though the system makes you reset a jumper for CPU
speed changes.

The Everex Tempo, with 4MB of RAM and a 128K cache, earned top   79.3
CPU and memory scores. It took us less than four minutes to swap out and
replace the CPU (no setup or jumper setting necessary) and sliding its floppy
and hard drives out the front panel was super easy, too. But even so, the
$3,077 Tempo is overpriced: Its 131MB Seagate IDE drive was just average,
and its integrated graphics circuitry (up to 1,280-by-1,024 resolution, but
only 512K of video memory onboard) doesn't justify this premium price.

The fast, sturdy ME 386-33 arrived with 4MB of RAM and a 256K   78.60
cache. Its Quantum ProDrive 120MB IDE drive (also with 256K cache) was
a fine performer, though you might want to replace its 1MB VGA Multimate
card for graphics-intensive work. Six of its eight slots were free after the
I/O and video cards were installed. The system we evaluated, however,
had a snag: Its low-radiation TVM monitor performed poorly at times, and docu-
mentation was below par.

Price is the key reason to look into BitWise Designs' Model 333C   76.30
but if you buy it, make sure you use the money you've saved to replace its
sluggish IDE drive. The coprocessor socket was easily accessible, and the
system's memory scores were impressive. The Model 333C is fine for the
money, but the planning and design behind it could use improvement. The
system suffered from poor documentation and badly labeled parts and
connectors.