news

Think thin, display more

If you were wondering how IBM was going to follow up the Thinkpad 701 – the one with the nifty expanding keyboard – the answer is soon to be revealed.

At the end of May, IBM is announcing the new Thinkpad 560 and, although it has a more conventional keyboard, in its own way it is even more innovative.

Weighing in at just over four pounds, it can be bought with a staggering 12.1in TFT display or, if you're paying for it yourself, an equally impressive dual-scan alternative. As if the lid-filling screen wasn't enough to draw attention to IBM's new baby, there's the extremely thin design. The Thinkpad 560 is only 3.1cm thick – just slightly thinner than Bill Gates' wallet.
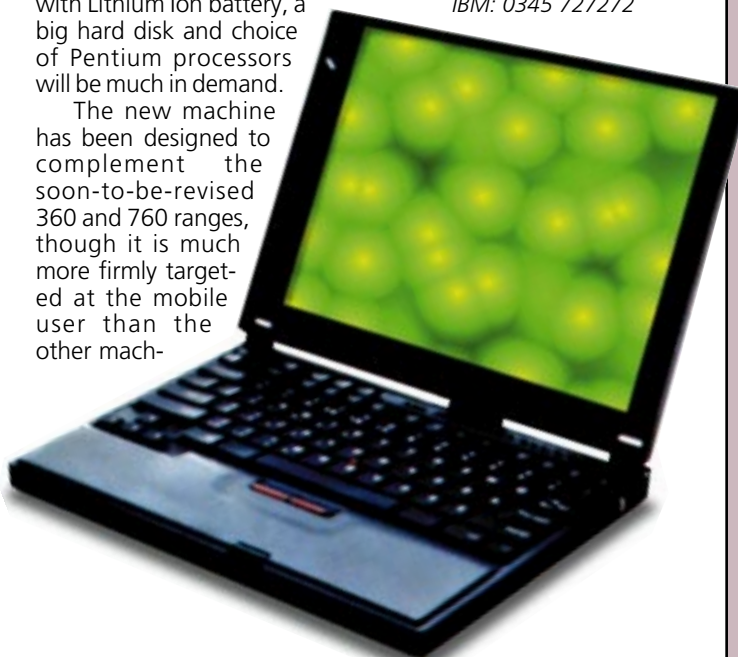
IBM is aiming for a price span of $3,000 to $4,000 in the US, though firm figures have yet to be announced. At prices like these, the new 560 with Lithium Ion battery, a big hard disk and choice of Pentium processors will be much in demand.

The new machine has been designed to complement the soon-to-be-revised 360 and 760 ranges, though it is much more firmly targeted at the mobile user than the other machines, which IBM sees as desktop equivalents.

IBM: 0345 727272

Macs run in Legoland

The connection between Apple Computers and the Lego company may not be self-evident. However, in Lego's new theme park, there's a roomful of Apple Macintosh Performa computers for children to play with.

The 35 Macintosh Performa computers are housed in the Imagination Centre of the Lego Dacta pavilion, running programs specially developed by the Lego group. These programs allow children to design their Lego creations on screen, manipulate them, and test their designs before building them with real bricks.

And if you still can't see the connection between Apple and Lego; it's that both are dedicated to inspiration and creativity. Legoland opened at the end of March, charged with a mission to both educate and entertain, and the 150-acre park at Windsor is dedicated to 'the imagination and creativity of children and their families'.

If nothing else, the computers in the Dacta Pavilion will give everybody something to do when it rains.
Apple: 0800 127753

Every other UK business is PC-less

Only 45 percent of companies in the UK use computers, according to the latest Banner survey.

It's mostly small businesses (one to 49 employees) which account for this low figure. Penetration in large organisations (50 or more employees) is 97 percent, with the public sector, unsurprisingly perhaps, 100 percent computerised.

As far as the Internet is concerned, the survey revealed that 22 percent of businesses are on line. Of those, 76 percent use the Internet for electronic mail, 65 percent for accessing the Worldwide Web, 43 percent for publishing their own company information, 41 percent for job-related services, and just 21 percent for fun or recreational activities.

Multimedia is on the increase: 36 percent of business users now have CD-Rom drives, 20 percent have sound cards, and eight percent use video.
Banner: 0171 351 4488

Two new arrivals in MT's T9000 family

Mannesmann Tally has announced two additions to its T9000 laser printer series.

Both the T9108 and T9208 use the Windows Printing System to simplify installation, and have a claimed 8ppm print speed and 600dpi resolution. The T9108 is available now, priced at £527.58, with the T9208 to follow shortly.

Meanwhile price cuts abound, with Canon, Epson and Star announcing reductions on popular models.

Canon's BJ30 mono and BJC70 colour inkjet printers have been cut by £35.25 and £48 to £198.58 and £303.33 respectively.

Star has reduced its flag-ship Wintype 4000 laser print-er by £94 to £374.83, while Epson's 720dpi Stylus Color II has dropped by £27.03 to £371.30.

Elsewhere in the printer market, Apple has unveiled two new colour inkjets for Macintosh users. The Style-writer 1500 and the faster 2500 both offer good-quality colour printing at low cost. They're available now, with street prices expected to be around £280 and £360 respectively.

MT: 0800 525318
Star Micronics: 01494 471111
Canon: 0181 773 6000
Epson: 01442 61144
Apple: 0181 569 1199

Adobe fixes the picture

Photodeluxe 1.0 is the latest addition to Adobe's range of image-editing software.

Aimed at home and small business users, Photodeluxe is an entry-level photo enhance-ment application. It features a simple interface and built-in templates that guide users through the process of modi-fying and enhancing digital photographs.

Although Photodeluxe has features usually found on high-end applications, its step-by-step approach takes some of the guesswork out of image manipulation. The pro-gram offers two modes of working – 'Guided Activ-ities' and 'On Your Own'. Guided activities takes users through a task from opening the original file to saving and printing.

Tasks include customising a greetings card with photos and clip-art, creating personalised calen-dars, and removing dust and scratches from old photos.

Photodeluxe is avail-able for Windows and the Mac and costs £88.13 (incl VAT).
Adobe:0131 451 6888

Strata creates multimedia design duo

Two multimedia design tools for Windows 95 and the Mac have been launched by Strata.

Mediaforge 2 allows des-igners to create multimedia projects using drag-and-drop techniques. The program can be used in conjunction with the Worldwide Web, and comes with its own browser. Perform-ance features include 32-bit authoring, sequential or event-driven execution, OLE support and multi-threading. Mediafor-ge 2 costs £995 plus VAT (the same as Macromedia Director 5), with a three-month intro-ductory price of £595 plus VAT.

Also available is Strata Med-iapaint 1 for Windows, a new digital video effects generator. According to Strata, unique features are its plug-in, time-based particle tools. Put simply, the artist draws a path where the effect is to take place. Med-iapaint then controls the speed, density, and other variables which allow the effect to appear over a series of frames. Time-based effects incl-ude lightning, fireworks, and bubbles. It costs £449 plus VAT.
Principal Distribution: 01706 832000

Tekdata, Aztech and Teac have all announced eight-speed CD-Rom drives this month, each offering data trans-fer rates of up to 1200 Kb/s.

Tekdata's 8Plex is an internal Scsi CD-Rom drive with an access time of 115 milliseconds and an on-board 256Kb buffer. The drive is available as both an internal and external model, for £410.75 and £515.83 respectively (both prices inclusive of VAT). Aztech's new eight-speed drive, the 8X, is an internal IDE model with an access time of 195 milliseconds. It costs £128.08 (incl VAT).

The Teac CD-58E is also an internal IDE drive with a 128Kb buffer and an average access time of 140 milliseconds. It costs £198.58 (including VAT).
Tekdata: 01782 577677
Aztech: 01734 814121
Teac: 01923 225235

Scala is a hybrid piece of graphics software for presenting information using a PC. Given that there's no shortage of presentation graphics software and all the major suites include decent examples, a company converting an Amiga program to the PC and charg-ing £149 for it must feel it has something special to offer.

In this case, it's the combination of video and multimedia features, with an easy-to-use scripting language that does not require any programming expertise. This allows you to move beyond mere presentations and into interactive demonstra-tions and tutorials. Look out for our forthcoming review.
Scala Computer Television: 01920 484811

Primax and **Microtek** have announced two new scanners aimed firmly at the desktop market.

The Compact 4800 from Primax is little bigger than the A4 sheet it scans and comes with its own Scsi-type interface card, as well as software for image editing and text recognition. At £369.99 (incl VAT), it offers interpolated resolutions up to 4,800 dpi – the same as the Scanmaker E6 from Computers Unlimited.

The Scanmaker costs £469 (incl VAT) but does offer 30-bit colour as against the Primax's 24-bit, and also comes with an Adaptec Scsi controller, providing connections to up to six other Scsi devices.
Primax : 01235 559922
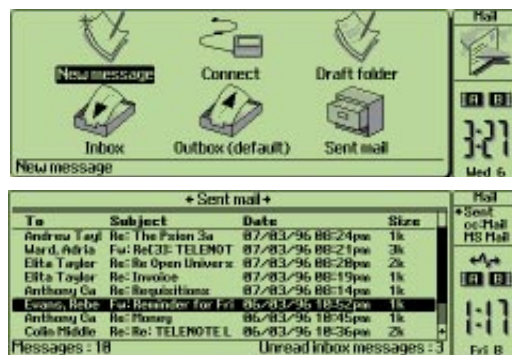*Computers Unlimited: 0181 200 8282*

Psion delivers e-mail to 3a

Psimail is the new electronic-mail package for Psion's Series 3a pocket computer.

It consists of 'client' software for the Series 3a itself, and a 'gateway' application which runs on a PC connected to the company network.

The gateway uses Mapi (mail application programming interface) to communicate with the company's host e-mail system. It also converts e-mail attachments (word-processor documents and spreadsheets) between Psion native formats and the most popular PC package, designed to help with the diagnosis of the condition.

to MS Mail or cc:Mail systems, in-box and out-box management, personal address books, and a save draft message option. Language variants, including French, German, and Dutch are due in the summer. Also, an Internet version of Psimail is scheduled for release this autumn.

The price for the gateway software will be around £150; a five-user licence for the client software approximately £375.

Other features include remote dial-up or direct access ages (Word, MS Works, Wordperfect, Lotus 1-2-3, Quattro Pro, and Excel). Preview and filter options are provided with Psimail.

Psion: 0171 262 5580

CD guides provide medical assistance

Corel has launched an interactive guide to epilepsy.

It's the first in a series of medical CD-Roms, aimed at everyone from medical professionals to patients, their families, and the public.

'Epilepsy' includes detailed reference text on the illness, together with some rather disturbing video foot-
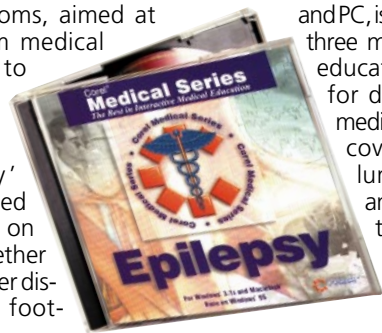
The series, available for Mac and PC, is divided into three main groups: educational titles for doctors and medical students cover curriculum teaching and speciality topics; while nursing education titles cover critical and palliative care, as well as parenting, breast feeding, and so on. There's also a range aimed at paramedic and first-aid training, based on the complete set of St John's Ambulance courses.

Speciality titles planned include Child Care, The Amputee, Aids and the Public, an Illustrated History of Medicine, and Everyone's Guide to Cancer Therapy. Each should cost £19.99 plus VAT.

Corel: 0800 581028

AMD hits Pentiums with a cheaper chip

AMD is finally shipping its new Pentium substitute processor, the 5K86, which is a plug-in replacement for Intel's Pentium processor.

Stories about this chip, which was originally known as the K5, have been circulating for ages. Now the 5K86 is available, computer builders will be able to shave up to £50 off the cost of an equivalent Pentium machine.

Currently, the chip is available in 75MHz and 90MHz versions, which won't worry Intel as it seems to be pushing 100MHz chips as the new entry level. It's likely that AMD will follow its usual course of mopping up the market after Intel.

System builders such as Panther already have machines featuring the new chips, which have been licensed by Microsoft to carry the Windows 95 logo.

AMD: 01483 740440

High-spec notebooks from Twinhead and TI

Two new high-spec notebooks have been launched by Texas Instruments and Twinhead.

Texas Instruments' Travelmate 5300 is based on a 133MHz Pentium processor and comes with 8Mb of Ram and a 1.2Gb hard disk as standard. The 11.3in active-matrix display is capable of 800x600 resolution and integrated 16-bit sound, internal speaker and microphone are also supplied. It costs £4,694.13 (incl VAT).

Twinhead's Slimnote 8 TV uses a 120MHz Pentium processor and also has an 11.3in SVGA active-matrix screen. It has 16Mb of Ram, a 1.2Gb hard disk, integrated 16-bit sound and touch-pad pointing device. Infra-red and TV ports are included as standard. It costs £4,447.38 (incl VAT).

TI: 0181 875 0044
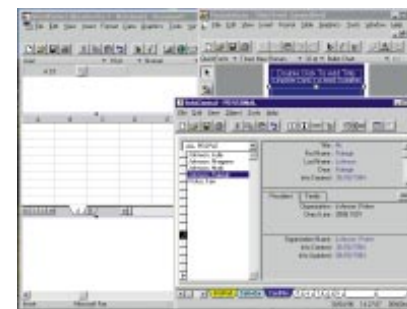*Twinhead: 01256 56066*

Corel unveils new suites

After its recent acquisition of the Wordperfect family of software products, Corel has launched several new office suites.

The Corel Wordperfect Suite is an integrated suite of Windows 3.1 applications, comprising the Wordperfect 6.1 word processor, Quattro Pro 6.0 spreadsheet, Presentations 3.0 presentation tool, Envoy portable document packager, and Corelflow 2, which is used for flowcharting.

Corel is also bundling some of its screensavers, fonts and clip-art along with, interestingly, a copy of Netscape's Navigator and Starfish Software's Sidekick and Dashboard. It is available now on CD or disc with a suggested retail price of £264.38. The disc version comes with a CD that contains the bundled extras.

For users who also require a database, Corel has released Office Professional. This contains the same applications as the Wordperfect Suite, but with the additions of Paradox (the database popular with developers), Infocentral (an unusual personal information manager) and Groupwise – a collection of groupware utilities.

Also on the cards from Corel are standalone versions of Quattro Pro 6.0 and Presentations 6.0, both at a suggested price of £92.83.

Windows 95 versions of all the products will follow shortly.
Corel: 0800 973189

AST's Pentium-powered Advantage

AST has updated its Advantage range of desktop PCs.

AST, who recently overtook Compaq as the UK's number two retail vendor, is aiming the range at customers who don't want to sacrifice performance for the sake of cost.

All machines in the Advantage range have a Pentium processor, CD-Rom drive and built-in 16-bit sound. Bundled software includes MS Works 4, Quicken 4 and a selection of games.

Prices for the new PCs start at £1,299 (incl VAT) for the entry-level 612E. This is a Pentium 75, with 8Mb of Ram, a 1.2Gb hard disk, quad-speed CD and 14in monitor.

The top-of-the-range 824 Advantage costs £2,199, has a Pentium 133 processor, 16Mb of Ram, 15in monitor, a 1,6Gb hard disk and six-speed, three-disc CD-Rom drive.
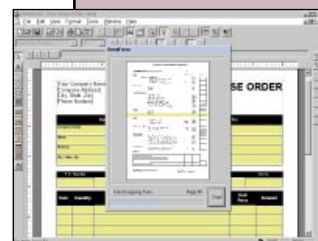

AST: 0990 611611

Onyx Associates' latest device could put an end to the rather messy business of refilling inkjet cartridges.

The PMS Autofill is a microprocessor-controlled refilling system for HP Deskjet 500 and 600 cartridges that completely automates the refilling process.

Empty cartridges are inserted into the mains-powered Autofill, which then detects the amount of ink needed and dispenses the appropriate amount. The £117.44 (incl VAT) unit is guaranteed for 150 refills and is completely sealed when in use, preventing those table-top ink slicks that can result from using the traditional ink-filled syringe method of refilling.

Onyx Associates: 0800 393132

Caere and **Xerox** have this month launched two new OCR (optical character recognition) applications.

Caere's Omniform uses OCR to convert existing paper forms into electronic format. The £269 (including VAT) program will take a scanned image of a form, identify the text and any formatting and produce an on-screen form, complete with fields for data entry.

Textbridge Pro 96 is the latest version of Xerox's successful OCR package. New features in the £410 (incl VAT) package include native support for Windows 95 and the ability to scan documents directly into the HTML editor, HotmetaL light.
Caere UK: 0171 222 3200
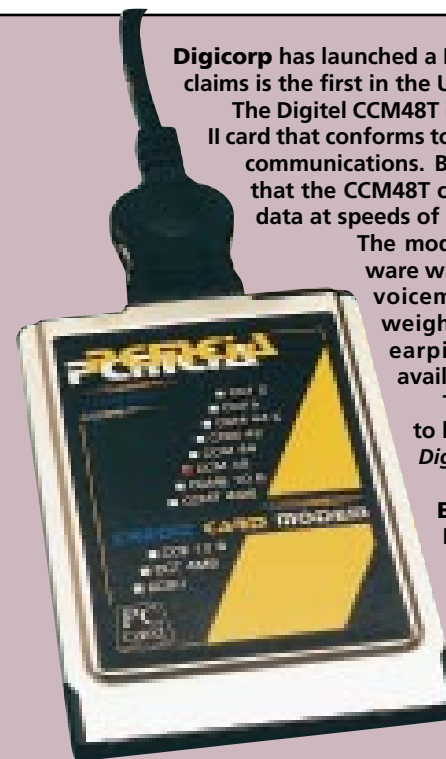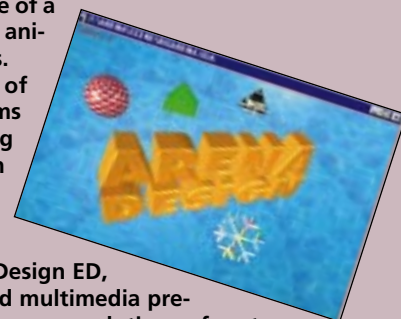*Xerox Desktop Document Systems: 01734 668421*

LTS has announced the release of a three-dimensional design and animation program for Windows.

By making two versions of Arena Design available, LTS aims to bring advanced 3D modelling and animation within the reach of home users, as well as catering for the more traditional professional markets.

The basic version, Arena Design ED, allows you to create animated multimedia presentations in 256 colours in screen resolutions of up to 320x200. Arena Design ST adds the ability to produce raytraced animations in 16-million colours, and in any size or resolution (hardware permitting).

Both versions are available now, in CD format only, priced at £57.58 and £139.83 respectively.
LTS: 01386 792617

Digicorp has launched a PCMCIA fax modem that it claims is the first in the UK to have voice facilities.

The Digitel CCM48T is a standard PCMCIA Type II card that conforms to the v34 standard for data communications. Being v34 standard means that the CCM48T can transfer uncompressed data at speeds of up to 28,800bps.

The modem is supplied with software which allows you to set up a voicemail system, and a lightweight headset (consisting of earpiece and microphone) is available as an option.

The retail price is expected to be around £210.
Digicorp: 01372 644151

Europress has released Mini Office Tax Return '96. This is in response to the Inland Revenue's 1996/97 changeover to the self-assessment tax system.

Coupled with tutorials and the friendly Mini Office interface, Tax Return '96 promises to ease the transition to the unfamiliar self-assessment system.

Once completed, your tax return can be printed in a format which will be accepted by the Inland Revenue, and you can convert it into spreadsheets for further analysis.

Tax Return '96 is available now with a recommended retail price of £19.99. The minimum requirements for running the software are a 486SX/25, 8Mb of Ram and Windows 95.
Europress: 01625 859333

Sareen's workgroup software, Officetalk, can be downloaded in trial version format from its Web site.

Sareen's claim that Officetalk outperforms Lotus Organizer and Microsoft Schedule Plus may be unsubstantiated, but it won't cost you anything to find out.

Officetalk can be downloaded from http://www.sareen.com. It is enabled for up to a hundred users (for 60 days), and includes free support during the evaluation period. If you decide to buy into the full system it costs £50 per user. Under the terms of the trial the first user is free, or you can choose to have a free single-user licence.
Sareen Software: 0181 423 9434

Softkey has launched Infopedia UK for £39.99 (RRP incl VAT). The CD includes Hutchinson's New Century Encyclopaedia, Longman Dictionary of the English Language, Hammond World Atlas, Bloomsbury Thesaurus and Dictionary of Quotations.
Softkey: 0181 789 2000

BT sees it's good to surf

A fresh crop of Internet service providers offers newcomers yet more ways of getting on line.

BT has jumped on the surfing bandwagon and is now offering an Internet service. For those who haven't got a modem, you can buy a package containing a fast 28.8Kbps modem and all the software you need for £205 (incl VAT). Monthly access is from £12.50 if you pay annually in advance.

If you live in the wilds, one advantage of BT's service is that users connect at local-call rates using a BT Lo-call number.

Another company, Zoo Internet, is promising its members that they will never find the service over-subscribed. With 85 virtual access points from Corn-

wall to Inverness, it offers connection at local rates for 90 per cent of the population. Unlimited access with two e-mail addresses is £14.50 per month.

Aviators Network has extended its aviation-specific service to other users for under £10 a month, paid yearly in advance.

For access to the *Daily Mirror* and *Independent*, you'll need to join America Online, as both papers have just signed up.
BT Internet: 0800 800001
Zoo Internet: 0181 961 7000
Aviators Network: 01727 868468
America Online: 0800 2791234

'Time for bed' said the clock on the PC

Parents concerned about their children's use of the home PC will no doubt be interested in 'Time's Up'.

The program, from the Fresh Software Company, is designed to place limits on a PC's usage. With it, it is possible to place a time limit on an individual application which, once expired, prevents them from being used further.

Each user of the computer is issued with a user name that dictates their level of access. All applications, including

games, can have a time limit placed on then and, when it is about to expire, advance warning is given so that any work can be saved. Should the warnings be ignored, the application is then terminated.

The program is not supervisory software and cannot be used to censor applications that may have violent or adult content, but it can monitor an application's use and provides a detailed report for each user.
Roderick Manhattan Group:
0181 875 4411

ALPS has announced a 4x4 CD-Rom autochanger for £262.03 (incl VAT). The quad-speed internal drive stores four discs in a magazine and changes them as required.
ALPS: 01344 873853

Formula Solutions is offering to convert company logos into Truetype fonts. The service, which starts from £200, will provide users with a logo that can be resized and used in any document.
Formula Solutions: 0181 252 4444

Apple Powerbook 5300c and 5300cs users are to receive free system software upgrades. The offer applies to all registered users who will automatically receive CD-Roms, but if you don't have a CD drive, for floppy disks you can call *0800 127753*

PlanIT letters provides ready-made, editable versions of UK-style business and personal letters. Once created, letters can be printed or pasted into a full word processor for further editing. The program costs £45.83 including VAT.
Roderick Manhattan: 0181 875 4444

Nildram's Screen Thief, the Dos screen grabber that became a Windows product, is now available in a new Windows 95 version. Screen Thief costs £23.44 including VAT, though a shareware copy can be downloaded from the Web: *www.nildram.co.uk.*
Nildram: 01442 891331

The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group is offering home and small business PC users specialist insurance cover on computer equipment. If you are interested in further details, contact your local insurance broker.

Top 20 software packages according to Romtec figures

Position	Package	Publisher/supplier	Type	Last month
1	Office v4.2 Standard	Microsoft	Office suite	2
2	PK Zip Dos	Atlantic Coast	Utility	4
3	Windows 95 Upgrade	Microsoft	Add-on	1
4	Office v4.3 Professional	Microsoft	Office suite	3
5	WFWG 3.11	Microsoft	Groupware	8
6	Dos Upgrade	Microsoft	Operating system	10
7	cc: Mail for Windows	Lotus	Groupware	6
8	WFWG Upgrade	Microsoft	Add-on	–
9	Word v6 for Windows	Microsoft	Word processor	13
10	Organizer v2 for Windows	Lotus	PIM	14
11	Smartsuite v3/4 for Windows	Lotus	Office suite	11
12	Office v4.2 Standard Upgrade	Microsoft	Add-on	–
13	Windows 3.x Upgrade	Microsoft	Add-on	–
14	Project v4 for Windows	Microsoft	Project manager	12
15	Plus for Windows 95	Microsoft	Add-on	–
16	Wordperfect v6 for Windows	Novell	Word processor	17
17	Access v2 for Windows	Microsoft	Database	20
18	Notes for Windows	Lotus	Groupware	15
19	Office v7 Standard	Microsoft	Office suite	7
20	Anti Virus for Windows	S&S International	Anti-virus	–

Figures for February 1996, source Romtec. Business application and desktop operating systems unit sales only, OEM sales excluded.
Romtec figures are calculated by grossing up sales from resellers. If you are interested in joining Romtec's Reseller Panel and finding out how as a reseller you can benefit, call direct on: 01628 414013.