

233MHz MMXs arrive

Leading PC makers have announced the first machines based on Intel's latest 233MHz Pentium MMX processor.

Apricot, Carrera and Tiny are among the first to launch systems using the fastest version of the Pentium processor to date.

Aimed at the home user, yet carrying a relatively heavy price tag, the new Apricot sits at the top of its MS660 range.

The machine comes with 32Mb of memory, a whopping 4.3Gb hard disk, a Sony 16-speed CD-ROM drive, V34 voice/fax/data modem and choice of monitors. Prices start at around £2,175.

Tiny is using the 233MHz

MMX chips in its Professional range. For £1,761 the 233 Office System has 32Mb of memory, a 3.5Gb hard disk, 12x CD-ROM, 15in monitor, 4Mb graphics card, wavetable sound and a fax modem.

Carrera's standard Power Media 233 also costs £1,761,

with a smaller 3.2Gb hard disk, larger 17in iiyama monitor, a 2Mb Matrox Mystique graphics card, 12x CD-ROM and 16-bit sound card.

Apricot (Mitsubishi Electric): 0121 717 7171

Carrera: 0171 830 0586

Tiny: 01293 821333



Windows 98 – probably

Microsoft has inadvertently let the cat out of the bag over the naming of the next version of its Windows operating system. Code-named Memphis (see our July issue), Windows 95's replacement will almost certainly be called Windows 98.

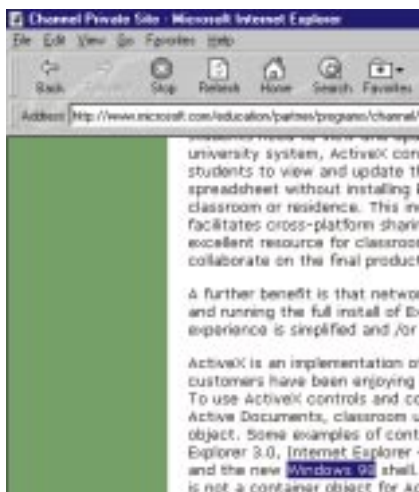
The first clues come from Microsoft's publishing arm, Microsoft Press, which has apparently printed a number of developer catalogues whose titles include: *Windows 98 Resource Kit*, *Getting Started with Windows 98* and *Windows 98 Step by Step*.

We also uncovered more evidence buried in the murky depths of Microsoft's Internet Web site, where a solitary mention of 'Windows 98' can be found (see our

screenshot below).

A source close to Microsoft would not deny our findings and, when pressed on the likelihood of Windows 98 being the commercial title of Memphis, said: 'I don't think you'll be far wrong with that.'

Microsoft: 0345 002000



Microsoft invests in Cambridge lab

Cambridge is set to benefit from a £50 million investment from Microsoft, which is to establish a research lab in the city's university district.

The facility, officially called Microsoft Research Ltd, has already been dubbed 'Silicon Fen' by industry wags intent on likening the project to California's technological nucleus, Silicon Valley.

Microsoft's chief technology officer Nathan Myhrvold said that the lab would provide 'a home for world-class researchers based in Europe who want to develop innovative new technologies'.

The investment was welcomed by President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, MP, who said: 'It is exciting to see [UK universities] recognised by Microsoft, one of the foremost software companies in the world.'

Microsoft also plans to pour another £10 million into 'technology ventures', with the bulk of the money earmarked for Cambridge-based firms.

Microsoft: 0345 002000

Demon Internet has just celebrated its one hundred thousandth subscriber since the company was founded in 1992. This makes Demon Britain's largest dial-up Internet Service Provider.

Demon: 0181 371 1234
www.demon.net



Sharp has reduced the price of its high-end personal organisers. The 1Mb ZR-5700 and 2Mb ZR-5800 will now cost £299.99 and £399.99 respectively.

Sharp: 0800 262958

Iomega has now shipped six million of its innovative Zip drive storage devices. The drives, which use inexpensive 100Mb removable cartridges, have become an option on many PC systems. Iomega: 0800 973194

The Connectix Corporation has made its Colour QuickCam video camera more affordable, at £179 – or £229 (inc VAT) when bundled with VideoPhone 2. Connectix: 0181 561 1414

Premier Electronics has launched a range of Smart Media memory cards, designed for digital cameras and mobile phones. The cards are available in 2Mb and 4Mb versions. Premier Electronics: 01992 634652

Maxtor has announced the DiamondMax 1750 range of 3.5in EIDE hard disks, including drives up to a whopping 7Gb in size. Maxtor: 01483 747356

IBM overhauls ThinkPad range

IBM's ThinkPad range of notebook PCs continues to evolve with selected models in the 760 series now being fitted with 13.3in screens.

IBM says the larger screen on its ThinkPad 765 presents a 21 percent greater viewing area than the 12.1in screens on current 760 models.

The ultra-slim ThinkPad 560 range also has a new member – the 560E, the first ThinkPad 560 model to have an MMX-enabled processor and 256Kb of cache memory to speed up the action.

At the more affordable end of the market, the ThinkPad 380s have floppy disk and CD-ROM drives built in. They also have a choice of hard disks, and 12.1in dual-scan or TFT screens.

IBM: 0990 727272



Camera ranges develop

The choice of digital cameras expanded again this month with two new models from Casio and Sanyo.

Casio's latest is the QV-300, adding to its existing QV-10a and QV-100 models.

The QV-300 has a similar design to the existing models but incorporates several new features. Most interesting is the dual focal-point lens. Flipping a switch on the side of the camera takes it from normal to telephoto mode and there is also a macro setting that goes down to 44cm.



Images can be framed and previewed on a 2.5in TFT screen on the back of the camera, and a low-light setting compensates for the lack of built-in flash.

The QV-300 has 4Mb of memory and can store up 64

images at 640x480 resolution or 192 at 320x240. It will cost around £700.

Sanyo's DigiCam (VPC-G200) has 4Mb of memory and can store 60 images at 640x480 or 120 at 320x240.

Images can be viewed and previewed on a 2in TFT screen and there is also a built-in flash. The DigiCam has a 'multishot' feature that can capture 16 continuous images in 0.1 second intervals. It costs £549.99.

Casio: 0181 893 2592

www.casio.co.uk

Sanyo: 01923 246363

Security bug in Netscape browsers

Netscape Communications has admitted to a bug in its browsers that could let outsiders see data on a user's hard disk drive.

Playing down security worries, Netscape's security director said that the risk to the average user was low, as the bug was not obvious. Moreover, Netscape was acting urgently to cure the bug, promising a fix for Netscape Communicator on Windows 95/NT within days and for the remaining Communicator

platforms immediately afterwards. Fixes for Netscape Navigator versions 2.0 and 3.0 would follow soon after.

The bug was discovered by Cabocomm, a Danish software company, and tests proved that Cabocomm could read a document through the company's firewall. It emerged that

Cabocomm wanted a 'huge unspecified amount of money' before parting with technical details of the bug. Netscape refused to co-operate and its own engineers, working with the details that Cabocomm had provided, were able to identify the problem within hours.

www.netscape.com



Microsoft has launched **Get on the Net**, a bid to convince people that the information available on the Internet is both useful and easy to find.

Aimed especially at people who have never used the Internet – perhaps never even considered it – the campaign will run until the middle of August.

The company has pressed a million special CD-ROMs designed to give a tour of the Internet. The CDs are free and can be used in home PCs or in trial centres hosted by Internet cafés and libraries throughout the country.

Call 0345 003344 for details of your nearest trial centre or to be sent a copy of the CD-ROM.

Leading chip manufacturer **LG Semicon** has warned the computer industry to beware of fake DRAM chips it has found on sale over the past three months.

The chips are packaged and marked as though they are genuine LG Semicon products.

Although the genuine RAM modules come from Korea, the counterfeit packaging is stamped Singapore. The chips are marked in gold ink rather than by laser engraving and have false serial numbers.

So far, fake chips have only been found on sale in the Far East and in the USA, priced at up to 20 percent less than real LG Semicon-branded modules. LG Semicon has launched an undercover operation to track down the counterfeiters.

www.lg.co.kr

A new graphics software package for the Psion Series 3a/3c has been launched by **Purple Software**.

A compendium of the company's three graphics applications **DrawIt**, **OrgChart** and **FloChart**, **Graphics Deluxe** offers a powerful combination of drawing tools. **DrawIt** is a generic drawing program, while **OrgChart** can be used for the creation of hierarchical charts, and **FloChart** is a flowchart designer.

Packaged together in this way, the three applications offer a wide range of graphics functionality, including full text editing, a large set of shapes, line styles and thicknesses and user-configurable lines with snap-to-grid. On floppy disk, **Graphics Deluxe** will cost £59.95 including VAT.

Purple Software: 0171 387 7777

The **British Library** is fulfilling its commitment to providing simple access to its collection with the launch of a free research tool, **Opac 97**, for Internet users.

Opac 97 contains details of more than 8.5 million books and other materials, from 1450 to the present day and has easy-to-use searching facilities.

It allows researchers in any field to find publications to help them in their work, while users of the Library's reading rooms can check that a book is currently in stock before making a trip.

The system is available now and can be accessed at: opac97.bl.uk/

More MMX notebooks

Three new notebooks, two from Panasonic and one from Gateway 2000, have been launched with Pentium MMX processors. The machines also incorporate Intel's latest TX system chips, designed to get the most out of the technology.

Other similarities between Gateway's and Panasonic's machines are in the use of Lithium Ion batteries – for longer periods between recharges – and the fitting of TFT display screens as standard.

In other respects, the Gateway Solo 9100 and the Panasonic CF-35 machines illustrate two different approaches to portable computing.



Panasonic has come up with machines designed to be rugged and lightweight, whereas Gateway's notebook offers full desktop performance and features, albeit in a considerably heavier package. The 2.2Kg Panasonic CF-35

costs £3,524 with a 150MHz processor and 2Gb hard disk, or £3,053 with a 133MHz processor and 1.44Gb disk. Both models feature 16Mb of memory and 12.1in screens encased in tough, slim-line, magnesium alloy casings.

Gateway's 9100 is more powerful than either of these, with a 166MHz processor, 3.1Gb hard disk and massive 48Mb of RAM supplemented by 4Mb of video memory. Add a 13.3in screen capable of displaying 1,024x768 pixels, its weight of a not inconsiderable 3.8Kg and a cost of £4,699.

Panasonic: 0500 404041
Gateway 2000: 0800 552000

Picture Publisher comes home



Straddling the professional, enthusiast and home markets is not an easy trick to pull off, but that's what Micrografix is trying to do with Picture Publisher 7.

Once sold as an expensive high-end image editor, then as part of the Webtricity and Graphics Suite 2 product suites, the program is once again available in a revamped stand-alone version at a new low price of £99 (inc VAT).

Innovations include 20 wizards and macros to help users create Internet graphics.

Especially useful to novices is the Command Centre, which tracks every change made to an image and lets you backtrack, undo or rearrange any modifications, even after the picture has been saved.

Among 25 new creative effects are a red-eye remover for flash photographs, a puzzle-piece designer and a texture creator.

(See also page 75.)
Micrografix: 0800 626009

Top names upgrade graphics cards

Leading graphics card makers are gearing up for a new generation of products.



First up is VideoLogic with the announcement of the Apocalypse 5D. The name refers to the fact that it is both a 2D and a 3D (2D plus 3D equals 5D, apparently) card, rather than any kind of geometry-bending technology breakthrough. It will cost from £199 when it goes on sale in August.

Next is Hercules with its Dynamite 3D/GL card. It is based around 3Dlabs' PERMEDIA 2 graphics proc-

essor and the 8Mb version is available now for around £220.

Finally, ATI is launching a card that takes advantage of Intel's high-speed Advanced Graphics Port technology.

The XPERT@Play is powered by the new 3D Rage Pro chip and should be on shop shelves within a few weeks. VideoLogic: 01923 260511
Imago Micro (Hercules' distributor): 01635 861122
ATI: 01235 833666

Compaq backs NetPC

Compaq has thrown water on the burning Network Computer (NC) issue by pledging support for Microsoft-Intel's alternative NetPC standard.

At the same time, the company launched the Deskpro 4000N – one of the first NetPCs to hit UK shores.

By offering a choice of processors (166MHz or 200MHz MMX Pentiums, and standard 200MHz Pentium), a 1.6Gb hard disk drive, 2Mb 64-bit graphics controller and up to 32Mb of memory, Compaq is going way beyond

the basic NetPC specification (100MHz Pentium, 16Mb and a basic VGA-compatible display adaptor).

Commenting on the forthcoming battle between the NetPC and Oracle's rival NC concept, Compaq's product marketing manager, Steve Torbe, declared: 'The Network Computer promise is wearing thin and its proponents have failed to recognise the necessity to bring to market a standards-based product.'

According to the press release, Compaq 'believes the

Deskpro 4000N will offer total cost of ownership that is lower than rival "Network Computer" offerings'.

Unfortunately, this is impossible to quantify, as the company hasn't yet decided upon a price structure.

Like all NetPCs, the machines in the Deskpro 4000N range lack a floppy disk drive or CD-ROM drive and the cases are 'sealable', thereby preventing unauthorised users from accessing the valuable innards.

Compaq: 0990 134456

Blue lasers triple storage on DVD

Matsushita, best known for its Panasonic brand name, has developed a laser that will triple the storage capacity of each side of a DVD disc to 15Gb.

DVD discs, regarded as the eventual successor to CD-ROMs and capable of storing high-quality video, audio and computer data, are currently restricted to 4.7Gb in size.

Data stored on the discs is retrieved by reading it with a red laser light, but red lasers are not sensitive enough to handle data packed more densely than 4.7Gb, for which a blue laser is required.

Until now, blue lasers were too expensive, too large and too unstable to be used in consumer devices.

The new blue laser converts the output from a red laser and is able to read and write high-density DVD as well as reading existing 4.7Gb DVD discs.

www.panasonic.co.uk
Panasonic: 0800 404041



Monitor makers agree on size issue

Size is important according to top monitor manufacturers, who have backed guidelines for describing their screens.

ADI, LG, Sony, Nokia and other sponsors of the Computing Suppliers Federation (CSF) 'Monitors Matter' campaign, have agreed to follow recent moves to help reduce end-user confusion over the difference between Visible Image Size (VIS), the actual amount of screen used on a monitor, and the often quoted external diagonal measurement.

The external diagonal fig-

ure generally includes an extra inch of black border between the image and the casing.

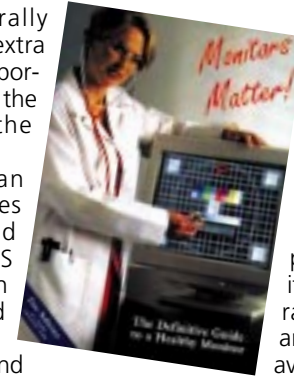
More than 13 companies have pledged to include VIS information clearly and conspicuously in adverts and brochures.

'A fundamental aim of our Monitors Matter campaign is

to ensure users get the right product for the applications they use,' commented Roger Crumpton, general manager of the CSF.

Monitors Matter is a free education programme for monitor users and corporates. A free booklet and testing software is available via a hotline or the CSF Web site.

CSF Hotline: 01905 613236
www.csf.org.uk



MathSoft has launched a new version of its technical calculation and data analysis software. Mathcad 7 Professional complements Microsoft Office 97 and has a new Windows 95 interface.

Mathcad 7 Professional allows problems ranging from the simple maths to advanced symbolic algebraic to be solved and common mathematical notation is used throughout.

Built-in Web browsing is via Internet Explorer 3 and collaboration on projects is possible over the Internet. Mathcad 7

Professional requires Windows 95, a 486DX2/66 processor and 12Mb of RAM, and costs £464.13 for a single-user licence. Adept Scientific: 01462 480055
www.mathsoft.com

Intel's Smart Video Recorder III has been released. Costing around £150, the expansion card lets you import video to your PC from a normal video camera or recorder, then edit it electronically and record it to disk or tape.

This latest international version supports all major standards for video signals. Most important for UK users is PAL (used in Britain and much of Europe), but the board also supports the American and Japanese NTSC standard and SECAM, used in France.

Asymetrix Digital Video Producer video-editing software is supplied, together with a utility to allow video clips to be embedded in Web pages. Intel: 01793 403000

Customers worried about complications in computers caused by the year 2000 can buy with peace of mind from shops in the **Dixons Stores Group**.

The Group, which trades through Dixons, Currys, PC World and The Link, has announced that all the PCs sold in its stores are guaranteed to be year 2000 compliant.

All manufacturers who supply the Group offer guarantees, but in addition Dixons has its own testing facility in Nottingham, which has a program for testing all products sold by the Group for year 2000 compliance to BSI standards.

Panasonic is promising to deliver a DVD-RAM drive and disc capable of storing 5.2Gb of data before the end of the year.

Users will be able to store up to 2.6Gb of data on each side of a disc, and rewrite it as often as they like.

Hitachi announced a similar rewritable drive last month, but Panasonic's is the first to be fully compatible with existing PD discs. PD is a rewritable storage system using 650Mb single-sided discs enclosed in protective cartridges.

Panasonic's drive will also be able to read uncased discs in the current CD and CD-R formats.

Panasonic: 0500 404041

A Windows 95 version of AOL's on-line service is now available. The new software has a customised version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 3.02 for Web browsing and incorporates elements of the Windows 95 interface. AOL 3.0i can be obtained from keyword 'Upgrade'.

AOL has also extended its 'Buddy List' system to Internet users who aren't AOL members. By going to keyword 'Instant Messenger', AOL members can send an invitation to non-members to download the beta version of the Instant Messenger software. Once registered, non-members can then be added to an AOL user's Buddy List and real-time Instant Messages can be sent between AOL and the Internet.

AOL: 0800 279 1234
www.aol.co.uk

IBM's ViaVoice is a new speech-recognition program that can recognise continuous, rather than broken, speech.

Existing speech-recognition programs require pauses between spoken words (known as 'discrete' dictation), but ViaVoice allows spoken dictation that is closer to natural speech.

Star Trek-style spoken commands are still some way off, however, as ViaVoice still requires fairly consistent speaking with a steady tone.

ViaVoice, launching in September, will cost £198.58 and requires a Pentium 166MMX PC, 32Mb of RAM and Win 95.

IBM: 01705 492249
www.software.ibm.com

Nationwide has gone on line with the first UK Internet banking service, offering round-the-clock access to its current account customers.

The new Web site, at www.nationwide.co.uk, enables FlexAccount customers to carry out a range of transactions, including bill payments, money transfer and up-to-the-minute balance information.

Other features include a mortgage calculator for an instant mortgage quote, a savings calculator and a 'What's New' section for information on the latest products and offers.

For some light relief, the site also features Nationwide's Football League results, league tables, table information, match reports and competitions – this part of the site already has over a million visitors per month.

Lexmark has unveiled the 3000 Color Jetprinter, a low-cost, six-colour inkjet printer aimed at home and office users.

The new printer has a top resolution of 600x300dpi (dots per inch) and a quoted print speed of up to five pages per minute in mono mode.

For £223.25, the 3000 Color Jetprinter comes complete with a colour ink cartridge and a second cartridge containing Lexmark's non-fading 'Super Sharp Waterproof' black ink.

Lexmark is including drivers for Windows 3.1x, Windows 95, Windows NT4.0 and OS/2. The machine can also be used in DOS applications, emulating an HP DeskJet 500C.

Lexmark: 01628 481500



The **BBC** has launched a commercial Internet site. www.beeb.com is intended to enhance existing programmes and services such as *Top Gear* and the *Radio Times*, as well as providing a sports results service.

ShopsOnTheNet is a new Web site that has a comprehensive directory of retail sites, with links to over 700 organisations. www.ShopsOnTheNet.co.uk

Iomega has announced **RecordIt**, digital recording software for audio recording and playback on PCs. Priced at around £25, it can save to and play from both Zip and hard disks. **Iomega: 0800 973194**



The **Microsoft Network** has developed its General Election site into a full 24-hour UK Internet news service complete with sport, features, and comment. www.news.uk.msn.com **Microsoft: 0345 002000**

Grey Cell is to launch a software-only GSM solution for Windows 95/NT or CE systems. **SoftMobile** will go on sale in September at around £180. **Grey Cell: 0181 938 1000**

Adobe is now shipping **After Effects 3.1** for Windows 95 and NT. Originally on the Mac, the special effects package makes full use of MMX technology. **Adobe Direct: 0131 458 6842**

Apple hypes core values

Apple has unveiled an aggressive marketing campaign and a range of new Power Macintosh systems, including the first mainstream 275MHz system available in Europe.

The new Power Macintosh 5500 and 6500 series feature accelerated multimedia functions, built-in Internet facilities and advanced video capture, editing options.

The machines have 32Mb of RAM, 256Kb cache, 2-4Gb hard disks, ATI Rage II graphics cards and use a new ver-

sion of Motorola's PowerPC 603e processor, which Apple claims can complete tasks up

to twice as fast as 200MHz Pentium MMX processors.

Prices start at £1,935 for the 5500/225 to £2,669 for the top-of-the line 6500/275.

To back these up the company has also unveiled a major UK advertising campaign. Themed 'Only Apple', the move, which started with an eight-page ad in *The Times*, is designed to reassert Apple's traditional brand values of innovation and technical superior products.

Apple: 0800 127753



Philips focuses on UK screen market

Philips is mounting a campaign to grab a bigger share of the UK monitor market.

This follows last month's news of across-the-board monitor price-cutting from Sony and LG Electronics and the arrival of competitively-priced monitors from the German company, Maxdata.

Philips has cut the prices of all 15 of its monitors but is spearheading its assault with the entry-level 107S, a 17in monitor which should hit the streets for only £350 (inc VAT).

The recommended price is

£452.38 for this, a Windows 95 Plug and Play monitor capable of displaying pictures up to 1,280x1,024 pixels.

At the more usual resolution for 17in monitors of 1,024x768, the 107S should produce a flicker-free image, thanks to an 80Hz vertical refresh rate.

The monitor complies with Energy Star power-saving and MPRII emission control requirements. In addition, it features digitally-controlled adjust-



ment of picture settings. **Philips: 0181 689 4444**

Top 20 software packages according to Romtec figures

Position	Package	Publisher/supplier	Type
1	CleanSweep for Windows 95	Quarterdeck	Utility
2	First Aid Deluxe for Windows 95	Cybermedia	Utility
3	Corel Printhouse	Corel	Graphics
4	First Aid for Windows 95	Cybermedia	Utility
5	Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit for Win 95	Dr Solomon's	Anti-virus
6	MS Plus for Windows 95	Microsoft	Utility
7	Corel Draw 6	Corel	Graphics
8	Windelete	IMSI	Utility
9	Norton AntiVirus for Windows	Symantec	Anti-virus
10	MagnaRAM for Windows 95	Quarterdeck	Utility
11	MS Publisher 97 for Windows 95	Microsoft	Desktop publishing
12	Corel Draw 4	Corel	Graphics
13	MS Home Essentials	Microsoft	Graphics
14	VirusScan for Windows	McAfee	Anti-virus
15	Corel Draw 3.0 for Windows	Corel	Graphics
16	Norton Utilities for Windows 95	Symantec	Utility
17	Micrografx Draw for Windows 95	Micrografx	Graphics
18	MS Works 4 for Windows 95	Microsoft	Integrated package
19	Uninstaller for Windows 95	Micro Help	Utility
20	MS Visual Basic 4 Professional	Microsoft	Programming language

Figures for April 1997, source Romtec. This new chart reflects retail sales only.

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.