

Among the new products reviewed here are a multimedia notebook, a program to design images of the human body, a colour multifunction device, a video-editing program, a multimedia desktop PC based on the AMD K6 processor, and Claris Works 4 Internet Edition



**C**ompaq is well known for its notebook PCs but the Presario 1060 is the first to bear the name more usually associated with its stylish consumer desktop models.

The 1060 certainly continues the Presario trend with its unusual looks. The case is a typical clamshell style but its base juts out further than the lid, and houses a set of audio CD control buttons (play, fast forward, etc), a small pair of stereo speakers and a touchpad pointing device.

Opening the machine exposes a low-profile keyboard with keys that are as broad, if not broader, than those of any desktop PC. The keys are exceptionally responsive, with a satisfyingly sprung action and adding to the keyboard's appeal is the gently sloped 3in wrist rest at the front. The design is as near perfect as you could hope from a notebook.

Given the 1060's multimedia aspirations, the choice of a largish 11.3in dual-scan colour display is a little peculiar. Although the 1060's is clearer than most, dual-scan screens are hopeless for fast-moving games and videos and are better suited to more sedate applications like word processing.

The 1060 is pre-installed with Windows 95 and Compaq has augmented it with a few programs of its own, all centred around the 1060's

multimedia capabilities. Programs like WAV Maker (for recording and mixing sounds) and CD Player are much better than their Windows 95 equivalents and are designed to make the best use of the 1060's sound facilities.

The sound hardware itself is pretty standard notebook fare – a Sound Blaster-compatible 16-bit ESS AudioDrive – but the speaker system is quite unlike that of any other notebook we've seen. Compaq's Premier Sound speaker design includes a small bass tube, intended to give that much-needed depth of sound that tiny speakers simply cannot provide. While the output is no match for a good set of external speakers, we have to say that the 1060's sound reproduction is probably the best we've heard from any notebook PC.

As for the other software extras, the bundle that Compaq throws in is reasonable, but hardly excessive by today's standards. Microsoft Works makes one of its regular bundle appearances, along with Quicken 4 (good, but ageing), Encarta 96 (ditto) and golf simulation PGA Tour 96.

Mention must also be made of the QuickRestore CD-ROM. This contains a complete recovery system for the 1060, so, if you completely mess up its configuration, the machine can be restored to its out-of-the-box condition.

Scott Colvey

## Compaq Presario 1060

*A multimedia notebook with built-in CD-ROM drive, stereo speakers and a joystick connector.*

- Intel Pentium 120MHz processor
- 1Gb hard disk
- 16Mb of memory
- Built-in six-speed CD-ROM drive
- 11.3in dual-scan screen (800x600 pixel resolution)
- ESS AudioDrive 16-bit stereo sound hardware
- Two Type II PC Card slots
- Ports: parallel; serial; 15-pin VGA; game (joystick); PS/2 (keyboard/mouse); speaker
- Size: (wxdxh) 310x254x48mm
- Weight: 7lb

**As a portable computer, the Presario is a little hefty but it's well specified and makes an ideal compact consumer PC. A tempting proposition if you're torn between buying either a notebook or desktop.**

- £1,799 (inc VAT)
- Compaq: 0990 134456

### Compaq Presario 1060

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Build quality   | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| Ease of use     | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| Features        | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| Value for money | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |
| <b>Overall</b>  | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ |

## Poser 2.0

A design program for creating 3D still and animated images of the human body.



- Predesigned male, female, clothed, nude, mannequin and stick figures
- Customisation of figures and body parts, including hands
- Library of 75 pre-positioned poses
- Body parts can be posed with interactive mouse controls
- Still or moving images can be created
- Intelligent, natural joint movements
- Multiple light sources when rendering
- Import and export files in DXF, OBJ, 3DMF, 3D Studio 4 and Detailer formats
- Figures can be combined with props and objects
- Pose figures against imported backdrops

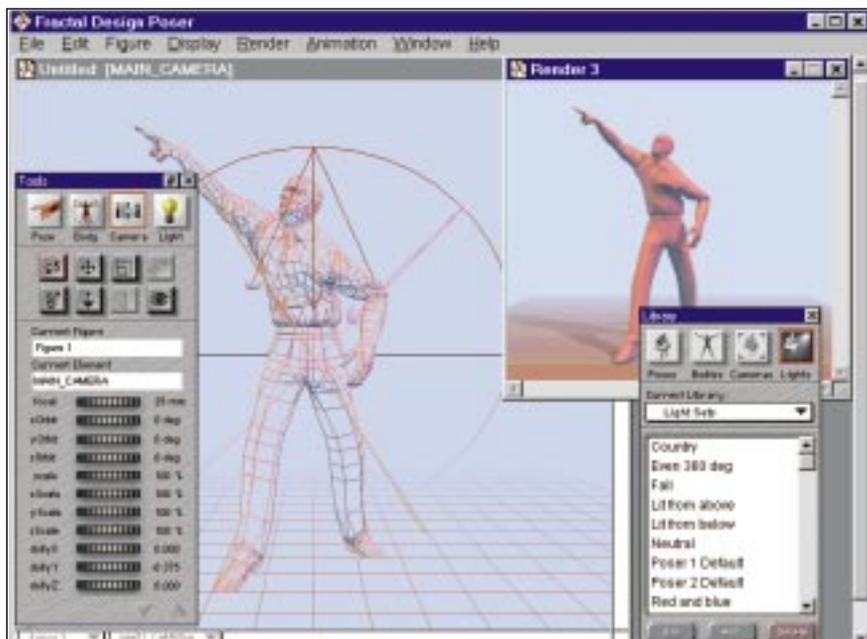
**Poser is a great tool for computer artists and designers working with human forms. It's not cheap enough to buy out of interest or for occasional use, but for those that need it, it's a bargain.**

- £222 (inc VAT)
- Principal Distribution: 01756 704000

### Poser 2.0

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Ease of use     | ★★★★★ |
| Performance     | ★★★★☆ |
| Features        | ★★★★☆ |
| Value for money | ★★★★☆ |
| <b>Overall</b>  | ★★★★☆ |

Minimum requirements: 486DX PC with 16Mb of RAM, Windows 95, CD-ROM drive, 35Mb of free hard disk space and high-colour graphics card.



The human body is one of the hardest forms to draw, even with conventional tools like pencil and paper. To create realistic figures using standard computer graphics software is even harder. Poser 2.0 is different, having been designed with the sole aim of creating human figures in an infinite variety of poses and it can be used by anyone, regardless of artistic ability.

Poser creates still images in several file formats suitable for use by other programs. Animations can be created either as playable Windows video files (AVI) or as sequences of still frames. Remember that Poser is only a means to an end – it's when a Poser graphic is imported into another application for completion that the hard work starts.

Remarkably for such a sophisticated piece of software, you can be posing models and rendering final images within minutes of using Poser for the first time. You begin by choosing the body type of figure you want to create – man, woman or child and whether clothed casually, for business or nude. Skeleton and mannequin types are also available. Predefined poses can be chosen from a library, or body parts can be grabbed by the mouse and moved into position. The resulting pose is rendered and saved as an image.

Rendering is the process of adding solid form to a figure by applying a surface texture and using lights to provide realistic highlights and shadows. It also involves setting a camera angle from which a figure is viewed. These aspects can be fine-tuned by selecting colours, textures, lights and viewpoints. Cameras and lights can also be animated to provide changing viewpoints of a still figure. Figures themselves can even be made to change position and run, jump, dance or even fly.

Animations are defined by setting key points in the animation control window. Each column represents one frame in the picture. You select a column and pose the figure to define a set of key points. Then you select a column further along the time scale and reposition the figure to make more key points. When the figure is animated, Poser will create all the movements necessary between the key point frames to get from one position to the other. A quick preview using blocks to indicate body parts lets you know how your animation is progressing and whether you need more key frames to get the type of movement you're trying to achieve. When you're happy with the results, you generate a final animation with the level of detail you require. This can take several minutes for each second of animation if you opt for large pictures with a high level of detail.

Whether you're creating still or moving pictures, there are lots of ways to add greater realism to figures. You can change the proportions of individual body parts and select from a range of hand shapes including fingers pointing, fists and relaxed. Backgrounds in the form of TIF or BMP files created in other programs can also be added. Several figures can be put into the same frame and when rendered, they will interact with each other to the extent that foreground figures will obscure background ones and cast shadows on them.

Poser 2.0 is not only great fun to use, it's also very effective. While it's possible to put figures into poses which, when rendered, look improbable, you have to go out of your way to make them look unnatural, which is a great compliment to a program such as this.

Paul Wardley ▶

## OfficeJet Pro 1150C

A colour scanner, inkjet copier and printer in one desktop-sized device from Hewlett-Packard.

- Two-cartridge, four-colour inkjet printer
- Handles paper up to A4, and envelopes
- 50-sheet output tray
- Maximum output seven pages per minute in black and white
- Resolution 300x300dpi (600x600dpi with enhancement)
- Copier works independently from computer
- Software includes utilities, OmniPage LE optical character recognition and Adobe PhotoDeluxe image editing
- Size: (hxxwd) 326x540x450mm
- Parallel connection via bi-directional printer port (cable supplied)

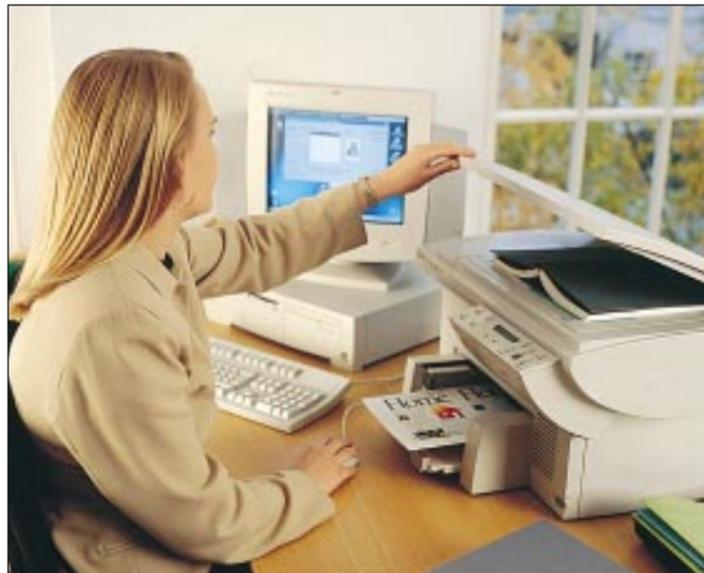
**Inkjet copiers aren't ideal for big print jobs but are perfectly fine for shorter runs, and there's the added bonus of colour if you want it. Not only is the OfficeJet Pro 1150C the perfect convenience copier, it's also a competent scanner and printer - the ideal choice for cost-conscious users in the home or small office.**

- £699 (inc VAT)
- Hewlett Packard: 0990 474747

### OfficeJet Pro 1150C

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Ease of use     | ★★★★★        |
| Performance     | ★★★★★        |
| Build quality   | ★★★★★        |
| Value for money | ★★★★★        |
| <b>Overall</b>  | <b>★★★★★</b> |

Minimum requirements: 486 PC with DOS 6, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 8Mb of RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space, 256-colour graphics card, bi-directional printer port.



Connect a printer and a scanner to your PC and you have a simple photocopier, since you can scan and then print documents. There are several disadvantages to this, not least finding space on your desk for two bulky devices. It's also very inconvenient to have to interrupt whatever you're doing on the PC to go through the rather complex series of commands just to copy a piece of paper.

Hewlett-Packard's OfficeJet Pro 1150C is a stunningly effective solution to both these problems. When attached to a PC, it functions identically to a quality inkjet printer and a true-colour (24-bit) scanner, but also offers all the convenience of a conventional copier. Just lift the lid, place your original on the glass and press the 'Copy' button - even if the PC is busy doing something else.

Adherents of the design philosophy that form should follow function, will love the OfficeJet - it looks exactly like an inkjet printer with a scanner bolted on top. It fits onto a desk but is less obtrusive standing on a side table, where it can be used as a convenience copier.

The illustrated manual accompanying the OfficeJet is a model for others to follow. It starts by telling you how to unpack the machine, then guides you through assembling the paper trays, fitting the ink cartridges, connecting to a PC, installing the free software and carrying out a test print. We scrupulously followed all the directions as if we'd never done this sort of thing before and were up and running in 10 minutes.

As a printer, the OfficeJet works like any other inkjet, with almost all options being set via software installed on the PC. The paper tray holds a 20mm-thick stack of paper, which is about 200 sheets of 80gsm

or you can replace this with up to 15 envelopes if you don't want to use the single-sheet envelope feeder. The output tray holds 50 sheets.

In scanner mode, the OfficeJet can be used directly from many Windows programs. Hewlett-Packard's PictureLink software puts an 'Add Picture' command onto the File menus of appropriate programs such as Wordpad and Paint. You can also scan into the Adobe PhotoDeluxe and OmniPage software supplied. A pre-scan of an A4 page takes around 20 seconds and you then select the area you want to include in your final scan. A full-colour snapshot-size photograph takes around 15 seconds at 100 dots per inch (dpi), while a full A4 page of text takes around 35 seconds at 300dpi (a suitable resolution for optical character recognition purposes).

To use the OfficeJet as a copier, selections must be made from a push-button panel. Here you can choose the number of copies and the quality of output (draft, normal or best), make adjustments to contrast and enlarge or reduce an original. When printing or copying, the panel is used to select the type of paper you want to print on (normal, premium, glossy or transparency) and this affects not only the output quality but also the speed of operation and the amount of ink used.

With so many options for paper type and print quality it's difficult to be specific about the speed of operation. Simple black-and-white text pages chug out at seven, five or three pages per minute in draft, normal and best qualities. On the other hand, a full A4 photographic-quality print on glossy paper can take six minutes, with a draft-quality plain-paper colour print of the same document taking 30 seconds.

Paul Wardley

## Corel Lumiere Suite 1.0

A video-editing program for assembling your own multimedia presentations from a collection of video, sound and still picture files. You can add transitions, special effects, music and audio and superimpose text or titles.

- Drag-and-drop media clips and transitions into your project
- Video clips can be trimmed, scaled, rotated and distorted
- Titler feature for creating text and graphics
- Images and titles can be superimposed
- Over 60 transition effects and 60 video filters for additional special effects
- SmartSound Wizard creates custom music and sound effects from preset styles and categories
- Includes Corel Motion 3D 7 to create 3D animations
- Corel Photo-Paint 6 bitmap image editor included
- Over 150 video clips, 60 minutes of music clips, 100 fonts, 1,000 photos, 1,000 bitmap images and 1,000 clip-art images

**If you are prepared to spend a while learning how to use this product you will be able to produce impressively professional multimedia presentations.**

- £99.88 (inc VAT)
- Corel Corporation: 0800 581028

### Corel Lumiere Suite 1.0

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Ease of use     | ★★★★★        |
| Performance     | ★★★★★        |
| Features        | ★★★★★        |
| Value for money | ★★★★★        |
| <b>Overall</b>  | <b>★★★★★</b> |

Minimum requirements: Windows 95 or NT 4; Pentium P90 (P100 or higher recommended); 16Mb of RAM (32Mb recommended); 53Mb of hard disk space (typical installation 121Mb); 2x CD-ROM drive; Video capture card (optional).



Until now, most people have regarded the creation of video presentations as a specialised job, best left to experts. Corel Lumiere Suite, however, simplifies the process to the extent that any reasonably experienced computer user can with relative ease create a video presentation of professional quality.

The three applications included in the suite are Photo-Paint 6 (the bitmap creation and editing program that also appeared in Corel Draw 6), Motion 3D 7, and Lumiere itself. The software is supplied on four CDs, which also include video, image and sound libraries. There are also two manuals - one for Photo-Paint 6 and one for Lumiere and Motion 3D - and both are clearly written and helpful.

Motion 3D is an application for creating three-dimensional, animated images that can be included in Lumiere movies. Objects comprising both text and graphics can be assembled and viewed from different angles during creation. A variety of surface textures can be applied and the finished 3D objects lit from various angles.

A library of backgrounds is also available and all objects can be animated by specifying start and end points and applying one of a range of motion options. The manual includes a tutorial and working through it gives a good understanding of how this fairly complicated procedure works.

Lumiere is the real star of the show though, and thanks to the well-thought-out screen layout and excellent tutorials, assembling a multimedia presentation becomes possible in a relatively short time.

The start-up screen is occupied by a dozen horizontal tracks with menu and toolbars at the top and side. The top three are two video

tracks, each separated by a transition track. There are three 'superimpose' tracks below these and then five audio tracks. A Timeline caps them all, marked off in hours, minutes, seconds and frames.

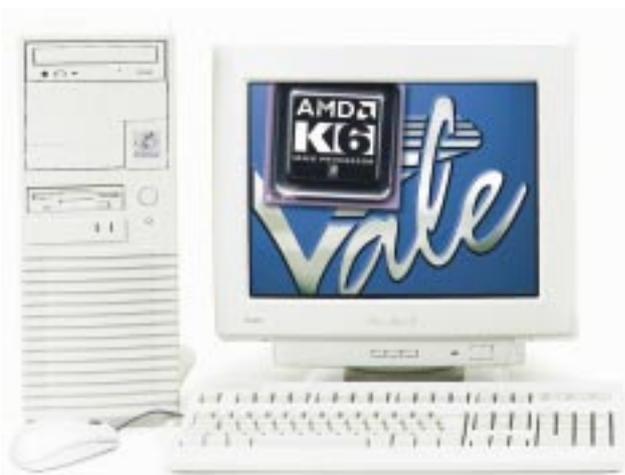
Before a presentation can be put together, the files (video, stills or sounds) must be imported into the 'media catalog'. This acts as a kind of floating repository for presentation components, from which items are dragged onto the appropriate track to set their sequence and timing. For example, a video clip dragged onto a video track occupies a horizontal space equal to its length on the Timeline. Drop a second clip that slightly overlaps it, and the two scenes will be instantly cut when played.

Transitions between scenes are added by dropping one from the library onto the transition track where the two clips overlap. The length of the transition can be varied and there is also a wide range of filters and motion effects that can be used to alter the appearance of video and still images.

The built-in 'Titler' allows text and graphics to be applied to presentations, together with a variety of backgrounds. Titles, credits, and so on are placed on one of the superimpose tracks, where they will overlay any video or image that is displayed at that point in the Timeline. Sound is added in a similar way to the audio tracks. The five tracks give plenty of scope and since sounds placed in the same chronological position on separate tracks are superimposed, such things as music and narration are possible.

Finished presentations can be played back through Lumiere but can also be saved as a Windows AVI file. This means playback doesn't require Lumiere to be installed.

Steve Cotterell



There's been a fair bit of fanfare preceding the launch of AMD's K6 range of processors, but the message can be condensed to something along the lines of 'faster and cheaper than Intel'. This is a claim that's been made before, with varying degrees of accuracy, so we were understandably curious to see whether the K6 could walk the walk.

AMD has produced K6 chips clocked at 166MHz, 200MHz and a positively frenetic 233MHz. It came as no great surprise to discover that Evesham had elected to use the fastest version for its new Vale Platinum machine, nor that the other aspects of the configuration were in keeping with this class of processor.

Fast CPUs tend to benefit from larger cache sizes, as they get through the data that much more rapidly, so we were pleased to see 512Kb of pipeline burst cache fitted to the Vale's motherboard rather than the standard 256Kb.

Peripherals include an all-plastic KeyTronic keyboard which sounded rather hollow and rattly but possessed an acceptably responsive action of the pop-not-click type, and a Microsoft Intellimouse. This is pretty much the same as the standard Microsoft mouse, except for the addition of a rotary control intended to make scrolling through documents that bit easier.

Evesham hasn't stinted on the monitor, which turned out to be a 17in Idek Iiyama Vision Master Pro, based on a Mitsubishi Diamondtron tube. These have the same vertically flat 'cylinder-cut' profile as the Sony Trinitron design from which they evolved, and their sharp overall focus and high vertical refresh support (for a flicker-free picture) has made them a popular choice with monitor manufacturers.

Multimedia components consist of a 12-speed Matsushita CD-ROM drive, a Creative Labs AWE32 wavetable sound card and a pair of Zydec mains-powered speakers

rated at 6W per channel. The CD-ROM delivers data at a respectable rate, and the AWE32 is a good, almost universally supported, sound card, but the speakers were of no more than average quality.

The innards of the machine are neat and relatively spacious and the ATX-style motherboard design means that the processor is positioned out of the way of the expansion slots. Not only does this mean that none of the free slots are obstructed but it also places the processor up next to the main cooling fan under the power supply, which makes sense with something as fast as this.

A shared backplate cutout means there's room to add either one ISA and two PCI cards, or three PCI cards. Since there's already a 33.6Kbits/s Dataflex data/fax/voice modem installed, this will probably be enough expansion for most people. If you want more drives, there are two 3.5in and one 5.25in front-opening bays up at the top and a further two 3.5in internal bays for extra hard disks if you manage to fill up the 3.2Gb Quantum Fireball drive.

The motherboard is fitted with the latest Intel 430TX chipset which supports very fast SDRAM memory, but although there are sockets for it, Evesham has stuck to the standard EDO variety. While ultimately SDRAM would yield slightly better overall performance, the combination of the K6, with its 64Kb on-chip cache (as opposed to a Pentium's 32Kb), MMX enhancements (licensed from Intel), good motherboard, fast hard disk and capable Matrox Millennium graphics certainly delivered the goods.

The new processor, if given the appropriate backing, as it has been here, will outperform a 200MHz Pentium MMX and even a 200MHz Pentium Pro-based machine, which is indeed an impressive achievement, and concrete proof that AMD isn't just all talk.

Dominic Bucknall

## Evesham Micros Vale Platinum K6

*A multimedia desktop PC based on the fastest of the new AMD K6 range of processors.*

- 233MHz AMD K6 processor
- 512Kb of pipeline burst cache
- 32Mb of EDO RAM
- Intel 430TX motherboard chipset
- 3.2Gb EIDE hard disk
- 12-speed Matsushita CD-ROM drive
- 4Mb Matrox Millennium graphics
- Creative Labs AWE32 wavetable sound card
- 6W active stereo speakers
- 33.6Kbits/s internal Dataflex Voice Surfer data/fax/voice modem
- 17in Idek Iiyama Vision Master Pro 17 monitor
- Microsoft Intellimouse
- Windows 95

**This is a reasonably priced and well-specified machine, but the blistering performance of the new AMD K6 processor is what really makes it special.**

- £2,212 (inc VAT)
- Evesham Micros: 01386 765500

### Vale Platinum K6

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Performance     | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★        |
| Build quality   | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★        |
| Features        | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★        |
| Value for money | ★ ★ ★ ★ ★        |
| <b>Overall</b>  | <b>★ ★ ★ ★ ★</b> |

## Claris Works 4.0 Internet Edition

A versatile integrated package bundled with a Web page design program, a pair of electronic books about the Internet and a trial Internet account with Pipex Dial.

- Two full programs: Claris Works 4.0 and Claris Home Page 2.0
- Two electronic books: Internet Yellow Pages and ABC of the Internet
- 28-day trial of Pipex Dial Internet Access
- Netscape Navigator software

### Claris Works 4.0

- Word processing, spreadsheet, database, painting and drawing modules
- Spelling checker, thesaurus and word counter in all modules
- Outlining tools
- 'Assistants' help in the creation of address lists, newsletters, calendars, presentations, envelopes, certificates and home finance documents
- Over 60 pre-designed items of stationery for home, leisure and business use
- 500 clip-art images of maps, symbols and pictures stored in 19 libraries
- Mail-merging from the database
- Conversion utility for earlier versions of Claris Works

### Home Page 2.0

- Supports frames
- Spelling checker
- Consolidates all images and text automatically
- Uploads finished pages to Web servers
- Uses Java, Shockwave and QuickTime applets and plug-ins
- Automatic table creation from structured text files
- HTML sourcecode editor



Claris Works 4.0 Internet Edition is not an integrated package with extra Internet features, it's two separate programs sold in the same box with a few other goodies to sweeten the deal. This is not a criticism because Claris Works 4.0 is as close to the ideal integrated package as anyone is likely to get, and bloating it with unnecessary extras would spoil it.

It's based around separate modules for word processing, spreadsheets, databases, painting and drawing and you choose which one you want to work with when you start a new document. In practice, because any type of Claris Works document can contain elements from other modules, the initial choice is not too important.

Claris Works eschews some of the conventions used by Windows programs (it was originally designed for the Mac, though the Windows version is long-established) and its terminology includes a few traps for the unwary. Templates, for example, are called stationery. On the positive side, there's a superb help system and printed manual to keep you on track.



All modules, apart from the database, share a common toolbar located on the left of the screen. This includes all the drawing tools as well as buttons to insert word processor, spreadsheet and painting objects into the current document. At the top of the screen there's a very simple toolbar and ruler, free of the plethora of icons in many Windows programs. This doesn't mean these are not available, but Claris calls them shortcuts and they're in a floating box that can be positioned anywhere on the screen or hidden altogether. The shortcuts can be customised and you can create your own using the macro facility to record keystrokes which are then assigned to a shortcut button.

The ruler/toolbar also contains a style selector, but Claris takes the notion of styles a step further than most programs. Styles are applicable not just to word-processed documents but also to graphics,

spreadsheets and databases, where they can be used to determine options such as fill patterns, number formats and shading. The built-in styles can be edited and new ones created. These are stored with the document in which they were created and not in a globally available template – an import and export facility lets you save your favourite styles and apply them to other documents. Confusingly, there's also a pull-down menu called Style but this is actually for formatting characters with bold, italic and other properties.

Just as styles are available across modules, so are writing tools. These consist of a spelling checker, a thesaurus and a word counter. Other features are specific to individual modules. The outliner, for example, is part of the word processor. It lets you structure a document while you are writing it by applying one of three outline styles to selected paragraphs. These can then be arranged hierarchically or moved about in blocks using the mouse or keyboard shortcuts.

Another useful feature of the word processor is the use of sections. These are used when you want to have different headers and footers, page numbering systems and columns within a single document. A facing-pages option lets you mirror the margin settings on left and right pages, useful when you want to bind printed documents into booklets, and annotations can be printed as footnotes on each page or at the end of a document.

The database is superficially simple with a card-index layout and a basic search system you use by typing the information you're looking for into an appropriate field, but there's also a sophisticated search option to select records based on multiple criteria. Reports can be printed out or viewed on screen in columnar, label or customised formats, with searches and sorts being applied automatically before printing. Summaries and totals are also calculated within reports.

The spreadsheet is conventional in approach. Its key strengths are the logical, statistical, numeric, date and time functions; an 'autosum' button for quick addition; and a Fill Special command to automatically complete sequences of days, dates and times for row and column labels. Figures in spreadsheets can be charted in the usual ways, with or without simple 3D effects.

The drawing module lets you create ellipses, polygons and free-hand lines with automatic smoothing and solid, patterned or gradient fills. Any object can subsequently be re-shaped by dragging control handles. The drawing module is

extremely versatile and can also be used to make presentations, which are viewed through a slideshow option, or to create the sort of documents normally associated with DTP (desktop publishing) programs. In these, text can be put into frames and made to flow from frame to frame as you enter or edit it. Pictures can be anchored to the text and will move with it as it flows.

The other half of Claris 4.0 Internet Edition is Claris Home Page 2.0. This is a Web page design program: straightforward enough for beginners to use for their personal Web pages, yet with sophisticated facilities for Web wizards who have to maintain complex sites.

You create a Web page by typing in text and adding images, tables, forms and other objects from the Insert menu. Pages in progress can be previewed within Home Page 2.0, but it's better to use the 'Preview in Browser' option to get a clearer idea of what they will look like when posted on the Web, especially if you are using frames.

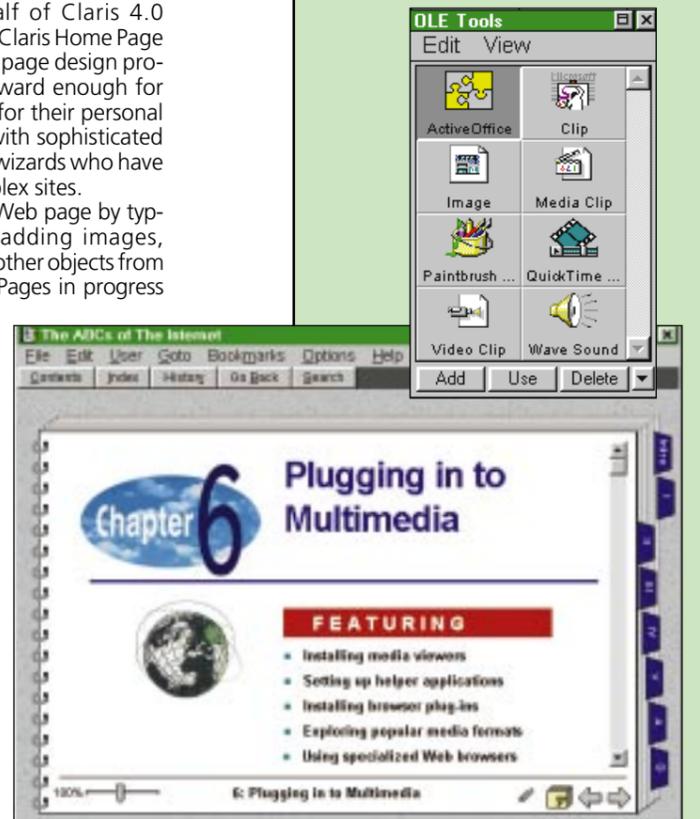
Tables are exceptionally easy to use and can be filled by dropping existing text or data into an empty table and then using global formatting options for the layout. You can also tweak the appearance of tables interactively using the mouse. Adding frames is easy enough, but you have to create the pages for the frames first, which doesn't allow for on-the-fly creativity.

There's no overview facility to give an at-a-glance-picture of an entire site, but you can create a structure of folders on your hard disk and Home Page 2.0 will ensure that all file references are adjusted relative to the root folder when the site is uploaded to a server.

Two minor grumbles about Home Page 2.0 are that it uses a non-standard help system (written in HTML) and the full manual is supplied only in electronic format. The printed documentation is a *Getting Started* booklet containing basic information and a brief tutorial for beginners. A special HTML file provides information about using Home Page 2.0 and Claris Works together, but any such interaction is based solely on the usual Windows cut-and-paste facilities.

Paul Wardley

## Claris Works 4.0 Internet Edition (continued)



If you're in the market for an integrated package and you have a hankering to create your own Web pages, go out now and buy Claris Works 4.0 Internet Edition. It's powerful and easy to use and while it may not be the cheapest option, it's still good value for money.

- £151.58 (inc VAT)
- £116.33 upgrade from any other integrated package or Web designer
- Claris: 0345 413060

| Claris Works 4.0 Internet Edn |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Ease of use                   | ★★★★★        |
| Performance                   | ★★★★★        |
| Features                      | ★★★★★        |
| Value for money               | ★★★★★        |
| <b>Overall</b>                | <b>★★★★★</b> |

Minimum requirements: 486 PC with Windows 95, CD-ROM drive, 8Mb of RAM, VGA graphics and 22Mb of hard disk space (both programs).

## Apple Newton MessagePad 2000

A hand-held computer with handwriting recognition and built-in applications for word processing, Web browsing and receiving e-mail.

- 161.9MHz StrongARM RISC processor
- 5Mb of RAM
- Built-in applications: word processor; spreadsheet, calendar; address book; calculator; Web browser; e-mail client
- 115Kbits/s IrDA port
- 2xPC Card Type II sockets
- Backlit, touch-sensitive screen (480x320 pixel resolution)
- Dimension (hxxwd): 28x119x210mm
- Weight: 640g

**While Apple devotees will lap it up, the plain fact is that there are smaller, cheaper and more functional alternatives to the Newton. Furthermore, with Windows CE-based PDAs looming, we cannot imagine the Newton has any kind of mass-market future.**

- £821.33 (inc VAT)
- Apple Newton helpline: 0800 639866

### Newton MessagePad 2000

|                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Build quality   | ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ |
| Performance     | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ |
| Features        | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ |
| Value for money | ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ |
| <b>Overall</b>  | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ |



**W**hen Apple launched the first Newton back in 1993, the machine was unique. Forgoing the obvious choice of a keyboard as a method of information entry, Apple decided that pen-based handwriting recognition would prove a more desirable feature to the buying public. The company had a point, of course – what better way to take notes than using your own handwriting? But it didn't work. The handwriting recognition was at best erratic and the operating system and applications were poorly implemented.

Since then, Apple has released several versions of the Newton PDA (Personal Digital Assistant), each an improvement upon the last. The MessagePad 2000 is the latest incarnation and it now features tools for sending and receiving e-mail and browsing the Internet.

The best that can be said of the MessagePad 2000's size is that it is unwieldy. Yes, it can be held in the hand but the design is not ergonomic and it's uncomfortably weighty. And even though it fits in your palm, it certainly will not fit in your pocket – that is unless your regular attire includes a parka.

From the top of the machine pops a neat pen-like stylus, around the same size and shape as a flightless dart. This is used to control the MessagePad 2000, be it 'clicking' application icons, pointing at the buttons of the calculator or writing into the word processor.

Handwriting recognition has improved in leaps in bounds since the first Newton machine was launched. Where once you would have to spend days training it to recognise your own brand of handwriting, now you can start working more or less straight away. It even coped well with the outrageous scrawls that afflict some of the less

dextrous members of the *What PC?* team. Even so, there are still problems. The fact is that most people will at times pause to consider a word's correct spelling, but as soon as you do this the Newton assumes you've finished that word and dutifully converts the fragment. Unless you write quickly and with consistent spacing, you'll find the Newton splitting words with erroneous spaces, which can be frustrating.

In our opinion, a much better way to work with the Newton is to use the newly added Graffiti recognition system. Graffiti is based on simplified pen strokes that represent the gamut of alphanumeric characters and the majority of symbols. While it might sound a little contrived, in practice Graffiti is very easy to use and most people can master the basics within a few minutes. The payoff for this time spent comes from the consistently accurate recognition that Graffiti gives.

The applications themselves are a mixed bunch. The address book, for example, is about as good as you could wish for, with customisable entry fields and clear, Filofax-like locator tabs. On the other hand, the word processor is poorly featured and trying to navigate and edit documents can be an infuriating affair.

The two newest additions to the Newton applications line-up are the Internet Web browser and the e-mail system. In both cases you need an account with an ISP (Internet Service Provider) before either can be used, as well as a PC Card modem. With these two things in place, receiving and sending e-mail and surfing the Internet are carried out in much the same way as they are on a desktop PC – albeit in black and white, and without the aid of a keyboard.

Scott Colvey ►

## Quicken 6 DeLuxe

The latest version of the leading personal finance package, now with new features to help with setup, learning and use, plus improved investment management facilities.



- Activity Bar and QuickTabs for easy operation
- Multimedia tutorials and on-screen help
- Automatic share price download
- Quicken 6 DeLuxe extras: Home Inventory, QuickInvoice, Free Microsoft Internet Explorer & Quick Tax, audio and video Qcards

**Still the best all-rounder, Quicken 6 now provides excellent tools to help users work with its unsurpassed feature set.**

- Quicken 6 DeLuxe: £59.95 (inc VAT) (£34.95 for upgrade)
- Intuit: 0800 072 7343

### Quicken 6 DeLuxe

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Ease of use     | ★★★★★ |
| Performance     | ★★★★★ |
| Features        | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Overall</b>  | ★★★★★ |

Minimum requirements: 486, 8Mb of RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95



Despite its rich feature set, Quicken has never been difficult to install and run. Yet, because of this very richness, discovering all its facilities and using them properly could take quite a long time. Quicken 6 solves that. This major upgrade makes it easier than ever to set up and use the program and adds new tools to accelerate the discovery and learning process.

We reviewed Quicken 5 in our April issue, and Quicken 6 retains the same capabilities and strengths. It handles six types of account: current, deposit, credit, cash, building society, investment, asset, and liability. Transactions are entered into its well-designed register, which looks rather like a bank statement, and you get memorising and other tools to minimise the chore.

Regular bills and income can be entered just once and Quicken then reminds you of imminent bills, even without starting Quicken itself. By specifying a category (such as Groceries) for each transaction, you can create reports and graphs analysing your income and expenses. Because of its comprehensive capabilities, there are many ways to employ Quicken. You can use it simply to record current account transactions and balance them monthly. Or you can manage many accounts of different types, track investments and loans, analyse how much you spend, forecast savings and create detailed financial reports to plan your early (hopefully wealthy) retirement.

If you're new to Quicken, you can start with a simple overview, or study the comprehensive on-screen user guide, then get step-by-step instructions to help set up your first account. New tools in Quicken 6 help you find and work with its many features. Each window you open adds a QuickTab on the right of the screen, showing the window's

name. To display a window, you just click its QuickTab. When you exit Quicken 6 and begin again, the same QuickTabs reappear, which makes it easy to resume where you left off. Another improvement is the Activity Bar at the bottom of the screen, which provides easy access to commonly used features.

Quicken 6 DeLuxe greatly expands on-screen assistance, including clever use of multimedia. You can, for example, click the 'How Do I?' button from key windows for help on common tasks. Then there's the neat new 'Tell me about it' facility—the first time you use a new feature, you hear an audio clip that explains how you can use it and you can listen again by clicking the Play button. In many Help windows you can similarly click a 'Show Me' button to see a video, with sound, on how to perform a task. Altogether there are 15 of these easily accessible video clips available.

A welcome enhancement in Quicken 6 DeLuxe is the ability to sort the transactions of any account register (apart from investments) by order of entry, date, amount, or cheque number. Right mouse button support is also excellent, popping up appropriate in-context menus to speed up access.

Investment tracking is another area in which Quicken 6 DeLuxe has been considerably enhanced. You can keep complete transaction records of all your investments in one place, track price histories, see how much your investments are worth, calculate your return on investments, track capital gains and taxable investment income for your income tax return, and track foreign investments. Best of all, providing you have an Internet Service Provider (ISP) account, Quicken 6 DeLuxe lets you update your portfolio prices from the London Stock Exchange automatically.

Terry Pinnell

## Carrera Power Media X P166

A budget-priced PC with 166MHz Pentium MMX processor.



Carrera was one of the first companies to push out a 200MHz MMX (multimedia extensions) machine and, now that the dust has settled, this 166MHz version has been added to the product range. This may not sound worthy of great excitement until you notice the price – Carrera has pulled out all the stops to bring in a fairly highly-specified computer with a price tag of under £1,200.

The P166 MMX is housed in a creamy-coloured midi-tower case. Setting it up is hassle-free, thanks to Carrera's own user manual – this is currently in a beta version and therefore incomplete, but a final version is promised soon.

A look inside the tower case shows things to be fairly tidy on the whole. There are two free ISA slots and three empty PCI slots, and these are all easy to get to. Sadly, the same can't be said for the SIMM (single in-line memory modules) slots. You need to forage among a forest of ribbon cables to discover that 16Mb of RAM is supplied on two 8Mb SIMMs and you stand little or no chance of adding extra memory without first disconnecting some cables.

More of a rummage reveals a Sound Blaster-compatible sound card and an ATI Mach64 graphics card with 2Mb of RAM. The hard disk drive is generous enough at 2Gb and there's another encouraging sign of quality in the Toshiba eight-speed CD-ROM drive.

What you won't find in this PC is a modem. Perhaps this isn't entirely surprising, given the price tag but it's a disappointment nonetheless. With growing interest in the Internet, a modem is not so much an optional extra as a necessity and it is perhaps a misjudgment to omit one.

Using the Carrera P166 MMX is a pleasant enough experience, although not everybody will appre-

ciate the Mitsumi keyboard. It certainly is a fast machine, with speedy response to menu selections and commands. The picture on screen lives up to the promise of quality from an ATI graphics card and the LG (formerly Goldstar) monitor, as always, delivers a pleasingly sharp image. It's not the usual Studio-works model, and presumably this is to do with budget constrictions, but the 1505s is still a very nice 15in monitor. The CD-ROM drive is quiet and efficient and the Microsoft mouse is as pleasant as ever. If you run standard software on this PC you will find it is quick and smooth. Run some MMX-specific packages and you will be enthralled.

Included with this computer is a limited range of software – Windows 95 is fully installed and ready to use, as is Microsoft Works. There's little else to get your teeth into, though – the Windows 95 'Start Here', while useful, is hardly exciting. That aside, you will only find some trial Internet software, installed ready for when you treat yourself to a modem. This rather draws your attention, once again, to the Carrera machine's lack of a built-in facility, so perhaps it isn't worth including.

The cuts had to be made somewhere to achieve this much in a computer for such a small price and bundled software is the major target. Microsoft Works for Windows 95 is supplied, as are a selection of utilities, but there's nothing that can really take advantage of the MMX processor's extra horsepower.

The documentation from Carrera is now looking promising, with a very comprehensive manual. As well as telling you how to set up your PC, it also has handy sections on looking after your disks, using MS-DOS and Windows 95, how to upgrade your computer and much more besides.

Sheila Hill

- 166MHz Pentium MMX processor
- Midi-tower case
- 16Mb of RAM
- 2Gb hard disk
- 8-speed CD-ROM drive
- 2Mb ATI Mach64 graphics card
- 16-bit sound card
- Stereo speakers
- Goldstar 15in monitor
- Windows 95, MS Works and utility software

**The Carrera Power Media X P166 has good components, is reasonably well put together and performs nicely. If you're after power on a shoestring this is a good buy but you'll have to spend extra to get all the finishing touches.**

- £1,173.83 (inc VAT)
- Carrera: 0171 830 0486

### Carrera Power Media X P166

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Features        | ★★★★★ |
| Build quality   | ★★★★★ |
| Performance     | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Overall</b>  | ★★★★★ |

## WebWhacker 3.0

A Web browser tool that reduces on-line costs by storing copies of Web sites on a PC's hard disk drive for later viewing.

- Schedule unattended sessions
- Grab URLs while surfing
- Contents filters to control downloads
- Headlines pages in various formats
- Automatic renewal
- Wizard for setting up database
- Text search with Boolean operators

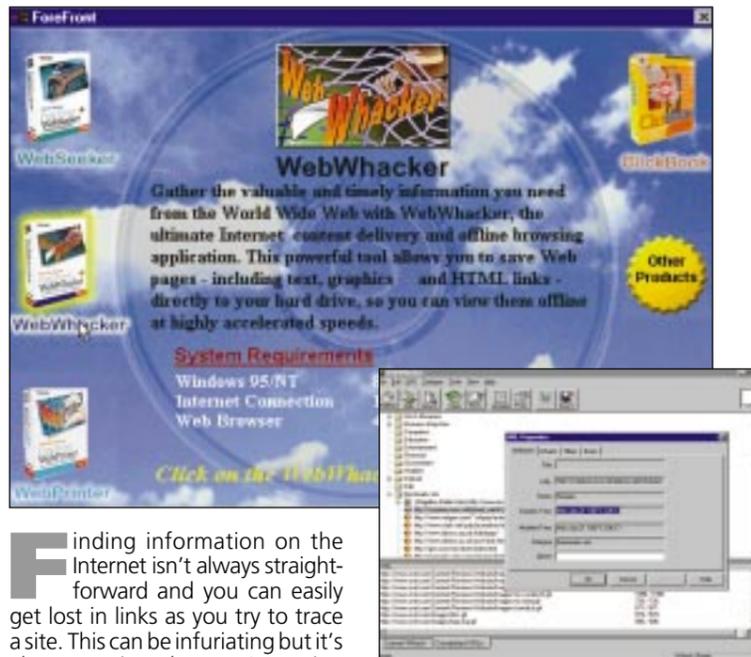
**WebWhacker 3.0 could be attractive to mobile corporate users, but for average home surfers the effort to set up and learn it might not be worthwhile. Since similar features are also incorporated into Internet Explorer 4 though, WebWhacker's usefulness might be short-lived.**

- £58.70 (inc. VAT)
- Forefront: 0181 387 4011

### WebWhacker 3.0

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Ease of use     | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Build quality   | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Performance     | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Features        | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Value for money | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| <b>Overall</b>  | <b>★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆</b> |

Minimum requirements: 486, Windows 95, 8Mb of RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space, Internet connection, SpyGlass SDI standard-compliant Web browser such as Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.1 or Netscape Navigator 3.01.



Finding information on the Internet isn't always straightforward and you can easily get lost in links as you try to trace a site. This can be infuriating but it's also expensive when you're paying for telephone calls by the minute.

WebWhacker 3.0 is intended to solve this problem by re-creating sections of the Web on your hard drive. You choose the sites, go on line, download pages (with text, links, graphics and sound), then browse them off line at your leisure.

This process is called 'whacking' and with a site stored on your PC, you no longer have to wait for information to be downloaded from busy sites at peak periods. By reducing the dependency on your Internet and phone connection, WebWhacker 3.0 could save time and money.

The problem is that before you can whack anything, you have to learn how to use WebWhacker and that's not as easy as it should be. Confidence in the product is also set back at an early stage by careless documentation and software flaws. Minor examples include help screens that are still labelled 'WebWhacker 2.0', contradictory information on system requirements, missing sections of Help, and so on.

It's also a pity that no sample Web addresses are included on the CD-ROM – the opening screen just contains a list of empty folders (Art, Business, Entertainment and so on), with no sites on which you can learn the procedures. You have to either add each URL and its title manually, or import them. You can only import Netscape bookmarks automatically, not Microsoft Internet Explorer Favourites. To import Microsoft Favourites you have to drag them across manually but, annoyingly, you then lose their titles.

For each of your chosen WebWhacker sites, you must 'subscribe' to its URL and assign it to a category. You also specify how often your subscription will be renewed,

rather like a magazine or newspaper subscription. Whenever the text or graphics of the original page changes, you can set things up so that you'll receive a new copy automatically. In practice however, whacking proved to be somewhat unreliable, often halting after a few seconds for no obvious reason. On the plus side, once data is downloaded you can search it flexibly for specified text. WebWhacker 3.0 also lets you have multiple databases of whacked sites for easy transfer between computers. Less impressively, WebWhacker does not compress its database when you delete sites, so you could use a lot of hard drive capacity.

The WebWhacker CD-ROM also includes an evaluation version of WebSeeker 3.0. The full version is the same price as WebWhacker 3.0, and this lets you make a comprehensive search of numerous search engines such as Yahoo, Lycos, WebCrawler and so on. WebSeeker 3.0 brings back the results quickly, sorts them, removes duplicates, collates them, and presents the results. It offers several major improvements over WebSeeker 2.0 (which we reviewed in the March, 1997 issue) including over 100 search engines, now organised into logical categories.

To use WebWhacker to its optimum you would probably have to give up your Netscape bookmarks or Internet Explorer Favourites and incorporate all those sites into WebWhacker, suitably categorised. However, if you compromise and use WebWhacker to complement rather than replace your normal methods, it can still prove beneficial if you do a lot of surfing.

Terry Pinnell

## M.Y.O.B 6

The latest incarnation of the mid-range accounting software that wants to help you mind your own business.



At small business level, accounting programs divide into two camps – those that pretend they're not serious double-entry systems and those that admit it. Version 6 of M.Y.O.B. is one of the latter. It's a full three-ledger system – nominal, sales and purchase ledgers – and it doesn't mind calling them that. The nominal ledger talks openly of assets, liabilities, capital (equity), income, expenses, cost of sales, other income and other expenses. Apart from these eight types of account there are another four levels of account nesting for closely detailed category analysis.

Setting up accounts categories is made easier if you fall into one of around 100 predefined trades, ranging from shoe shops through freelance writers to funeral directors. You can change these account details or define your own set.

As well as its three main ledgers, M.Y.O.B. offers integrated chequebook records plus stock control and, unusually, an address card-file for simple contact management. Each card can be annotated by up to 10 single-letter identifiers, enabling you to categorise contacts for anything from credit control to sales prospecting. You also get a To Do List.

Within the sales ledger you can determine credit terms for specific customers as well as standard credit terms for the rest, both automatically applied. You can also, if you're commercially brave (or strong) enough, impose finance charges on overdue accounts. As well as invoices and credit notes, there are 'pending' or pro-forma invoices which can be used as quotations or acknowledgements, since they have no effect on ledger or stock records. Invoices can be formatted for goods, services or 'professional' layout.

You also get a new facility to define separate records for any number of 'jobs' for each customer, each job's income and expenditure

being separately tracked. Jobs can be organised under job headers and details, and include important information like start and completion dates, project manager and client contact. Reimbursable expenses can be linked to specific jobs and invoiced automatically.

Stock control is also handled automatically, stock levels (and values) being reduced as you invoice sales and increased as you send out purchase orders. You can also adjust stock manually if the annual stocktake reveals discrepancies. All stock can be individually priced (as cost or selling price), although you can override those figures for individual transactions. Stock items can also be grouped together to allow automatic parts assembly.

Invoices, statements, purchase orders and cheques can be customised for fields and layout, which is useful if you're using plain paper or your own letterhead instead of the preprinted M.Y.O.B. forms.

Reporting facilities are good, with around 100 variations, which can be displayed on screen or printed out, allowing you to list and analyse everything you need to know about your business. You can customise reports, including which fields will appear on the report, and in which order. You can also use colour selectively; for example, to display negative numbers in red.

Other new features include cue cards for trickier transactions like dealing with bounced cheques and exporting data to other applications. Navigation is by Windows menus or a 'Command Centre' interface which gives you a context-sensitive hierarchical flow chart.

Mistakes can be corrected without trace if the data hasn't been saved yet – and if it has, there's a routine for that too. Accessing detailed information is also easy, using 'drill-down' techniques right to the original entry.

James Taylor

- Three-ledger system with chequebook and invoicing
- Sales and purchase order processing and analysis
- Aged debtor analysis
- Estimating and quotation preparation
- Stock management
- Customer card file with contact management facility
- Custom forms designer

**Many small businesses would take a long time to outgrow M.Y.O.B. 6 and its low price belies a great deal of functionality.**

**Despite its user-friendliness, however, it does need some accountancy knowledge.**

- £229.13 (inc VAT)
- BestWare: 0800 0260261

### M.Y.O.B. 6

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Ease of use     | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Performance     | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Features        | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| Value for money | ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆        |
| <b>Overall</b>  | <b>★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆</b> |

Minimum requirements: Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, with 386 processor, 10Mb of hard disk space and 4Mb of RAM.



# How reliable is your PC?

Fill out our survey form to enter a prize draw for a FREE one-year subscription to *What PC?*

**M**ost of us depend on our PCs at work or at home, but just how reliable are they? Tell us about your system by filling in this form and return it to us at *What PC?*

editorial, Reliability survey, VNU Business Publications, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG. The first 10 out of the hat will receive 12 issues of *What PC?* absolutely free.

### What make is your main desktop PC?

- Acer
- Adams
- Apple
- Apricot
- Aries
- Armari
- AST
- Brother
- Carrera
- CIC
- Colossus
- Commodore
- Compaq
- Compuadd
- Dan
- Dell
- Digital
- Dotlink
- Escom
- Evesham Vale
- Other (state) .....
- Fujitsu/ICL
- Gateway
- Hewlett-Packard
- Hi-Grade
- Hyundai
- IBM
- ICL
- Mesh
- MJN
- Olivetti
- Opus
- Packard Bell
- Red Box
- Special Reserve
- TAG
- Tatung
- Tiny
- Tulip
- Viglen
- Zenith

### What processor type is your main desktop PC?

- Pentium
- 486
- 386
- 286

### How long ago was your desktop PC purchased?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 months to a year
- One to two years
- Over two years old

### Has your PC ever broken down?

- Yes
- No

### If so, what was the problem to do with?

- Hard disk drive
- CD-ROM drive
- Floppy disk drive
- Processor
- Memory
- Power supply unit
- Motherboard fault
- Serial or parallel interface
- Internal modem (if supplied with PC)
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Windows 3.1
- Windows 95
- Business software application
- Leisure software (ie game, multimedia, etc)
- Sound card
- Graphics card
- Monitor
- Don't know
- Other (state) .....

### How did you fix it?

- Did it myself
- Sent it back to manufacturer/supplier
- Manufacturer/supplier serviced it on-site
- Phoned manufacturer's technical support line
- Repair shop
- Friend
- Still broken

### How do you rate the support you got from your supplier/manufacturer?

- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

### How do you rate your desktop PC for reliability?

- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

### Do you have a printer? If so, is it a...

- Laser (including LED printers)
- Inkjet printer
- Dot-matrix printer
- Other (state) .....

### What make is your main printer?

- Apple
- Brother
- Bull
- C.Itoh
- Canon
- Citizen
- Dataproducts
- Epson
- Fujitsu
- Other (state) .....
- Hewlett-Packard
- Integrex
- Kyocera
- Lexmark
- Mitsubishi
- Oki
- Olivetti
- Panasonic
- QMS
- Samsung
- Seikosha
- Sharp
- Star
- Tally
- Tektronix
- Triumph Adler
- Xerox

### How long ago was your printer purchased?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 months to a year
- One to two years
- Over two years ago

### Has your printer ever broken down?

- Yes
- No

### If so, what was the problem to do with?

- Paper feed
- Toner cartridge
- Ink cartridge/print head
- Power supply unit
- Leads/connections
- Software (drivers etc)
- Don't know
- Other (state) .....

### How did you fix it?

- Did it myself
- Sent it back to manufacturer/supplier
- Manufacturer/supplier serviced it on-site
- Phoned manufacturer's technical support line
- Repair shop
- Friend
- Still broken

### How do you rate the support you got from your supplier/manufacturer?

- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

### How do you rate your printer for reliability?

- Very good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....