




FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS AND GRAPHICS CARDS

| Flat-panel displays | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Details | Last month's position | First reviewed | Price (ex VAT) | Warranty | Screen size | Maximum resolution | Pixel pitch | Dimensions (width x depth x height) | Weight | Digital connector | USB ports | |
|  1 CTX PV700 01923 810 800 www.ctxeurope.com | 1 | Sep 02 | £395 | 3-year | 17in | 1,280x1,024 | 0.26mm | 438x447x166mm | 7.5kg | no | no | |
|  2 NEC 1700V 0870 120 1160 www.nec.mitsubishi.com | 2 | Sep 02 | £449 | 3-year | 17in | 1,280x1,024 | 0.26mm | 434x437x220mm | 6.2kg | no | no | |
| 3 Sony SDM-X52 0870 511 1999 www.sony-cp.com | NEW | Oct 02 | £399 | 3-year | 15in | 1,024x768 | 0.29mm | 392x199x358mm | 4.8kg | yes | no | |
| 4 Sony SDM-S71 0870 511 1999 www.sony-cp.com | 3 | Sep 02 | £609 | 3-year | 17.1in | 1,280x1,024 | 0.26mm | 423x233x399mm | 6.5kg | no | no | |
| 5 Samsung SyncMaster 171P 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.com | 4 | Sep 02 | £605 | 3-year | 17in | 1,280x1,024 | 0.26mm | 424x206x457mm | 6.2kg | yes | no | |
| Graphics cards | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Details | Last month's position | First reviewed | Price (ex VAT) | Warranty | Graphics processor | Installed RAM | DDR RAM | Ramdac | 4xAGP | Maximum resolution@ refresh rate | Colours@ 800x600 | DVI |
|  1 Gainward GeForce4 Pro Ti/650 Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de | NEW | Oct 02 | £85 | 3-year | nVidia GeForce4 MX 460 | 64MB | yes | 350MHz | yes | 2,048x1,536 @75Hz | 16.7 million | no |
|  2 Chaintech GeForce4 MX A-G441 0120 447 4747 www.chaintech.dk | 1 | Aug 02 | £49 | 2-year | nVidia GeForce4 MX 440 | 64MB | yes | 350MHz | yes | 2,048x1,536 @75Hz | 16.7 million | no |
| 3 Albatron GeForce4 Ti 4200 0870 729 7818 www.albatron.com.tw | NEW | Oct 02 | £123 | 3-year | nVidia GeForce4 4200 | 64MB | yes | 350MHz | yes | 2,048x1,536 @75Hz | 16.7 million | yes |
| 4 Gainward GeForce3 Ti/450 Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de | 2 | Apr 02 | £110 | 3-year | nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200 | 64MB | yes | 350MHz | yes | 2,048x1,536 @75Hz | 16.7 million | no |
| 5 Gainward GeForce4 Ultra/700 XP Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de | 3 | Jul 02 | £210 | 3-year | nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400 | 128MB | yes | 350MHz | yes | 2,048x1,536 @75Hz | 16.7 million | yes |

FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

1 CTX PV700

 Entering at number one last month, the PV700 from CTX continues to hold on to its Best Buy award. This flat-panel may not have the extras of some of its competitors and its specifications are lower, but when it comes to what really matters – good visual display and value for money – it’s way ahead of its peers.


The PV700 has an optimal resolution of 1,280x1,024 at 60Hz and a 0.26mm dot pitch. The 120-degree viewing angle means it’s hard for more than one viewer to get a good look at the screen but that one person has a treat in store – this model offers a display comparable to flat-panels twice the price. It copes well with sharp text and the colour reproduction on DVD playback is very accurate.

The casing is plain and there are no extras like a USB hub or speakers. The big plus point with this 17in model, though, is its price. CTX is only charging £395 where most models are at least £500, making this one of the best bargains on the market.



GRAPHICS CARDS


1 Gainward GeForce4 Pro Ti/650 Golden Sample

 Our new Best Buy improves on the previous chart-topper by including the fastest graphics chip in the value GeForce4 MX family, the MX 460. Partnered by 64MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and 4x AGP, this card also benefits from Golden Sample status, so it can run at the highest 600MHz clock speed. The Gainward’s frame rates are impressive as well, remaining above the magic 50fps (frames per second) mark under the most demanding conditions. A budget card isn’t about the extras, so there’s no digital connector or advanced TV facilities as standard. On saying this, though, you do get TV-out, while Gainward’s famed tweaking application allows you find the best performance settings. If you can afford one of the GeForce4 Ti 4400 or 4600 cards, then these will keep your PC running longer and harder in the coming months. If, however, £100 is your upper limit, the Pro/650 is a strong contender that punches well above its deceptively modest weight.



FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

2 NEC 1700V

 Like the Best Buy CTX, this flagship 17in model from NEC lacks a decent feature base and extras, but it also sports a higher price tag. As a result it can’t compete with CTX on value for money but it has one of the best images we’ve seen on a 17in model. With its 1,280x1,024 at 60Hz and 0.26mm dot pitch, the 1700V yields visual quality way beyond the capabilities of the competition. The text display is deep and sharp while colour is excellent. There’s no pixellation and DVD playback is exceptional. If you’ve got money to spend and you want the best in quality, then the NEC is the model for you.



3 Sony SDM-X52

Sony brings its design nous to the 15in flat-panel market with its new release, the SDM-X52. The 1,024x768 at 75Hz resolution is par for the course but the 150-degree viewing angle makes it possible for more than two people to comfortably see the screen – handy if you watch DVD movies on your PC. The 400:1 contrast ratio and Candelas rating provide excellent luminosity so the display won’t be dull even in harsh lighting conditions. It’s only let down by the disappointing 0.29mm dot pitch.



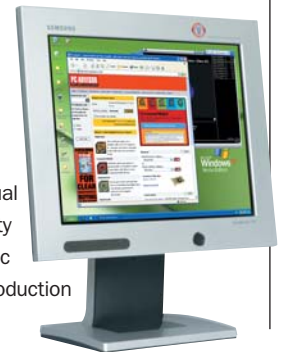
4 Sony SDM-S71

The SDM-S71 may be a design classic, but the lack of a USB hub or DVI (digital visual interface) is disappointing, and the setup options aren’t the most versatile. But if the Sony is lacking when it comes to accessories and menu options, it succeeds in terms of specification. Image quality is excellent, using the crisp colour palette to bring the most static pictures to life. Better still is the text reproduction, with well-defined characters and clean background.




5 Samsung SyncMaster 171P

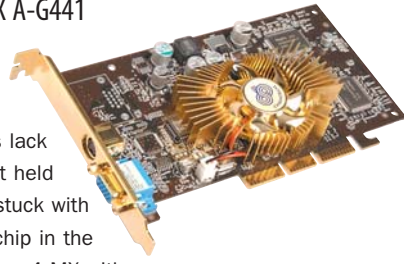
Samsung enlisted the help of Ferdinand Porsche to design its latest model, resulting in a sturdy and durable flat-panel with an attractive textured casing and refined curves. The menu options, however, aren’t as pleasing and without screen resize keys it is difficult to use the whole of the screen area in anything other than 1,280x1,024 mode. There is no USB connection, although the DVI (digital visual interface) connector ensures compatibility for the future. Images are always realistic and detailed, but we found the text reproduction lacking clarity.



GRAPHICS CARDS

2 Chaintech GeForce4 MX A-G441

 Chaintech may still be relatively new to the retail graphics card arena, but its lack of experience clearly hasn’t held the company back. It has stuck with the tried-and-tested nVidia chip in the MX A-G441, using the GeForce4 MX with 64MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM – which few GeForce4 MX cards will top. It only features a TV-out S-Video port, but the software bundle is impressive as it includes Aquanox and MDK. In the all-important Quake III test, it managed a fantastic 159fps (frames per second) at a resolution of 1,024x768. Even in top resolutions, it stays close to the 50fps mark.



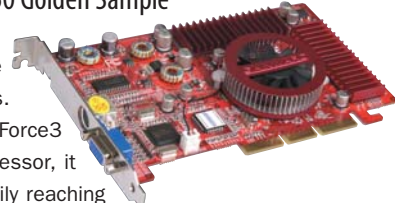
3 Albatron GeForce4 Ti 4200

This newcomer has an anticlimactic feel, partly due to the fact that Albatron has used the cheapest and least powerful of the Ti processor range, the GeForce4 Ti 4200. Although the performance isn’t bad, it was rarely able to extend a significant lead over the Gainward MX 460. There are compensations for the slightly disappointing performance, including the DVI (digital visual interface) connector, the AV cable and the solid games bundle. Overall, though, this card lacks the performance of the more powerful Ti 4600 and 4400 models, and the value for money of the Gainward and Chaintech cards.



4 Gainward GeForce3 Ti/450 Golden Sample

This former Best Buy combines a reasonable price with high-quality components. Employing the mid-range GeForce3 Titanium 200 graphics processor, it delivers sizzling speed, easily reaching 120fps (frames per second) at a resolution of 1,024x768. Even under the most demanding circumstances you’ll find it continues to hug the 50fps mark. The hardware specifications are also impressive with 64MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and a TV-out port included, though the lack of a DVI (digital visual interface) is disappointing.



5 Gainward GeForce4 Ultra/700 XP Golden Sample

German graphics giant Gainward slips to number five with the Ultra/700 XP. Gainward has opted for the Ti 4400 chip rather than the top-of-the-range 4600, but this makes little difference in practice: it produced a searing 181fps (frames per second) in our Quake III tests at a resolution of 1,024x768. It loses out however when it comes to value for money – even though £210 makes this one of the cheaper GeForce4 cards, it’s still a lot to pay.

