reviews

Scoring and testing explained

Each review rates a product according to a set criterion for its type. The score is broken down at the end of the review to show how we reached our final verdict. Ratings range from 1 to 10 and fall into the following classifications:
1 to 3 – poor   4 to 6 – average   6 to 8 – good   8 to 10 – excellent

Hardware categories
• Features **This rates the specification of a product by current standards. For example, a 1.5GHz PC with 256MB of RAM and 60GB hard drive would score highly.**
• Build quality **How well the product is made and the quality of the components.**
• Value for money **The price of a product will often be the deciding factor between a good review and a bad review. This is not to say that cheaper products will always win out, but the better the price/performance and features ratio the higher the score.**

Software categories
• Ease of use **Describes how easy it is to install and use the software.**
• Features **As with hardware, this rating indicates how much the software package contains. An office suite that only came with a word processor would score poorly.**
• Value for money **Lots of features, good performance and a low price tag will result in a good score.**

Scoring
• Software **Overall ratings for software take into account the three main assessment categories above and any other factors that are covered in the detailed review.**
• Hardware **Because we provide product charts which rank hardware from 1 to 10 across a category, we do not provide overall scores. To gauge how well a hardware product has fared against the competition, look at where it falls in the relevant Top 10 chart.**

All our rankings are based on a calculation of features and performance compared to price, so the highest-scoring products also represent the best value for money. For those products not featured in our charts, anything we consider particularly outstanding is awarded a Recommended logo. Charts are introduced, amended or removed as and when necessary to cover any emerging hardware sectors, advances in technology or changes in the industry.

The Best Buy and Recommended awards
A Best Buy product offers a superlative combination of features, performance, value for money and customer service. Those that earn a Recommended award are almost as good, offering great value, quality and performance.

Prices
All the prices printed in PC Advisor are quoted by the manufacturer or distributor and exclude VAT. Prices are only intended as a guide, and you may see products on sale for less or more than our quoted price.

If you're interested in purchasing any of the products reviewed in **PC Advisor,** please contact the manufacturer or supplier direct, mentioning both the magazine and the issue in which you saw the product. If they won't supply the product as reviewed, please contact reviews@idg.com. Please note manufacturers are under no obligation to feature reviewed products on their website.

The February issue is upon us, and brings with it plenty of tempting new products. Whether you're after a new PC or a DV (digital video) camcorder, don't part with a penny until you've read through our reviews of all the latest models.

Technological advances
We kick off our new monthly *Technofile* series on page 95, with an in-depth look at DV camcorders. We've rounded up all the latest models, so whether you are an amateur or a seasoned home movie maker, we can help you make an informed buying decision.

Technofile is designed to give you a deeper understanding of a specific product area, combining expert buying advice with an explanation of the technology behind the products and a look at what the future might hold.

PCs-a-plenty
Our regular quarterly examination of the PC market comes round again this month, on page 118, and you'll notice a slew of new entries in all three charts – Power, Budget and Superbudget – on pages 100, 104 and 110 respectively. It has never been
a better time to invest in a new computer, with low prices, fast processors and a brand new operating system to play with.

Testing times
You'll also notice that we've updated our WorldBench benchmarking software, moving from 2000 to version 4 (don't ask us to explain the numbering system). This uses updated software and a faster base system to give you a better idea of how each PC

performs – for more information turn to page 93. Just one note of caution: old WorldBench 2000 scores cannot be compared with new WorldBench 4 scores. From now on, all of the reviewed PCs will be tested using version 4, but some stragglers may remain in our charts for a few months.

Hot for hardware
There seems to be no end to the products we've tested this month, with new printers from Epson and HP making an appearance on page 78. HP's offering is particularly interesting as it incorporates a Bluetooth connection, so you can print directly from any similarly equipped devices. Epson crops up again on page 84 with its first USB 2.0 scanner, and we look at how the faster data transfers offered by this standard help to speed up transmitting large scans to your PC.

AJP has given us an exclusive preview of its new notebook on page 77, which reads both Secure Digital and Memory Stick media and will be a real bonus if you own a camera or PDA (personal digital assistant), for example, that uses these storage formats. This should whet your appetite for next month's round-up of all the latest new models across our two notebook charts – Power and Budget.

Design for life
In *Software* we look at four of the latest DVD authoring packages, which are ideal for burning DV camcorder footage on to a disk. If your design skills lie more in the graphical, rather than audio visual, sphere then you should check out our review of Serif's Draw & Design and Photo & Paint packages on page 89.

We know how important security is to all computer users. In response to this we have the low-down on McAfee's Internet Security package. Turn to page 90 to see just how safe it will keep your PC.

Coming up…
Alongside notebooks next month, *Technofile* delves into the world of motherboards. We have also been promised a look at a PC powered by Intel's new top-speed processor, but that's all we can say for now. Be sure to pick up March's issue to find out more. ■

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