





TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS AND FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

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
 1 Elsa Gladiac 721 020 7294 0114 www.elsa.com	1	Jan 02	£170	6-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million
 2 ATI Radeon 8500 01628 477 788 www.ati.com	2	Jan 02	£212	3-year	ATI Radeon 8500	64MB	Y	400MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @85Hz	16.7 million
3 Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 200 020 8686 5600 www.hercules-uk.com	3	Jan 02	£212	3-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million
4 Gainward GeForce2 Ti/500 XP Golden Sample 0870 220 0700 www.gainward.de	4	Jan 02	£110	3-year	nVidia GeForce2 Ti	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million
5 Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 500 020 8686 5600 www.hercules-uk.com	5	Jan 02	£280	3-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 500	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million

Flat-panel displays											
Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Screen size	Maximum resolution@ refresh rate	Pixel pitch	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight	Digital connector	USB ports
 1 LG Flatron LCD 882LE 0870 607 5544 www.lge.co.uk	1	Feb 02	£749	3-year	18.1in	1,280x1,024 @60Hz	0.28mm	434x235x443mm	9kg	Y	4
 2 NEC MultiSync LCD1830 0845 121 9200 www.nec-monitors.com	2	Jan 01	£729	3-year	18.1in	1,280x1,024 @75Hz	0.28mm	435x215x449mm	8.5kg	N	N
3 Taxan CrystalVision 780 01344 484 646 www.taxan.co.uk	3	Oct 01	£749	3-year	17.4in	1,280x1,024 @75Hz	0.27mm	450x245x455mm	10.4kg	N	4
4 Hitachi CML170 01628 643 315 www.hitachi.co.uk	4	Oct 01	£649	3-year	17in	1,280x1,024 @75Hz	0.26mm	424x178x436mm	6.5kg	N	N
5 Sony SDM M61 0870 542 4424 www.sony-cp.com	5	Nov 01	£599	3-year	16in	1,280x1,024 @60Hz	0.25mm	400x180x357mm	5.4kg	Y	N

TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS

1 Elsa Gladiac 721

It's a sign of the capabilities of nVidia's GeForce3 card that sales have been fairly good despite the extortionate price tags. So for anyone waiting to welcome the GeForce3 into their home without selling their house first, the Elsa Gladiac 721 will come as a breath of fresh air.

The Gladiac 721's chip, the GeForce3 Titanium 200 – or Ti 200 – is the mid-range option in nVidia's new line of processors. Although it doesn't have the cutting-edge acceleration of the GeForce3 Ti 500, it's only under the most demanding conditions that you'll notice the difference. On Quake 3, for example, frame rates on a 1GHz PC run close to 100 even at a resolution of 1,600x1,200. Better still is the price tag: £170 is still a lot to pay for a graphics card, but this is an excellent deal considering the hardware's ability. For affordable graphics firepower with no strings attached, the Gladiac is a Titanium for the masses.



TOP 10 FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

1 LG Flatron LCD 882LE

At first glance, £749 seems rather a high price to pay for a flat-panel display. However, the LG Flatron LCD 882LE is an 18.1in model – a screen that, in reality, offers a greater viewing area than a 19in CRT monitor.

The LG is slim, lightweight and the dainty frame will consume surprisingly little of your desk space. Hardware specifications, including a 160-degree viewing angle and 0.28mm dot pitch, for example, are standard but more than capable. Although the maximum resolution of 1,280x1,024 seems a waste of such a large screen, you'll be hard pressed to find an 18.1 flat-panel that beats it.

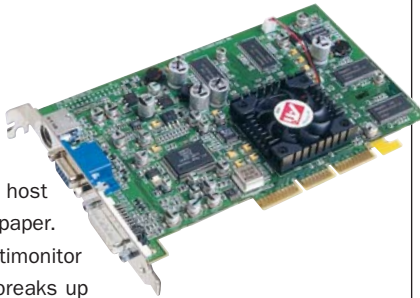
The LG would be no more than a competent 18.1in flat panel were it not for its price tag. But the low cost surely makes this display the latest must-buy screen in the one sector of the IT industry that you truly can't take your eyes off.



TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS

2 ATI Radeon 8500

The latest incarnation of ATI's Radeon chip, the 8500, offers a host of stunning features on paper. Hydravision enables multimonitor support, while TruForm breaks up surfaces into a number of smaller sections, allowing graphics to be more detailed. However, the 8500's unstable performance and poor Windows XP compatibility mean you have a card that appears to have been rushed out before it's ready. We still place the Radeon 8500 in the number-two position because, for its performance, the £212 price tag is excellent.



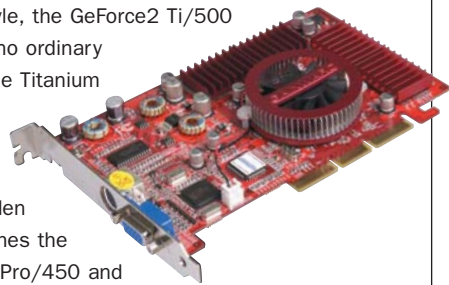
3 Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 200

This Titanium 200 card from Hercules is certainly impressive. The Lightspeed Memory Architecture, for instance, manages 64MB of fast DDR (double data rate) RAM and the programmable nFinite FX engine delivers stunning graphics. The Ti 200 chip is no slouch, though, and only the pricey Ti 500 was noticeably faster, but this was only at resolutions of 1,600x1,200 with high detail levels.



4 Gainward GeForce2 Ti/500 XP Golden Sample

In typical Gainward style, the GeForce2 Ti/500 XP Golden Sample is no ordinary GeForce2 card, and the Titanium enhancements promise plenty of speed. In performance, the Golden Sample easily dispatches the likes of the GeForce2 Pro/450 and the Kyro 2 cards. And while it might be no match for the GeForce3 range, it did measure up to the underdeveloped ATI Radeon on a couple of occasions.



5 Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 500

If the GeForce3 Ti 200 is impressive enough then it's the Titanium 500 – with a 500MHz memory sub-system and the ability to perform 960 billion operations per second – which proves astonishing. The most amazing feature of the top Titanium is its ability to keep up the pace. If you can afford this card you won't regret it, but for the average user our top two cards remain the more tempting purchases.



TOP 10 FLAT-PANEL DISPLAYS

2 NEC MultiSync LCD1830

The MultiSync's 18.1in screen actually boasts a picture equivalent to a 19.5in CRT (cathode ray tube) display. Hardware specifications are impressive, and include a 160-degree viewing angle, 0.28mm dot pitch and 300:1 contrast ratio. Text definition is needle sharp and the gorgeous colour palette is a visual treat. The disappointing case construction is more a minor flaw than a reason not to buy the LCD1830. While its £729 asking price rivals those of the top 17.4in models, this vibrant and versatile screen would stand out at twice the price.



3 Taxan CrystalVision 780

Monitor stalwart Taxan has produced an outstanding 17.4in flat-panel for under £750. The Taxan includes a second RGB port, but no DVI (digital video interface). Hardware features – including a pixel pitch of 0.27mm, maximum resolution of 1,280x1,024 with a refresh rate of 75Hz – are good, but it's the Taxan's image quality that truly impresses. The CrystalVision's dark and rich colour palette offers levels of realism and atmosphere that aren't found on other competitors' models. The Taxan has excellent image quality, an expansive 17.4in screen size and excellent price tag.



4 Hitachi CML170

The attractive midnight-blue Hitachi CML170 makes an instant impression. The slimmed-down 6.5kg frame – the lightest of the 17in models – is partly due to the lack of advanced hardware features. The absence of a digital connector is slightly disappointing. The colourful menu system is much better, as is the extensive setup options that let you fine-tune the screen to near-perfection. Graphically, the Hitachi CML170 is excellent but text definition isn't as good.



5 Sony SDM-M61

As with all Sony products, the M61 looks attractive with a slender neck and tiny base. The scrollable menu system is sleek and the intuitive three-button navigation gives easy access to the ample range of functions, which includes smoothing, zoom and a backlight. The screen is versatile and includes a DVI (digital video interface) socket. The Sony may lack the resonance and intensity of our top-rated flat-panels, but its refined and colourful images are pleasing to the eye.

