

hot off the press

Some things you just can't wait to shout about. This month *Hot off the press* has two exclusives that missed the reviews desk deadline, but couldn't be left until next month: a magic GPS navigation system and a new range of light-speed graphics cards

Navman GPS 3000

Global positioning system unit

If you're not very good at following directions, or have problems getting from A to B, then a GPS (global positioning system) receiver could be the answer. GPS uses a network of satellites to calculate your position, telling you exactly where you are. The Navman GPS 3000 clips on to a Compaq iPaq Pocket PC and, combined with maps from Tele Atlas, ensures you won't get lost. Two applications are bundled with the Navman: SmartPath City allows you to find your way between major towns, while SmartPath Trip directs you around a particular city.

The bundle also includes a cigarette lighter adapter to power your iPaq while you're on the move and an adjustable suction arm to mount the device in your car. As the Navman clips directly on to the iPaq, there are no additional wires to worry about and the CompactFlash II slot provides extra storage for additional maps. Planning routes is simple, and the directions change with your position making it easy to follow. We couldn't find a facility for voice announcement, but other than that it worked flawlessly. The main downside, however, is the cost – at £212, you'd have to use it a fair bit to get your money's worth.

Navman: 01293 449 882

Website: www.navman-mobile.com

Price: £212 ex VAT



nVidia GeForce4 MX 440 and Ti 4400

Graphics cards

By the time you read this, graphics card retailers should already be filling their shelves with the latest slew of cards from nVidia. Imaginatively titled the GeForce4, the new line will mix budget-priced MX with high-performance Ti models. It won't mark a major advance in technology, although enhanced speed and graphics quality should give nVidia's rival, ATI, some sleepless nights.

The sub-£100 MX 420 – using SDRAM rather than fast DDR (double data rate) RAM – will be the ultra-budget model, while the middle-of-the-range MX 440 and 460 chips should cost you between £130 and £175. We were able to test the 440 card and found that only the Ti 200/500 and ATI Radeon 8500 models were faster. It was possible to keep frame rates above 70fps (frames per second) on a range of games and, even at 1,600x1,200 and beyond, the MX 440 never fell more than 4fps behind the Ti 200.

Even more promising are the Ti cards. The 64MB 4200 and 4400 are due out almost immediately, with a 128MB 4600 coming out later in the year. These high-end graphics cards have an initially prohibitive price tag – expect to pay between £250 and £300 plus – however, the cost is justified due to previously unseen frame rates.

We had a quick glimpse of the 4400 and found that it could cope with an astonishing amount of detail, producing almost



←↑ nVidia's new GeForce4 range of graphics cards offers enhanced speed and smoother graphics quality

identical frame rates at 1,600x1,200 (with 32bit colour) as the Ti 200 could at 1,024x768. There was obviously much work to be done on the drivers – at lower resolutions it was only in the rather uncommon 3D Mark 2001 package that the 4400 showed significantly more speed than the existing Titanium cards. However, by the time these cards are released to the public, they can be expected to significantly outstrip the competition.

The speed increases offered by nVidia's latest batch of cards are partly due to some major revisions to the old technology – the Lightspeed memory architecture and nFinite FX engine – while AccuView AA, the new anti-aliasing standard, should create smoother graphics quality. The old TwinView technology (allowing you to extend workspace across a second monitor or flat-panel) makes a return in the slicker guise of nView, although this feature will be optional rather than standard.

nVidia: www.nvidia.com

Price: varies according to specification