


BUDGET PCs

Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	PC World-Bench 4	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Processor type/speed	RAM	Hard disk/capacity	Mother-board	Chipset	Modem	USB ports	Monitor	Screen size	Dot pitch	Max resolution @75Hz	Graphics card	Graphics chip	Graphics card memory	Sound card	Speakers	No of speakers/subwoofer	DVD-ROM speed	CD-RW read/write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software & other extras	
1  Multivision Vision Elite 4 Ti 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk	NEW	Sep 02	118	£999	3-year onsite, 3-year labour	AMD Athlon XP 2100+/ 1.73GHz	512MB DDR RAM	IBM/ 80GB	MSI 6380E	Via KT3 Ultra	56K	5	Iiyama Vision Master Pro 454	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	128MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	VideoLogic ZXR 500	5/Y	16x	48x/48x/12x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite, multimedia bundle	
2  Evesham Axis 2200+ 0870 160 9500 www.evesham.com	NEW	Sep 02	120	£999	2-year onsite, 1-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/ 1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	Asus A7V333	Via KT333	56K	6	Samsung SyncMaster 957 DF	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	Leadtek WinFast A250	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Pinnacle Studio 7.0, Roxio Easy CD Creator, games bundle	
3  Cybyte XP2000RD+ 0160 345 5554 www.cybyte.co.uk	NEW	Sep 02	122	£1,020	2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.68GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 180GB	Softek 75DRV5	Via KT333	56K	4	AOC Spectrum	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	128MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x	48x/32x/12x	Windows XP Home, Power DVD, Nero Burning ROM, games bundle	
4  Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com		1	Jun 02	118	£899	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.68GHz	256MB DDR DDR	Maxtor/ 80GB	Asus A7 A266-E	M1647	56K	Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	Radeon	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite	
5 Systemax Inspire 7122 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	NEW	Sep 02	121	£999	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/ 1.8GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/ 80GB	MSI 6380E	Via KT3 Ultra	56K	6	CTX EX950F	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	GeForce4 Ultra 650	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	VideoLogic ZXR 500	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite, CD/DVD bundle, games bundle	
6 Multivision Vision Pro 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk		2	Jun 02	120	£999	2-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.68GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Seagate/ 60GB	MSI 6390 LE2	Via KT266A	56K	4	Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	Radeon	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	VideoLogic ZXR 500	5/Y	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
7 Systemax Reliance P2260E 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk		3	Jul 02	116	£999	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	Intel Pentium 4/ 2.2GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/ 80GB	Intel 845E	MSI MS-6566E	56K	4	CTX PR705F	17in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live 5.1	VideoLogic ZXR 500	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
8 Best Price Poweroid 2100 020 8904 3347 www.poweroid.com		4	Jun 02	116	£999	1-year parts and labour, 4-year labour	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/ 1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	Soyo K7 Dragon Plus	Via KT266A	56K	8	Iiyama LS902	19in	0.26mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 DV	Radeon	64MB	Creative Labs 8738 Integrated	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, remote control, Sim card reader
9 Time Mercury 2200+ PQ 0870 830 3116 www.timecomputers.com	NEW	Sep 02	122	£1,199	3-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/ 1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	2 x Seagate/ 80GB	Gigabyte GA7VRXP	Via 8233A(CE)	56K	4	Samsung Samtron 71s	17in flat-panel	0.26mm	1,280x1,024	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Star Office, GT XP	
10 NEC Powermate i-Select XL4 2200+ 0870 010 6326 www.nec-online.co.uk	NEW	Sep 02	121	£1,199	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/ 1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/ 120GB	MSI nForce	6367 nVidia nForce	56K	6	NEC HR19	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live 5.1	Labtec LCS-2632	5/Y	16x	40x/40x/10x	Windows XP Home, Britannica, games bundle, gamepad	

1 Multivision Vision Elite 4 Ti

 Multivision scoops the Best Buy award this month with the Vision Elite 4 Ti. Rather than opt for AMD's 2200+ Athlon XP chip, Multivision has opted for its predecessor, the 2100+. Despite not offering the speediest performance in the chart, its WorldBench score of 118 is respectable and, in everyday use, it's unlikely you'll notice the difference. Combine this with its strong all-round package and warranty and you can see why the Elite takes the top spot.

↓ Multivision's new entry, the Vision Elite 4 Ti, takes the number one spot due to its top-notch specification



Both 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and 80GB hard drive have become standard offerings in the Budget chart, so it comes as no surprise that Multivision has opted for this spec.

The Ti's display setup is good – Iiyama's Vision Master Pro 454, with its built-in speakers, performs well and adds an extra two USB ports to the five that are on the tower. The 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4200 graphics card, which can easily cope with graphics-intensive applications, is combined with the now almost standard Creative Audigy sound card and a set of VideoLogic ZXR 500 surround speakers. If you're after an entertainment system then the Multivision Vision Elite is an ideal choice.

Giving this Best Buy system the edge is a 48-/48-/12-speed (read/write/rewrite) Teac CD-RW drive, a speedier model than the competitors have to offer. The warranty runs to a comprehensive three years onsite followed by a further three years labour only. Multivision also scores highly on the software front – as well as Lotus SmartSuite, its generous multimedia bundle will keep you amused for days.

2 Evesham Axis 2200+

 Evesham opted for AMD's fastest processor chip yet – the Athlon XP 2200+ – but the Axis still has to settle for second place this month. The 2200+, running at 1.8GHz, uses a 0.13 micron production process rather than the 0.18 micron design of previous AMD chips. The smaller the core the less power it needs, allowing it to run faster without generating as much heat. This should translate to better system performance, but the difference between the 2100+ and the 2200+ is negligible to say the least.

The Evesham Axis' WorldBench 4 score of 120 makes for a decent performance, but it's certainly not streets ahead of other systems in this category which use slower processors. The performance in our graphics tests was strong again, producing frame rates a little higher than the Best Buy Multivision, though there was very little to choose from between the two systems in the video encoding tests.

There's plenty of room inside, proving good upgradability, and you don't even need a screwdriver to take the case off.



↑ The Recommended Evesham Axis 2200+ is a value-for-money machine that can be easily upgraded

Even more conveniently, there are six USB ports – two of which are front-mounted – so you can easily plug and unplug devices without have to delve round the back of the PC.

The Evesham's monitor is a Samsung SyncMaster 957 DF, which is a decent display for a Budget system, while the warranty is good although not the strongest in the chart with two-year onsite and one-year return-to-base cover. At just under £1,000 the Evesham Axis offers good value for money and deserves its Recommended award.

3 Cybyte XP 2000RD+

 The AMD Athlon XP 2000+ processor which powers the Cybyte XP proved more than capable of competing with its two big brothers, the 2100+ and 2200+. In terms of performance, Cybyte's tidy system proved a real winner – its WorldBench score of 122 beat all the 2200+ entrants. The gargantuan 180GB Maxtor hard drive has more space than the average user could reasonably fill, so if you opt for this third-placed system running out of space will never be a problem.

There's plenty of memory, with 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM installed, and the 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4400 graphics card and Creative Audigy sound card are quality components. In terms of backup, the Cybyte features a 48-/32-/12-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW and there's also a 16-speed DVD-ROM.

Cybyte has pushed the boat out in terms of design. The XP 2000RD+ differs from the average beige box tower, with two front-mounted USB ports hidden under a panel at the bottom, plus two more at



↑ With a massive 180GB hard drive, no other PC can beat the Cybyte XP 2000RD+ on storage space

the back. With two free memory slots inside and two empty 5.25in bays there's also plenty of room to upgrade.

The XP 2000RD+ failed to make the top spot for two reasons. The 19in AOC Spectrum is a no-frills monitor to say the least. It may offer a decent 0.25mm dot pitch, but it doesn't have a flat screen, resulting in a goldfish bowl effect. We also would have liked to see a bundled office suite. All in all, however, the Cybyte XP 2000RD+ is a strong performer and well deserves its Recommended award.

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4 Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC

The well-balanced Matrix moves down three places but still retains an award thanks to its combination of great features and generous three-year onsite warranty. The Athlon XP 2000+, running at 1.68GHz, is twinned with a sizable 80GB hard drive. Unfortunately, the system only includes 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM – with another 256MB the WorldBench 4 score of 118 could have been higher.

As an entertainment PC the Matrix won't let you down. On a price-to-performance ratio ATI's 64MB Radeon LE is an easy winner, providing great visuals. It is twinned with the 19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92. Together they produce high frame rates and a crisp picture – perfect for graphics-intensive applications. Sound is courtesy of Creative's Inspire 5300 speakers and Audigy card. You'll also find a 16-speed DVD-ROM and a 40-/24-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW for backup.

↓ Our former Best Buy, the Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC, is relegated to fourth place this month



↑ Another new entry in the Budget chart, the Systemax Inspire 7122 scored 121 in our tests

5 Systemax Inspire 7122

Narrowly missing out on a Recommended award is this offering from Systemax. The Inspire 7122 might not offer a top-notch specification, but it does feature the brand-new AMD Athlon XP 2200+ processor. This ensured the Systemax achieved a WorldBench 4 score of 121 – respectable, considering it only houses 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM.

The 80GB hard drive provides ample storage space and, even though the GeForce4 Ti 4200 graphics chip only has 64MB of RAM, it still performed well in our tests. The 19in CTX EX950F is always a good choice, so the 7122 will be well received by gamers and users of graphics-intensive applications. The warranty is a reasonable one-year onsite and two-year return-to-base, and there's a generous software bundle including Lotus SmartSuite.

It's likely that with another 256MB of DDR RAM the Inspire 7122 would have performed better and gained a higher placing in the chart.

6 Multivision Vision Pro

Pushed down from second to sixth place, the Multivision still has more than enough impressive features to keep it in the Top 10. Apart from the attractive Logitech keyboard and mouse, the Vision Pro is a plain-looking system, but it proved to be one of the best Budget PCs in its time.

Multivision opted for 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM to go with the 1.68GHz Athlon XP 2000+ processor, and the Vision Pro's WorldBench 4 score of 120 reflects this specification. The 60GB hard drive is barely average these days but, even so, it should still prove near-impossible to fill.

With a 64MB Radeon LE graphics card from ATI and Mitsubishi's 19in Diamond Plus 92 monitor, the visual setup is superb and renders impressively sharp results. Likewise, the Videologic speakers are on a par with the popular Cambridge DTT2200s, and the Audigy sound card gives you the benefit not only of good audio, but also a FireWire port.



↑ Still going strong, the plain-looking Multivision Vision Pro holds on at number six

New chip on the block

AMD's latest processor, the Athlon XP 2200+, powers several of the new entries in this month's Budget PC chart. Running at 1.82GHz, the 2200+ is the big brother of the 2100+ and 2000+ processors that also feature in this chart. The Athlon XP 2200+ has been designed to compete with the 2.2GHz Pentium 4 processors in terms of performance. The clock speed may be 400MHz slower, but the differences in architecture mean the Athlon outperforms Pentium 4 on a like-for-like megahertz rating.

This new Athlon CPU is also based on a different design to its predecessors – it uses 0.13 micron technology as opposed to the 0.18 micron technology used by previous Athlon chips.

This basically means it is smaller and therefore uses less power, and this, AMD claims, means better performance.

However, the tests we have run on systems that use the 2200+ processor have been far from conclusive. The resulting WorldBench 4 scores for these systems have been little different to scores of machines using both the 2100+ and 2000+ chips.

Where it has made a slight improvement is in our graphics and video encoding tests – areas where Intel's Pentium 4 is traditionally strong. But we're sure there is more to come from the 2200+ processor, so keep your eye on the Power and Budget charts over the coming months.

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↑ The Systemax Reliance P2260E is the only Budget PC in the chart to house an Intel Pentium 4 processor

7 Systemax Reliance P2260E

The only PC in this chart to boast an Intel processor, the Systemax Reliance's WorldBench 4 score of 116 is acceptable considering the mere 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM onboard. On saying this, it is the slowest score in the chart, so if a speedy performance is paramount then this isn't the system for you.

The Pentium 4 does have an edge over the AMD processors in terms of graphics performance, however, and the P2260E is blessed with nVidia's GeForce4 Ti 4200. Despite being the slowest of the new Titanium family, the 4200 performed strongly in our games tests.

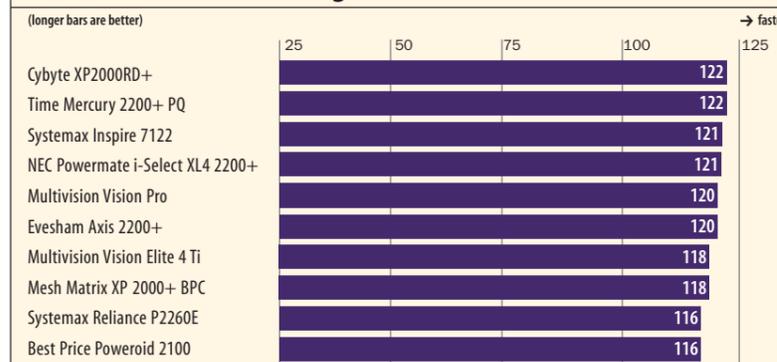
Balanced throughout, there's little evidence of cost-cutting in the £999 Systemax Reliance. The IBM hard drive offers a capacious 80GB of storage space and the P2260E's sound system pairs Creative's SoundBlaster Live 5.1 with Videologic ZXR 500 speakers.

The Systemax Reliance P2260E effectively demonstrates that you can still build an impressive PC around the Intel Pentium 4 processor.



↑ Best Price's Poweroid 2100 only scored 116 in WorldBench 4, although it still offers a good spec

PC WorldBench 4: Budget PCs



8 Best Price Poweroid 2100

The Best Price drops to eighth this month and, despite a few quibbles, it's still a good system. There's an Athlon XP 1900+ processor, 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and an 80GB hard drive.

However, the WorldBench 4 score of 116 is one of the lowest in the chart. ATI's 64MB Radeon 8500 DV graphics card offers TV functionality, but you need to use the bundled adapter to hook up the monitor as it only features a DVI (digital visual interface) port.

9 Time Mercury 2200+ PQ

We didn't expect systems powered by AMD's Athlon XP 2200+ to feature in the bottom half of the chart, but this Time Mercury houses good quality components and has two 80GB Seagate hard drives. The WorldBench 4 score of 122 makes for an extremely speedy PC, but its inflated price of £1,199 means it sits lower down the chart. However, it does come with a 17in flat-panel monitor and a 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card, currently the top-of-the-range model in the GeForce4 Titanium family. The warranty is also a bit of a let down, with only three-year return-to-base cover.

10 NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 2200+

Propping up the chart this month is another system powered by AMD's new processor. Like the Time Mercury 2200+ PQ, the i-Select XL4 2200+ has top-quality components including a 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card and a 120GB Western Digital hard drive. This



↑ The pricey Time Mercury houses the Athlon XP 2200+ processor, which helped it pull in a score of 122

helps the PowerMate pull in a WorldBench 4 score of 121.

Our major gripe with the NEC is the way it has been put together leaves very little room inside the machine to upgrade. There's only one free PCI expansion slot, no FireWire port and no free 5.25in bays for extra CD or DVD drives. There are two front-mounted USB ports to add to the four at the back, but even that and the generous three-year onsite warranty can't save this system from a lowly tenth place.



↑ There is no room inside the NEC's PowerMate case to upgrade, so this PC is not well futureproofed