

TOP 10 POWER PCs

			Power PCs	Processor type	RAM	Motherboard	Monitor	
				Processor speed	Hard disk capacity	USB ports	Dot pitch	
							Maximum resolution@75Hz	
1		Mesh Matrix 3000+ Xtra 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year onsite warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 160GB	Asus A7N8X 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB 0.25mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		136		
2		Carrera SSC Focus Extreme 3.0PA 0870 066 0682 www.carrera.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year onsite, 2-year return-to-base warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 180GB	Asus A7N8X 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		132		
3		Mesh Matrix 3000+ RD98 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,299 ex VAT• 3-year onsite warranty• First review Jun 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 200GB	Asus A7N8X 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		133		
4		MicroLand Addons Power PC 0870 443 0399 www.microland.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year return-to-base, 3-year labour-only warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	1GB DDR RAM 160GB	MSI K7N2 Delta 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB 0.25mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		133		
5		Multivision Vision Ionix Wonder 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year onsite, 3-year return-to-base warranty• First review Apr 03	AMD Athlon XP 2700+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	MSI 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		129		
6		Evesham Axis 3200+ 0870 160 9500 www.evesham.com LAST MONTH 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,449 ex VAT• 2-year onsite, 1-year return-to-base warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ 2.21GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Leadtek WinFast K7NCR18D Pro 2	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB 0.25mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		133		
7		Multivision Ionix 98 GX 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk LAST MONTH 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year onsite, 4-year return-to-base, labour-only warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 180GB	MSI K7N2 6	19in LG Flatron F900P 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		130		
8		Time Mercury 3000+ PQ 01282 777 555 www.timecomputers.com LAST MONTH 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year return-to-base warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 2.17GHz	512MB DDR RAM 160GB	MSI KT4 Ultra 5	19in LG Flatron F900P 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		131		
9		NetHighStreet Net PA1200T 0870 777 5252 www.nethighstreet.com LAST MONTH 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 1-year collect-and-return warranty• First review Jul 03	AMD Athlon XP 2800+ 2.08GHz	1GB DDR RAM 160GB	Gigabyte GA-7VAXP Ultra 6	17in Samsung SM171S flat-panel 0.264mm 1,280x1,024	
				WorldBench 4		132		
10		Mesh Matrix XP 2700+ NDX 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1,200 ex VAT• 3-year onsite warranty• First review Apr 03	AMD Athlon XP 2700+ 2.17GHz	1GB DDR RAM 120GB	Asus A7N8X 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB 0.24mm 1,600x1,200	
				WorldBench 4		130		



↑ In speed tests, the record-breaking Mesh Matrix 3000+ Xtra was a clear three points ahead of its nearest rivals

Buying advice: Power PCs

If you are buying a new system or replacing an aged one and money is no object then the Power PC chart is the place to look. The price constraints of the Budget and Superbudget charts mean that compromises have to be made. In this Power chart, however, there is no price limit. This means manufacturers can put in whatever components they like – regardless of cost. Obviously we're still looking for value for money, but the extra freedom allows system makers to put in that little bit extra.

- **Processor** After a brief resurgence of interest in Intel's processor family – in particular, the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 and the HT (hyperthreading) capabilities of the high-end 3.06GHz P4 – AMD has now resumed its dominance of the Power PCs chart. The AMD Athlon 3000+ (with the Barton core) may run at just 2.17GHz, but its performance exceeds that generated by the fastest Intel chip.
- **Memory** Settle for no less than 512MB – some PCs now come with 1GB onboard. Ensure that you're getting the quicker DDR RAM and look for DDR333 or DDR400.

	Graphics card maker Graphics chip Graphics card memory	Sound card Speakers Subwoofer	DVD drive speed CD-RW read/ write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software and extras	Comments
	ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro All-In-Wonder 128MB	Creative Audigy2 Platinum 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	12x 40x/32x/10x (CD-RW), 4x/2.4x (DVD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	Top-notch specs and a record-breaking WorldBench score make the Mesh hard to resist. The All-In-Wonder Radeon 9700 Pro racks up high frame rates and offers TV and video recorder capabilities. Armed with a range of digital and audio sockets, Creative's Audigy2 Platinum and Inspire 6700 create heart-stopping audio.
	Gainward nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra 128MB	onboard nForce 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	16x 40x/16x/10x (CD-RW), 2.4x/2.4x (DVD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Carrera training CD, games bundle	For the fastest and smoothest gaming experience, the second-placed Focus Extreme 3.0PA is a true winner. Its magic ingredient, nVidia's GeForce FX 5800 Ultra, makes this the speediest games PC in the chart. But despite the best efforts of top card maker Gainward, the chip's excessive noise levels are obtrusive.
	ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	16x 48x/48x/24x (CD-RW), 4x/2x (DVD-RW), 2.4x/2.4x (DVD+RW)	Windows XP Home, Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	No company gets more out of the Athlon XP 3000+ and 512MB of DDR RAM than Mesh, and the RD98's WorldBench score is one of the highest in the chart. Hats off go to the Audigy2 and Inspire 6700 sound system, the virtually flawless monitor and the superb Sony DVD burner that offers support for DVD-RW and DVD+RW standards.
	ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	16x 52x/52x/24x (CD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Soldier of Fortune 2, Hitman 2, spare CD-Rs	MicroLand is one of only two makers not to bundle a DVD burner. The money saved has been spent bolstering the rest of the PC. There's a first-rate sound system, fantastic video and a healthy 1GB of DDR400 RAM. However, we can't ignore the fact that the top three systems offer similar facilities with a DVD burner thrown into the mix.
	ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 Platinum 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	16x 32x/16x/8x (CD-RW), 4x/2x/1x (DVD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite 9.7	Comparatively snail-like performance and unimpressive video and graphics put the Multivision at five. But fortunately the Ionix is about more than raw speed. This PC delivers where it matters, offering quad-speed DVD-R capabilities, a smooth 19in Mitsubishi monitor, six-year warranty and plenty of connectivity options.
	ATI ATI Radeon Pro 9800 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	16x 32x/8x/4x (CD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office 2002, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	Powered by AMD's latest Athlon 3200+ processor, the beautifully styled Evesham clocked slower than some chart entries. But remember that the processor uses the new Barton core so it pushes better performance per megahertz. The Axis is a well-built, extremely powerful model – if you've got the money to pay for it, that is.
	ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	onboard nForce 4 x Creative 4400 yes	16x 40x/16x/10x (CD-RW), 4x/2x (DVD-RW), 4x/2.4x (DVD+RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003	For peace of mind, the Ionix claims a whopping seven years support. The DVD burner is a strong addition, combining high rates with compatibility for both standards. But otherwise the GX disappoints, offering only adequate performance in terms of speed and graphics. The LG's image quality also fails to measure up at high resolutions.
	ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy 5 x Videologic ZXR-500 yes	16x 32x/12x/8x (CD-RW), 2x/1x (DVD-RW)	Windows XP Professional, StarOffice 5.2, flash memory reader	The Mercury is a capable PC, but you'll get more bang for your buck elsewhere. The 19in LG lacks the definition of the Mitsubishi screens. Time also fails to get the best out of the Athlon XP 3000+, while the Radeon 9700 Pro produced low frame rates. There's plenty of ports and connectors, though, and the flash memory drive is a bonus.
	Gigabyte ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy 4 x Creative 4400 yes	16x 48x/48x/24x (CD-RW)	Windows XP Home, OpenOffice, games bundle	The PA1200T doesn't have a DVD burner – NetHighStreet has blown the budget on a 17in flat-panel instead. Audio is handled by the original Audigy, while the Radeon card, the slower 9700 Pro, produces some of the lowest frame rates in the chart. The slew of ports and connectors offer compensation, but the warranty is disappointing.
	ATI ATI Radeon Pro 9700 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Inspire 6700 yes	n/a 32x/24x/10x (CD-RW) 8x/4x/2x (DVD-RW)	Windows XP Home, Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE	The Matrix is being pushed slowly out of the chart owing to its performance. It does come with 1GB of DDR RAM, though, and the Audigy2 sound card and Inspire 6700 system create great audio. Backup is covered thanks to a quad-speed DVD writer. With its unusual styling, it won't be everyone's cup of tea looks wise.

• **Storage** If you'll be using your PC for video editing then go for the most storage you can afford. Few, if any, Power PCs come with less than 100GB and for video enthusiasts 180GB or 200GB units can be specified at little extra cost. Have backup covered with at least a 40/32/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive, although if CD burning is likely to be a regular activity look for one of the higher-end 48/48/24 or 52/52/24-speed drives. DVD writers are becoming almost as common as CD-RW drives. There are several competing DVD writing standards

and to ensure your drive doesn't become redundant in the future look for one that supports both major formats – that is, DVD-RW and DVD+RW.

• **Monitor** Look for a 19in screen that offers a resolution of 1,600x1,200 and a dot pitch of 0.25mm or less. Flat-panel displays can vary wildly in quality – opt for a 17in or 18in screen that can support a resolution of 1,280x1,024.

• **Graphics card** The ATI Radeon 9700 and 9800 Pro cards are faring well at the moment. nVidia's GeForce FX5800 also offers excellent performance, but only if

you don't mind the near-deafening noise of its cooling system. If you're after a gaming system, opt for no less than 128MB of dedicated RAM.

• **Sound card and speakers** Creative's Audigy2 offers top-quality audio and adds an extra FireWire port. This card can support seven channels, so you'll need a subwoofer and six satellites to use it to its full potential – the Inspire 6700 setup is a great choice. Creative's Inspire 5300 and Videologic's ZXR-500 systems, offering a subwoofer with five satellite speakers, are often bundled with Power PCs.