reviews

Desktop PCs are great if you've got the space. But if you're not prepared to give up a whole desk to one device then a notebook is a far more attractive option. They're small, light and easy to pack away when you've finished, plus these battery-powered portables mean that you don't need to be tied to a desk. A notebook allows you to go wherever you want but still be productive – well, that's the theory at least.

Like Richard Gere's tap dancing skills in *Chicago*, notebook battery life fails to live up to expectations. Once you've experienced more than a few times a notebook's irritating habit of beeping at you then going to sleep, you'll do the sensible thing of saving juice for those times when there's no mains supply available – in trains and planes and during power cuts, for example. If you're near a socket then it's easier and much less stressful to just plug it into the mains and get on with your work.

Intel hopes to change all this with the delivery of Centrino – its new mobile processor bundle consisting of the Pentium M chip, 855 chipset and wireless card.

Centrino fills the gap between low-voltage Pentium III (slow PC/good battery life) and Pentium 4M (fast PC/an hour if you're lucky). With Centrino you can have a fast computer and good battery life all in one unit.

Centrino should also, in theory, revitalise the subnotebook market. These machines have been piling on the pounds over the last year and it's now time for them to go on a diet.

The first-generation Centrino models, see review on page 39, combine top performance with good battery life. Hopefully soon we'll also see it topped off by sleek and light packaging. ■

Will Head, reviews editor

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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

How we rate hardware
• Features **This score rates the specification of a product by current standards. For example, a 2.6GHz PC with 512MB of RAM and a 120GB hard drive would score highly.**
• Build quality **This rating denotes 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.

How we rate software
• Ease of use **Rates how easy software is to install and use.**
• Features **Indicates how much the package contains. An office suite that**

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exclusive

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210 Top 10 charts

Our Top 10 charts start on page 210. Located at the back of the magazine, the charts are designed so they're a cinch to navigate. The at-a-glance comments and buying advice help you make the right purchasing decision. Products we've already tested are ranked in our charts after competing against existing entrants. The result is a definitive guide to the best hardware available on the market.

only came with a spreadsheet would score poorly.
• Value for money **Lots of features, good performance and a low price tag will result in a good score.**

Prices
All prices are quoted by the manufacturer or distributor and exclude VAT. Please note that prices are only intended as a guide and you may see products on sale for less or more than our quoted price. *PC Advisor's* recommendations are for guidance only and are not a guarantee of suitability. The publisher takes no responsibility for purchasers' decisions.

PC Advisor Gold award
Outstanding hardware products receive a *PC Advisor* Gold award. This may indicate that the product will enter our charts next month but *PC Advisor* Gold also honours excellence in a product that is not covered in our existing charts.

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