

TOP 10 POWER & BUDGET NOTEBOOKS

		Power notebooks	Processor	WorldBench 4 score on battery	RAM	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Battery type
			Dual-speed		Hard disk capacity		
1	 <p>ACI Centurion 020 8830 1958 www.aciplc.com NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,489 ex VAT • 1-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,489 ex VAT • 1-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	1.5GHz Intel Pentium M Speedstep	116	768MB	330x273x29mm 2.6kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		118		
2	 <p>AJP D480W 020 8208 9710 www.ajp.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,375 ex VAT • 1-year parts & labour, 2-year labour only warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,375 ex VAT • 1-year parts & labour, 2-year labour only warranty • First review Oct 03 	2.8GHz Intel Pentium 4 no	115	1GB	329x275x37mm 3.8kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		124		
3	 <p>Rock Quaddra DTS 0870 990 8888 www.rockdirect.com NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,399 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,399 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	3.06GHz Intel Mobile Pentium 4 Speedstep	107	512MB	329x275x37mm 3.6kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		127		
4	 <p>Hi-Grade Notino C6700-1700 020 8532 6120 www.higrade.com NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,599 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,599 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	1.7GHz Intel Pentium M Speedstep	129	512MB	352x260x30mm 2.7kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		129		
5	 <p>Toshiba Portege M100 0870 444 8944 www.toshiba.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,499 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,499 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	1.2GHz Intel Pentium M Speedstep	115	256MB	270x248x34mm 1.9kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		115		

		Budget notebooks	Processor	WorldBench 4 score on battery	RAM	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Battery type
			Dual-speed		Hard disk capacity		
1	 <p>Multivision Solus 1010 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £799 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Sep 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £799 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Sep 03 	1.8 GHz AMD Mobile Athlon XP 2500+ PowerNow	116	512MB	328x283x27mm 3.1kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		118		
2	 <p>Advent 7027 0870 546 4464 www.pcworld.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,106 ex VAT • 1-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,106 ex VAT • 1-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	3.06GHz Intel Pentium 4 no	116	512MB	325x275x41mm 3.4kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		118		
3	 <p>Mesh PowerView 15.1 Plus 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £999 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £999 ex VAT • 3-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	3.06GHz Intel Pentium 4 no	104	512MB	329x275x37mm 3.2kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		112		
4	 <p>Pico Innovator 0870 729 6111 www.picosystems.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £999 ex VAT • 1-year RTB, 2-year labour only warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £999 ex VAT • 1-year RTB, 2-year labour only warranty • First review Oct 03 	2.8GHz Intel Pentium 4 no	111	512MB	329x275x37mm 3.2kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		122		
5	 <p>Acer Aspire 1700 0870 900 2237 www.acer.co.uk NEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,199 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,199 ex VAT • 2-year collect & return warranty • First review Oct 03 	3.06GHz Intel Pentium 4 no	107	512MB	378x320x55mm 7.1kg	lithium-ion
			WorldBench 4		119		

TOP 5 POWER NOTEBOOKS

1 ACI Centurion

The Centurion from ACI is a worthy winner of this month's Best Buy award due to its excellent performance, features and portability. The Centurion's slim profile and silver casing are easy on the eye, but the ACI isn't just a pretty face – it's a

capable and versatile notebook too. The 1.5GHz Intel Pentium M processor pushed the Best Buy to a WorldBench 4 score of 118 when plugged in to the mains. This may be 11 points behind the fourth-placed Hi-Grade Notino but you wouldn't really notice the speed difference between the two models in day-to-day use.





2 AJP D480W



Just holding off the Rock Quaddra DTS in third position and snatching a Recommended award in the process is the AJP D480W. One of only two entries that sport a 17in widescreen, the AJP is intended as a desktop replacement system and from the performance it gave in our tests it's definitely up to the task.

There's a 2.8GHz Pentium 4 processor, a massive 1GB of fast DDR RAM and an 80GB hard drive – specifications that wouldn't look out of place in a desktop PC. It's no surprise, then, that when plugged in to the mains power the D480W managed a speedy score of 124 in our WorldBench 4 tests.

AJP also has an ace up its sleeve in the shape of a DVD writer – ideal if you need to back up large amounts of data. If you're keen on video editing you can burn your movies to high-capacity DVD discs and not worry about using up precious hard drive space.

A good-quality display is a must when looking for a desktop replacement and the D480W fulfils this criteria. With plenty of screen to view, you certainly don't have to worry about eyestrain. Battery life, on the other hand, is slightly disappointing. We only managed to get 111 minutes out of the AJP in our MobileMark 2002 battery tests. But then it's designed to be used plugged into the mains rather than run off the battery.

3 Rock Quaddra DTS

The Quaddra DTS just misses out on a Recommended award. Based on the same chassis as the AJP, the Rock managed a higher performance score than the AJP – 127 points when plugged into mains power. Using a 3.06GHz Mobile Pentium 4 chip it's no surprise that the Rock is such a speedy model, although it's let down slightly by battery life – 107 minutes is the lowest score in the Power notebook chart.

Screen size Max resolution	Graphics card Memory	CD-RW read/ write/rewrite rate DVD read rate	Operating system, software and extras
15.1in 1,400x1,024	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Professional
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			235
17in 1,440x900	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	32x/16x/8x 8x/2x/1x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW)	Windows XP Home
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			111
17in 1,440x900	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Home, Ability Office 2002, Panda AntiVirus Titanium
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			107
15.2in 1,280x854	nVidia GeForce FX Go 5200 64MB	32x/16x/8x 8x/2x/1x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works 7.0, Panda AntiVirus Titanium
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			181
12.1in 1,024x768	Intel integrated up to 64MB	24x/12x/8x 8x	Windows XP Professional
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			223

Screen size Max resolution	Graphics card Memory	CD-RW read/ write/rewrite rate DVD read rate	Operating system, software and extras
15in 1,400x1,050	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Home, Ability Office 2002
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			168
15.1in 1,400x1,050	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	32x/16x/10x 8x/2x/1x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works 7.0
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			180
15.1in 1,400x1,050	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			111
15.1in 1,400x1,050	ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Home
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			123
17in 1,200x1,024	SIS integrated up to 64MB	24x/24x/10x 8x	Windows XP Home, Norton AntiVirus 2003
MobileMark 2002 battery life (minutes)			100

The Centurion's most impressive feature is its battery's performance. Running the MobileMark 2002 battery life test, the ACI managed 235 minutes – a shade under four hours – which was streets ahead of the competition. Combine this long battery life with the Centurion's weight of 2.6kg – the second lowest in the chart – and you can see that this model is perfectly suited to life on the road.

With 768MB of fast DDR RAM, the ACI should cope with just about any task you wish to throw at it. The 60GB hard drive may not be the biggest in the chart but the average user would still have difficulty filling it up.

The bundled OS of Windows XP Professional, Wi-Fi capabilities and a price tag of £1,489 means that the Centurion is the perfect travelling companion for the busy executive.



new

An 80GB hard drive should be plenty for all your storage needs even if you are a keen video editor with plenty of archived footage. There's an internal floppy drive, which is still a great, cheap way to store small files, while the CD-RW takes care of higher capacity backup needs.

The Quattra's 17in widescreen is the real selling point of this model, however – it's good quality and great for DVD playback. With five speakers outputting strong audio, the Rock doubles up as an entertainment centre as well as a desktop replacement system.

4 Hi-Grade Notino C6700-1700



new

The most expensive model in the chart, the Notino C6700-1700 beats the existing Power notebook WorldBench 4 record. It scored a remarkable 129 points both plugged into the mains or running from the battery. This is largely thanks to the 1.7GHz Pentium M chip, although the 512MB of fast DDR RAM plays its part too. Battery life was pretty good as well – we managed to get just over three hours out of the Notino.

For backup the CD-RW drive doubles as a DVD writer, managing dual-speed burning rates to DVD-R media and single-speed to DVD-RW discs. There's also plenty of room on the 80GB hard drive for storing all your data and applications.

The 15.2in widescreen offers a good quality image and would be great for playing back DVD movies. Microsoft Works 7.0 is included in the software bundle but the £1,599 price tag holds the Hi-Grade back from a higher chart position.

5 Toshiba Portege M100



new

This tiny model from Toshiba is a real pocket rocket. Although the Portege M100 weighs only 1.9kg, it has plenty of processing power in the shape of a 1.2GHz Pentium M chip. A WorldBench 4 score of 115 is pretty impressive for any notebook and phenomenal for one this small.

The Portege is definitely aimed at the traveller – it managed 223 minutes in our MobileMark 2002 battery life tests, making it ideal for use on the move, and there's even room for two Type II PC Card slots. The £1,499 M100 doesn't, however, have what it takes to be a desktop replacement system. The 40GB hard drive is small by today's standards, while the 12.1in screen isn't ideal for prolonged periods of use.

TOP 5 BUDGET NOTEBOOKS

1 Multivision Solus 1010



Reviewed last month, the Multivision impressed us with its low price tag, all-round specification and stylish black casing. This month's issue the Solus has beaten off strong opponents to grab the top spot in our chart. AMD's Mobile Athlon XP 2500+ chip has been used to great effect in the Solus and its WorldBench 4 score of 118 is very respectable. The processor is backed by decent components – 512MB of fast DDR RAM and a 64MB Mobility Radeon 9000 graphics card. There's a generous 60GB of storage space on the hard disk –

a bonus as notebook drives are hard to upgrade.

The Multivision's battery life is impressive too. MobileMark 2002 squeezed 168 minutes out of the 1010, so you'll be able to use it for a decent amount of time when away from mains power. If you do plan to use the Solus on the move then you'll be grateful of its 3.1kg weight.

If this notebook has one fault it's the lack of built-in Wi-Fi or Bluetooth capabilities. However, many laptop users still don't need these functions and leaving them out has allowed Multivision to keep the price down.



new

2 Advent 7027



A great spec and decent performance

helps the Advent take second place in the chart. Though this Recommended system nearly hits the price ceiling of the Budget notebook category, it offers good value for money and even throws in a couple of unexpected extras.

The 7027's DVD writer means that backing up large amounts of data is easier and quicker than with a CD writer. This compensates for the slightly stingy 40GB hard drive – although this storage will prove enough for most users, three of Advent's chart competitors offer more than this.

The Advent houses an absolute powerhouse of a processor. The 3.06GHz Pentium 4 will handle everything you throw at it with ease. But the 7027's battery life is where this machine really is a class apart. It managed three hours in our MobileMark 2002 tests and this is pretty astounding when you consider the 7027 is using a processor designed for desktop PCs. The Advent also has 802.11b capabilities so you will be able to hook it up to a wireless network easily.



new

3 Mesh PowerView 15.1 Plus

In third place this month is the PowerView 15.1 Plus – another system that opts for the 3.06GHz Pentium 4 desktop chip. The Mesh managed 112

in our WorldBench 4 tests – a few points down on the other Budget notebooks. But in everyday use this isn't a speed difference that you'd notice – the system is still capable of completing demanding tasks quickly.

With its chunky styling, the PowerView isn't going to win any awards for its looks. The 40GB hard drive is disappointing, especially as notebook hard drives are very fiddly to upgrade. The 15.1in screen is good quality, however, and the visuals are handled smoothly by ATI's 64MB Mobility Radeon 9000 graphics card.

Bluetooth and Wi-Fi capabilities are two excellent additions. Even if you won't make use of the facilities now, these technologies are becoming more commonplace and you might find yourself wanting them in the future. Other nice touches include the built-in camera and an internal floppy drive – something seldom found in notebooks these days.

4 Pico Innovator

Based on exactly the same chassis as the third-placed Mesh, Pico has opted for a slightly different combination of components in its Innovator. Like the Mesh, it houses 512MB of fast DDR RAM but the processor is a 2.8GHz Pentium 4 chip. Although in theory this component isn't as powerful as the Mesh's 3.06GHz P4 processor, in practise it helps the Pico to a speedy WorldBench 4 score of 122 – the highest result in the Budget notebook chart.

The 60GB hard drive is a decent size and the

Buying advice

If you're planning on using your notebook largely at home plugged into the mains then you'll want a desktop replacement system. These often use processors designed to be used in desktop PCs and feature larger-than-average screens, although they tend to have poor battery life. If you're after something to use on the move then go for an ultra-portable device. These are smaller and lighter and generally offer better battery life. Bear in mind, though, that fewer screen inches mean it can be quite difficult to use such systems for long periods of time.

- **Processor** Desktop replacement models tend to use Intel Pentium 4 chips – you can get anything up to a 3GHz processor at the moment, even in the Budget category. There are also two mobile chips available from Intel: the Mobile Pentium 4 and the Pentium M. The former can run at anything up to 3GHz but the latter runs at a much lower frequency. Centrino notebooks use the Pentium M and these offer good performance without draining battery life. In terms of AMD processors, the Mobile Athlon XP is a good chip but struggles to challenge the dominance of Intel's range at the moment.
- **Memory** The standard offering in both categories is 512MB at the moment, although some power models offer more. For budget models 256MB will do but the more you have the smoother your notebook will run.
- **Hard drive** It's very difficult to upgrade a notebook's hard drive so you need to make sure the one you buy is big enough for your needs. If you are buying a desktop replacement go for at least 80GB. If you will just be using it on the road then you won't need as much – 20GB is the absolute minimum you should opt for.
- **Screen** What you intend to use the screen for dictates the number of inches you'll need. If you're after a desktop replacement model then go for at least 15in – for DVD movie playback 17in widescreen models are perfect. For ultra-portables, look to get something no bigger than 14in.
- **Visuals** If you want to play games or watch DVD movies then you should choose the 64MB ATI Mobility Radeon 9000 or one of the 64MB GeForce FX Go cards. If you won't be using your notebook for such high-intensive visual work then an integrated onboard graphics chip will be perfectly adequate.

visuals are well catered for by the 64MB Mobility Radeon 9000 graphics card and excellent 15.1in TFT screen. The Innovator is Wi-Fi enabled but unfortunately there are no Bluetooth capabilities.

On the down side, Pico's software bundle is disappointing, offering only the Windows XP Home operating system. The system's two-hour battery life could also have been better.

5 Acer Aspire 1700

The term 'desktop replacement' has never been so apt – the Aspire 1700 was certainly not meant to be carried around too much, if at all. Weighing in at 7.1kg the Acer is a real beast – when you close the lid it feels more like shutting the bonnet of a Mini Metro.

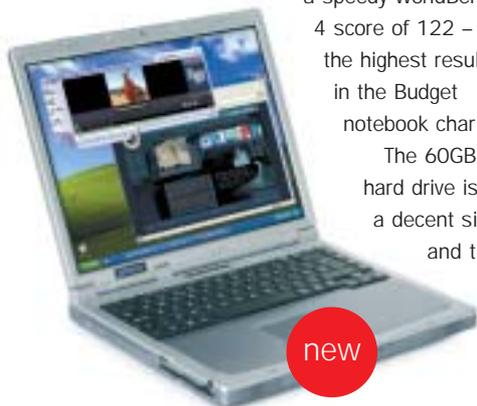
But it has plenty of grunt under that hood. The 3.06GHz Pentium 4 processor

teams up with 512MB of fast DDR RAM to good effect – the WorldBench 4 score of 119 is the second highest in this chart. What really impresses, though, is the 120GB hard drive – absolutely huge for a notebook.

If you want to use the 17in screen to play games then you'll be disappointed as the onboard graphics chip isn't good enough, although for other purposes it is perfectly adequate. At £1,199, though, the Aspire doesn't offer as good value for money as other models in the chart which ultimately put it in last place.



new



new



new