

TOP 10 POWER PCs

		Power PCs	Processor type	RAM	Motherboard	Monitor	
			Processor speed	Hard disk/capacity	USB ports	Dot pitch	
						Maximum resolution@75Hz	
1		Multivision Ionix Pro ZS 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk NEW	• £1,219 ex VAT • 3-year onsite, 3-year RTB, labour-only warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM 240GB	MSI K7N2 Delta ILSR 6	19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB 0.24mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4	138			
2		Mesh Matrix Xtreme 3200+ 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com NEW	• £1,399 ex VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM 160GB	Asus A7NX Delux 6	18in NEC 1860NX flat-panel 0.281mm 1,024x768
			WorldBench 4	137			
3		Evesham Axis 3200 Revolution 0870 160 9500 www.evesham.com NEW	• £1,299 ex VAT • 2-year onsite, 3-year RTB warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ 2.2GHz	1GB DDR RAM 160GB	MSI MS-6729 4	19in ViewSonic G90f+b 0.25mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4	134			
4		Carrera SSC Extreme FX 0870 066 0682 www.carrera.co.uk NEW	• £1,359 ex VAT • 3-year onsite, 2-year RTB warranty • First review Sep 03	Intel Pentium P4 3.2GHz	1GB DDR RAM 200GB	Intel P4 D875 8	18in Sharp LL-H1813 flat-panel 0.28mm 1,024x768
			WorldBench 4	140			
5		Best Price Poweroid.com 2014 0870 220 0444 www.poweroid.com NEW	• £1,369 ex VAT • 2-year RTB parts & labour, 3-year RTB labour-only warranty • First review Oct 03	AMD Athlon XP 3200+ 2.2GHz	512MB DDR RAM 240GB	MSI K7N2 Delta ILSR 8	17in LG 1710B 0.264mm 1,024x768
			WorldBench 4	135			
6		Dell Dimension 8300 0870 907 5693 www.dell.co.uk NEW	• £1,299 ex VAT • 3-year onsite warranty • First review Sep 03	Intel Pentium P4 3GHz	512MB DDR RAM 120GB	Intel 875P 8	18in Dell UltraSharp 1800FP 0.285mm 1,280x1,024
			WorldBench 4	126			
7		Mesh Matrix 3000+ Xtra 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 1	• £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 935B 0.25mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4	136			
8		Carrera SSC Focus Extreme 3.0PA 0870 066 0682 www.carrera.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	• £1,200 ex VAT • 3-year onsite, 2-year RTB 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			
9		Mesh Matrix 3000+ RD98 0870 046 4747 www.meshcomputers.com LAST MONTH 3	• £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			
10		MicroLand Addons Power PC 0870 443 0399 www.microland.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	• £1,200 ex VAT • 3-year RTB, 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 Pro 935B 0.25mm 1,600x1,200
			WorldBench 4	133			



↑ With its 7.1 channel Audigy2 ZS sound card and ultrafast Serial ATA interface, the Multivision Ionix Pro ZS is a worthy Best Buy

1 Multivision Ionix Pro ZS
Topping the chart this month is Multivision's Ionix Pro ZS which offers a combination of well-balanced components, value for money and an extensive warranty. On this alone the system deserves our Best Buy but it also comes with a couple of knockout features – Creative's brand-new 7.1 channel Audigy2 ZS sound card and a Serial ATA interface, which offers the fastest possible way to transfer data to the hard drive. The Ionix also matches style to its substance – a smart all-black design.

The 3200+ Barton core Athlon processor only runs at a speed of 2.2GHz – that's 1GHz slower than Intel's latest Pentium 4 chip. But backed by 512MB of fast DDR RAM the Multivision achieved an impressive 138 points in WorldBench 4. This score is aided by two vast 120GB hard drives connected via Serial ATA. This provides a maximum data transfer rate of 150MBps (megabytes per second), compared to Ultra ATA's 133MBps.

Not that you'll ever run out of space on the hard drives, but backup is provided by a multifunction DVD writer. This covers

Graphics card maker Graphics chip Graphics card memory	Sound card Speakers Subwoofer	DVD drive speed CD drive speed	Operating system, software and extras
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 ZS Platinum 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Ability Office XP
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 ZS 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 SE AIW 128MB	M-Audio Revolution 7 x Videologic ZXR-750 yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) 32x/24x/16x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office, Pinnacle Studio 8.0
Reference nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra 256MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x (DVD-ROM) 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 256MB	nForce onboard 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x/4x/4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Ability Office
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 128MB	Creative Audigy2 5 x Altec Lansing ADA 995 yes	16x/4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/+RW) 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works 7.0
ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro AIW 128MB	Creative Audigy2 Platinum 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	12x/4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW) 40x/32x/10x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003 Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE
Gainward nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra 128MB	nForce onboard 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x/2.4x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/-RW) 40x/16x/10x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Carrera training CD, games bundle
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x/4x/2.4x/2x/2.4x (DVD-ROM/-R/+R/-RW/+RW) 48x/48x/24x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2003, Pinnacle Studio 8.0 SE
ATI ATI Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB	Creative Audigy2 6 x Creative Labs Inspire 6700 yes	16x (DVD-ROM) 52x/52x/24x (CD-ROM/R/RW)	Windows XP Home, games bundle

you in case one of the competing DVD standards becomes obsolete.

The pin-sharp Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930 SB is one of the best 19in monitors on the market and it's complemented by ATI's Radeon 9800 Pro graphics card, although Multivision has stuck with a 128MB version rather than opt for 256MB of dedicated memory. While the 7.1 channel Audigy2 ZS is the best audio quality you could ask for, we'd like to see it backed up by Videologic's ZXR 750 – currently the only 7.1 PC speaker setup on the market.

2 Mesh Matrix Xtreme 3200+

With the best software bundle and commitment to sterling performance, the Matrix Xtreme 3200+ takes second place in our chart. It might be one of the more expensive models, but you certainly get your money's worth.

Mesh has gone for the popular all-black design that many PC manufacturers are now adopting, with a spot of white from Logitech's excellent cordless peripherals. The Xtreme 3200+ certainly lives up to its name.



↑ The Mesh Matrix Xtreme offers a generous software bundle and speedy performance

AMD's latest 3200+ processor and the obligatory 512MB of DDR RAM gave this Mesh one of the highest WorldBench 4 scores of 137.

Amazingly, the 160GB of hard drive space is now one of the smallest offerings in the chart and the system does not have a Serial ATA interface. However, you'll only ever fill the hard disk up if you're storing masses of high-quality digital video. Fortunately, there's plenty of space for backup provided by the multiformat DVD writer.

Like the Best Buy Ionix Pro ZS, this is the only other PC to come with Creative's Audigy2 ZS sound card, though it lacks the 5.25in breakout box. The speakers are good but only offer 6.1 channel sound support so you can't experience the true 7.1 channel audio that the excellent sound card offers.

3 Evesham Axis 3200 Revolution

Evesham has generally supplied soberly designed systems for us to review, so it came as a shock to be delivered something not too dissimilar to an alien spacecraft. Aesthetically it won't be to everyone's taste, but where it counts this system is interstellar – a superb balance of specifications and features, great value for money and topped off with a generous warranty.

Evesham has opted for a massive 1GB of DDR RAM to join the Athlon 3200+ processor. We were therefore surprised to see the system returning a WorldBench score of 134 – quick enough to cope with any tasks you choose to throw at it but not quite harnessing the power of the specifications. There's no Serial ATA interface on the Revolution's 160GB hard drive, although its multiformat DVD writer is one of the fastest models currently available – you'll be burning your backup discs in no time.





new

↑ The unusually styled Evesham Axis 3200 features an excellent sound system, including a 7.1 channel speaker setup

The sound subsystem is awesome. Via's high-quality audio 7.1 channel chipset is attached to the brilliant M-Audio Revolution card. Evesham has also made the sensible decision of including the only 7.1 speaker setup around. While it can be a nightmare of messy cables, 7.1 channel sound is something to behold.

Thanks to the All-In-Wonder version of ATI's Radeon 9800 graphics card the Axis 3200 works well as a multimedia PC. It's a shame that the black 19in monitor has a shadow mask tube rather than the better aperture grille, but the ultrabright mode offered sharp picture quality.

4 Carrera SSC Extreme FX

The £1,359 Extreme FX is expensive but if you're after the most powerful system money can buy then look no further – this PC is all about blistering performance.

The good-looking Extreme FX perfectly matches the cordless optical Logitech peripherals and sleek black flat-panel display. Powered by one of Intel's new Pentium 4 processors, running at a speedy 3.2GHz, Carrera decided to complement such a good processor with 1GB of DDR RAM. Add to this the 200GB hard drive and it's no wonder the FX returned a WorldBench 4 score of 140.



new

The 6.1 channel Inspire speakers produce great audio thanks to the high-quality Audigy2 sound card, although there's no 7.1 channel support. In our tests the Extreme's graphics card performance was excellent and the 18in pivot flat-panel display offers bright colours and sharp text. There's no DVD writer and software is limited, but the fastest CD-RW drive on the market along with 10 USB ports and three FireWire make up for this.



new

5 Best Price Poweroid.com 2014 With ramped-up speeds on processors and graphics cards creating ever more heat, this Poweroid.com 2014 has the perfect answer – its stunning Thermaltake Xaser III case with a breakout box. This unit has individual controls for three very powerful but quiet fans so there's no chance of overheating.

With an Athlon 3200+ processor and 512MB of DDR RAM it's no surprise the 2014 scored 135 in WorldBench 4. This is assisted by a Serial ATA interface on two vast 120GB hard drives and further storage space is provided by NEC's multiformat DVD writer. The 256MB ATI Radeon 9800 Pro graphics card provides high-quality visuals and the 17in LG flat-panel display is a good addition. If you're after plenty of screen inches, though, you'll be disappointed.

6 Dell Dimension 8300

The Dimension 8300 is a beautifully conceived system where both form and function have been given high priority. The Dell is packed with a 3GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor, 512MB of fast DDR RAM and a 120GB hard drive. The resulting WorldBench 4 score of 126 is okay for this specification but it can't compete with the latest AMD processors – indeed, it's the slowest PC in the chart.

There's the 128MB Radeon 9800 card from ATI handling the graphics – par for the course these days – but this is matched with one of the best 18in flat-panel displays on the market, Dell's UltraSharp 1800FP. Sound is more impressive and the Audigy2 sound card is combined with a decent speaker setup including a huge subwoofer.

While we'd like to see a multiformat DVD writer, Dell compensates with good documentation, a decent software bundle and a three-year onsite warranty.



7 Mesh Matrix 3000+Xtra

Our ex-Best Buy hangs in at number seven and proves that older systems can still pack a punch with its excellent WorldBench 4 score of 137. With such an influx of new entries, though, most of the Mesh Matrix's competitors now at least match its Athlon XP 3000+ processor, 512MB of fast DDR RAM and 120GB hard drive.

Although the Radeon 9700 Pro graphics chip continues to rack up high frame rates, it is starting to show its age. Having said that, the card did perform well in our video-encoding and graphics tests. It also gets brownie points for being the All-In-Wonder version.

The Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 93SB isn't quite as sharp a monitor as the Diamond Pro 930SB, but it's still one of the best screens available.

Top-notch visual quality is matched by decent audio. Creative's Audigy2 Platinum card, armed with a range of digital and audio sockets, is combined with the Inspire 6700 (offering six speakers and a subwoofer) to produce heart-stopping sound.



9 Carrera SSC Focus Extreme 3.0PA
When we first reviewed the Carrera SSC Focus Extreme, its magic ingredient – the fast but loud nVidia GeForce FX 5800 Ultra – made it the speediest games PC in the chart. It's now been surpassed by the new fourth-placed Carrera machine, which boasts the same graphics chip but a higher overall specification.

The 3.0PA coaxed a performance score of 133 from its Athlon XP 3000+ processor and 512MB of DDR RAM, but it can't keep up with the new contenders. That said, it still has some great hardware such as the brilliant Diamond Pro 930SB monitor which offers arguably the best text and image quality of any of the 19in CRT models.

The sound system is a notch down with the meagre onboard nForce audio controller but the Inspire 6700 speakers guarantee earth-shaking sound quality. The strong drive options include a huge 180GB IBM hard drive and a 2.4-speed NEC DVD-R/-RW burner.

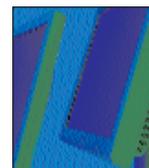


9 Mesh Matrix 3000+RD98
No company gets more out of the Athlon XP 3000+ processor and 512MB of PC2700 DDR RAM than Mesh and the Matrix RD98's WorldBench 4 score of 133 remains reasonable.

Despite the ageing specs there's still the excellent offering of Creative's Audigy2 sound card and Inspire 6700 speaker system, the virtually flawless 19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 930SB monitor and the first-class clutch of drives. Not only is a 200GB Maxtor hard drive

Buying advice

- **Processor** We get a few rare glimpses of Intel's Pentium 4 but AMD's new Athlons make economic sense for manufacturers to bundle. That said, you won't be disappointed with any P4 chip running at 3GHz or higher – just avoid lower speeds. We've been getting phenomenal scores from AMD's new Barton core Athlon processors. Despite being up to 1GHz slower than Intel's offerings on some clock speeds, they perform really well.
- **Memory** You should settle for no less than 512MB, although some PCs are now coming with 1GB. Ensure that you're getting the quicker DDR RAM rather than SDRAM and look for DDR333 or even DDR400 RAM for the best results.
- **Storage** It's unbelievable that 120GB is now considered a small amount of storage space but look at our chart and you'll see most manufacturers opting for 160GB. Even better now is the Serial ATA interface for rapid transfer rates set to make Ultra ATA obsolete. Have backup covered with at least a 40/32/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive, although look for higher end 48/48/24-speed or 52/52/24-speed drives. DVD writers are common now but there are several competing DVD writing standards. To ensure your drive doesn't become redundant, look for a multiformat model.
- **Monitor** Choose a 19in screen that offers a resolution of 1,600x1,200 and a dot pitch of 0.25mm or less. Flat-panel displays are increasingly common but can vary wildly in quality – look 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, although nVidia's GeForce FX 5800 also offers excellent performance – but only if you don't mind the almost deafening sound of its cooling system. Look for no less than 128MB of dedicated memory if gaming is important to you.
- **Sound card and speakers** Creative's Audigy2 offers top-quality audio and adds an extra FireWire port to the PC. However the new Audigy2 ZS touts 7.1 channel speaker support as does M-Audio's Revolution. Any of these cards are an essential purchase and should be backed up by excellent speakers – at least 5.1 channel and, if you can get Videologic's ZXR 750 setup, true 7.1 channel support.



and 48/24-speed CD-R/RW included, but there's also a superb multiformat Sony DVD writer.

10 MicroLand Addons Power PC
Down but not yet out is PC Advisor newcomer MicroLand which posed something of an enigma for our reviews team. On the one hand it's one of only two PCs in the chart to come without a DVD burner, which may or may not be a problem depending on whether you wish to burn your files to 4.7GB DVDs rather than 650MB CDs. The upside is that the money



saved by omitting the burner (in excess of £100) has been spent bolstering the rest of the PC. So this means a first-rate sound system, fantastic video and a healthy 1GB of PC3200 (DDR400) RAM, culminating in a respectable 133 points in WorldBench 4. ■



Unsure of a technical term? Find out exactly what it means in our searchable Glossary which is on the cover disc