# TOP 10  POWER PCs

| Power PCs | | Processor type | RAM | Motherboard | Monitor | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Processor speed | Hard disk capacity | USB ports | Dot pitch | |
| | | | | | Maximum resolution@75Hz | |
| **1** Evesham Axis 2700+ <br> 0870 160 9500 <br> www.evesham.com <br> NEW | • £1,349 ex VAT <br> • 2-year onsite, 1-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | AMD Athlon XP 2200+ <br> 2.17GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 120GB | Asus A7N8X <br> 8 | 19in LG F900P <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | | 129 | | |
| **2** Best Price Poweroid 2201 <br> 0870 220 0444 <br> www.poweroid.com <br> NEW | • £1,399 ex VAT <br> • 3-year onsite, 2-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 2.8GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 2 x 80GB | MSI 845E Max2 <br> 4 | 19in CTX PR960F <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 117 | | | |
| **3** Systemax Inspire 7352 <br> 0870 729 7364 <br> www.systemaxpc.co.uk <br> NEW | • £1,299 ex VAT <br> • 3-year onsite warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | AMD Athlon XP 2600+ <br> 2.13GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 120GB | MSI MS-6712 <br> 6 | 19in CTX PR960F <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 118 | | | |
| **4** NetHighStreet Net AD 1200 <br> 0870 777 5252 <br> www.nethighstreet.com <br> NEW | • £1,200 ex VAT <br> • 1-year onsite, 1-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 2.53GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 120GB | Gigabyte 8PE667 <br> 6 | 15in Samsung flat-panel <br> 0.3mm <br> 1,024x768 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 116 | | | |
| **5** Mesh Matrix XP 2700+ PPC <br> 020 8208 4702 <br> www.meshcomputers.com <br> NEW | • £1,299 ex VAT <br> • 3-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | AMD Athlon XP 2700+ <br> 2.17GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 120GB | Asus A7N8X <br> 6 | 17in NEC flat-panel <br> 0.26mm <br> 1,280x1,024 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | | 127 | | |
| **6** Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 3GHz HT <br> 020 8532 6100 <br> www.higrade.com <br> NEW | • £1,701 ex VAT <br> • 3-year onsite warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 3.06GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 160GB | Gigabyte P4 Titan <br> 4 | 19in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 920 <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 124 | | | |
| **7** Dell Dimension 4550 <br> 0870 152 4689 <br> www.dell.co.uk <br> NEW | • £1,649 ex VAT <br> • 1-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 2.8GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 120GB | Intel <br> 6 | 17in Dell 1702 flat-panel <br> 0.264mm <br> 1,280x1,024 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 127 | | | |
| **8** Systemax Reliance 3017 <br> 0870 729 7364 <br> www.systemaxpc.co.uk <br> LAST MONTH 1 | • £1,249 ex VAT <br> • 3-year onsite warranty <br> • First review Nov 02 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 2.41GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 2 x 80GB | MSI MS-6398E <br> 5 | 19in CTX PR960F <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 121 | | | |
| **9** Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 2.8 PV10 <br> 020 8532 6100 <br> www.higrade.com <br> LAST MONTH 2 | • £1,200 ex VAT <br> • 1-year onsite, 2-year return-to-base warranty <br> • First review Nov 02 | Intel Pentium 4 <br> 2.8GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 80GB | MSI MS-6566E <br> 6 | 19in LG Flatron 915FT Plus <br> 0.24mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | | 131 | | |
| **10** PC World Advent 3828 BTO <br> 0870 546 4464 <br> www.pcworld.co.uk <br> NEW | • £ 1,449 ex VAT <br> • 1-year onsite warranty <br> • First review Feb 03 | AMD Athlon XP 2700+ <br> 2.17GHz | 512MB DDR RAM <br> 80GB | Asus A7N8X <br> 4 | 19in Philips 109B4 <br> 0.25mm <br> 1,600x1,200 | |
| | WorldBench 4 | | 121 | | | |

new

↑ The Best Buy Evesham Axis 2700+ offers a lightning fast WorldBench 4 score, great specification and generous warranty

**1** Evesham Axis 2700+

Evesham takes the Best Buy award this month with the superb Axis 2700+. Its winning combination of performance, quality components and a decent warranty, all at a reasonable price, means that Evesham claims the crown.

Our new number-one system is built around AMD's latest Athlon chip, the XP 2700+. The Asus motherboard, combined with nVidia's nForce2 chipset, teams up brilliantly with the processor and helps the Evesham score a dazzling 129 in our WorldBench 4 tests – just two points short of our Power PC all-time record.

Performance in our graphics tests is equally impressive. The ATI Radeon 9700 Pro card achieved 95.1fps (frames per second) when running the Quake 3 Annihilator demo at a resolution of 1,600x1,200. Combine the Axis' incredible frame rates with LG's brilliantly sharp monitor, the F900P, and you've got a system that's perfect for games and graphics-intensive applications.

| | 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | onboard 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 32x/12x/8x | Windows XP Home, Ability Office 2002 |
| | nVidia nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600 128MB | Creative Audigy 2 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 32x/12x/10x | Windows XP Home, Star Office 5.2 |
| | ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Videologic ZXR-500 yes | 16x 40x/40x/10x | Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite 9.7 |
| | ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 52x/52x/24x | Windows XP Home, OpenOffice |
| | Sapphire ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | onboard 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 48x/48x/16x | Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite 9.7 |
| | Gigabyte ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 32x/12x/10x | Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2002 |
| | ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | Turtle Beach Santa Cruz 5 x Atlec Lansing ADA 995 yes | 16x 48x/40x/12x | Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works |
| | nVidia nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Videologic ZXR-500 yes | 16x 40x/40x/10x | Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite 9.7 |
| | MSI nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Creative Inspire 5.1 yes | 16x 40x/32x/10x | Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite 9.7 |
| | ATI ATI Radeon 9700 Pro 128MB | Creative Audigy 5 x Videologic ZXR-500 yes | 16x 40x/40x/12x | Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2002 |

new

↑ It may not be the niftiest of machines but the Poweroid 2201 has some great features

powers the system to a WorldBench 4 score of 117 – a full 12 points behind the first-placed Axis. While we certainly don't rate a PC on speed alone, it is entirely possible that if the Poweroid had achieved a higher score it would have grabbed the Best Buy crown from Evesham.

However, there are still plenty of features that ensure the Poweroid stands out from the crowd – including Creative's excellent Audigy 2 sound card. Capable of seven-channel support (unlike the six channels offered by the original Audigy), Creative's latest release will process DVD audio and retains the FireWire port its predecessor offers. The Audigy 2 is undeniably the new daddy of sound cards and is likely to remain so for a good while.

Another striking feature of the Poweroid 2201 is the DVD+RW drive. Capable of 2.5-speed write/rewrite rates, it's easy to back up phenomenal amounts of data on to a single disc should you so wish. There are also two 80GB hard drives that can be configured as Raid-0 so you'll be able to access your data quickly.

Taking into account the Best Price's high-end features, its £1,399 price tag and five-year warranty (the first three of which are onsite), the Poweroid is certainly a system to consider.

In terms of storage, the 120GB hard drive should prove near-impossible to fill. It's also simple to back up data on the Evesham – the bundled DVD-RW drive, which offers write/rewrite rates of dual- and single-speed, can store eight times more data on a disc than a CD.

The Axis' one drawback is it doesn't have a standalone sound card. However, this being an nForce2 motherboard, the sound quality of the onboard audio chip is still good and there's support for six channels. On the plus side, this system does have a FireWire port. With a

three-year warranty (the first two years onsite) and a low price tag of £1,349, the Axis 2700+ is a great buy.

**2** Best Price Poweroid 2201

Best Price Computers narrowly misses out on the top spot this month with the excellent Poweroid 2201. A combination of novel features, decent components, generous warranty and a modest price make it a worthy Recommended system.

At the heart of the Poweroid is a 2.8GHz Pentium 4 processor which

**3** Systemax Inspire 7352

Systemax enters the chart at number three, winning itself a Recommended award in the process. Offering an impressive all-round specification at a reasonable £1,299, the Inspire 7352 is the only Power PC to use the Athlon XP 2600+. Despite not being one of AMD's latest processors, this chip is still a great addition to any PC. The

↑ With solid performance and an alluring price tag, Systemax gets a deserved Recommended award

Inspire managed 118 in the WorldBench 4 tests – a reasonable score, but it's beaten by many other Power contenders.

Handling the graphics is ATI's Radeon 9700 Pro – and it does so very well. The scores in both the graphics and video encoding tests were as good as any other system in the current Power PC chart. When you combine the capabilities of this card with Systemax's monitor of choice, the CTX PR960F, you have a gaming and graphics dream. With a dot pitch of 0.24mm and a clear and sharp image the CTX handles all your display needs.

If you're looking to use your PC to create a home cinema in your living room then you'll be pleased with the audio setup the Systemax Inspire 7352 has to offer. Creative's Audigy sound card, combined with Videologic's ZXR-500 speaker system, will satisfy even the most demanding audiophile. There are even a couple of extras thrown in for good measure, including a Creative Muvo MP3 player that was reviewed in the December 02 issue of *PC Advisor*. All this at £1,299 – including a three-year onsite warranty – can't be a bad deal.

↓ Style and substance combine in the Net AD 1200 – and all without punishing your pocket



## 4  NetHighStreet Net AD 1200

The final Recommended award goes to NetHighStreet for offering a well-rounded system at a decent price. Probably the second-best looking system in this chart after the Dell, the Net AD 1200's all-black casing matches the black bezel of its Samsung SyncMaster 151S flat-panel.

The 2.53GHz Pentium 4 processor that powers the Net AD is slightly old and slow and this shows in terms of its WorldBench 4 score of 116. This may be the lowest performance rating in the chart, but speed isn't necessarily everything in a PC – the NetHighStreet has a strong component line-up. There's a generous 120GB of storage space on the Western Digital hard drive, 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM, an ATI Radeon 9700 Pro graphics card and a Creative Audigy sound card.

Though the flat-panel display isn't going to be perfect for gaming, if you want to cut down on desk clutter and save space then it's ideal – and there's the bonus of it looking good too. The two-year warranty may not be the best cover in the chart, but for £1,200 it's a decent deal.

## 5  Mesh Matrix XP 2700+ PPC

New processors abound in the Power PC chart this month, including the Mesh Matrix XP which uses AMD's Athlon XP 2700+. Combined with the Asus motherboard and nVidia nForce2 chipset, the 2700+ PPC achieved 127 in our WorldBench 4 tests – a strong score.

The 17in NEC 1700V flat-panel is an impressive display and ideal if space is at a premium. However, it doesn't make the best use of the 128MB Sapphire Radeon 9700 Pro graphics card so hardcore gamers might be better off considering another system.

The overall specification of the Mesh is reasonable, though, with 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and a 120GB hard drive that provides ample storage space. The audio chip is integrated into the motherboard but still supports six channels so the Creative Inspire 5300 speaker system isn't wasted.

Disappointingly, the Mesh Matrix XP's warranty only extends to three-year return-to-base support. However, this isn't so bad when you consider the system costs a reasonable £1,299 excluding VAT.

## 6  Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 3GHz HT

The only PC in the Power chart to sport Intel's latest processor, the 3.06GHz Pentium 4, the Hi-Grade still didn't manage to set the WorldBench 4 test on fire despite its HT (hyperthreading) technology.

The thinking behind HT is that a huge amount of processing power is wasted by giving one gigantic chip a single set of instructions to process. By making a virtual duplicate of the Pentium 4 chip and fooling the PC into thinking that it actually has two processors onboard rather than one, HT technology can hand out tasks to both 'processors' at the same time. Just as humans perform most tasks more efficiently by using two hands rather than one, HT ensures that as much of the processor's resources are being used as possible.

A score of 124 was respectable enough, though this was achieved when the HT was disabled – when it was enabled, the Hi-Grade only managed 118. However, WorldBench 4 was not designed to be a test of HT technology, so it would be unfair to knock this system for not wiping the floor with the opposition.

The Ultis PV4 is a strong system in terms of its specification and it even includes a 2.4-speed write/rewrite DVD+RW drive. Buying a system that houses the latest 3GHz Pentium 4 is not going to be cheap, though – the Hi-Grade costs a whopping £1,701.

## 7  Dell Dimension 4550

If the Power PC chart was judged on looks alone, the Dell Dimension 4550 would certainly have been a runaway winner. The stylish dark grey casing, unusual keyboard and stunning flat-panel display all complement each other well, creating what can only be described as the

sexiest system here. Performance-wise, it's not too bad either. Thanks to the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 processor, the Dimension achieved a respectable score of 127 in our WorldBench 4 tests. Another feature that stands out is the 2.5-speed write/rewrite DVD+RW drive – ideal if you want to back up large amounts of data.

However, at a whopping £1,649 and with a mere one-year return-to-base warranty, the Dell Dimension 4550 isn't the best deal available. If cost is not an issue, though, and you're looking for a PC that can take pride of place in the living room instead of being hidden away upstairs, then you could do much worse than the Dell.

**8** Systemax Reliance 3017

Last month's number one drops to eight, demonstrating how fierce the competition has been this month. What won this system a Best Buy in the past was a combination of the generous amount of storage space – two 80GB hard drives – a three-year onsite warranty and one of the best monitors in the chart – the CTX PR960F. All this is priced at £1,249 excluding VAT represents good value for money. The system performed well in the graphics and video encoding tests, but the 2.41GHz Pentium 4 processor only helped the Systemax pull in a WorldBench 4 score of 121.
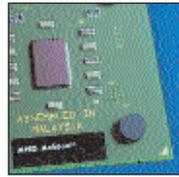
**9** Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 2.8 PV10

Dropping down to ninth this month is the Ultis PV4 2.8 PV10 from Hi-Grade. While this system is the fastest in the chart with a WorldBench 4 score of 131, the Hi-Grade can't compete with many of the new chart entries in terms of all-round specification.

The graphics and sound cards and monitor are more or less the same quality as the competition, but if you want a system that will complete everyday tasks that little bit faster then the Hi-Grade is still well worth considering.

The hard drive isn't as generous as those of some of the other Power contenders, and though the warranty is three years long, only the first year is onsite cover. However, at £1,200, the Ultis PV4 is reasonably priced.

**10** PC World Advent 3828 BTO

While the Advent 3828 BTO has a good all-round specification, its components are not of the same quality as the other Power PC contenders'. With a WorldBench 4 score of 128, this tenth-placed system is certainly speedy and results of the graphics and video encoding tests were reasonable as well. However, the 80GB hard disk is small compared to drives in other chart systems, the Philips 109B4 19in CRT (cathode ray tube) monitor isn't up to the standard of other models available and the one-year onsite warranty seems mean considering the £1,449 price tag.
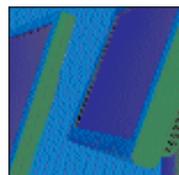
## Buying advice

• Processor **In the last few months, AMD and Intel have both brought out several new chips. The 3.06GHz Pentium 4 is the latest offering from Intel, but as the HT (hyperthreading) technology it uses won't be worth having until software is designed to work with it you may be better off choosing a 2.5, 2.6 or 2.8GHz P4. AMD recently bolstered its range with the Athlon XP 2700+ and 2800+, but anything over an XP 2200+ is fine in the Power PC category.**

• Memory **Expect 512MB of RAM and make sure it is the faster DDR (double data rate) RAM, rather than SDRAM. Rambus is seldom used these days, although you will see it in some systems. Performance-wise, though, it isn't an awful lot different to DDR RAM. Remember to look for DDR333 RAM (the fastest version of DDR RAM), although DDR400 is slowly entering the Power PC market and should prove to be a better bet in the future.**

• Storage **An 80GB hard drive is about the minimum size you can expect in the Power PC category, but a system with two hard drives is preferable. Have backup covered with a 40-/32-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive. DVD rewriters are becoming available, too, but this is likely to push up the overall cost of the system.**

• Monitor **At this price point you should be opting for a 19in screen that offers a resolution of 1,600x1,200 and a dot pitch of 0.25mm or less. Flat-panel displays are becoming more common but can vary in quality – look for one that can support a resolution of at least 1,280x1,024.**

• Graphics card **To keep your monitor on its toes you want an agile graphics card and the ATI Radeon 9700 is just about top dog at the moment, though nVidia's GeForce4 Ti 4600 also offers strong performance. Look for at least 64MB of RAM, with 128MB being even better.**

• Sound card **Audio performance may be just as important to you as graphics, so don't forget to be picky here as well. Some PCs are still fitted with the SoundBlaster 5.1 Live, but the best bet is Creative's Audigy. The Audigy 2 is just becoming available and this will handle DVD audio as well as CD audio.**