

BUDGET PCs		Last month's position	First reviewed	PC World-Bench 4	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Processor type/speed	RAM	Hard disk/capacity	Mother-board	Chipset	Modem	USB ports	Monitor	Screen size	Dot pitch	Max resolution @75Hz	Graphics card	Graphics chip	Graphics card memory	Sound card	Speakers	No of speakers/subwoofer	DVD-ROM speed	CD-RW read/write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software & other extras
	<b>1</b> Multivision Vision Elite 4 Ti 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk	1	Sep 02	118	£999	3-year onsite, 3-year labour	AMD Athlon XP 2100+/1.73GHz	512MB DDR RAM	IBM/80GB	MSI 6380E	Via KT3 Ultra	56K	5	Iiyama Vision Master Pro 454	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	128MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	48x/48x/12x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite, multimedia bundle
	<b>2</b> Evesham Axis 2200+ 0870 160 9500 www.evesham.com	2	Sep 02	120	£999	2-year onsite, 1-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Asus A7V333	Via KT333	56K	6	Samsung SyncMaster 957 DF	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	Leadtek WinFast A250	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/yes	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Pinnacle Studio 7.0, Roxio Easy CD Creator, games bundle
	<b>3</b> Mesh Matrix 2200+ RD Pro 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com	3	Oct 02	123	£899	3-year collect and return	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Asus A7V333	Via KT333	56K	2	Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 9000 Pro	ATI Radeon 9000 Pro	64MB	Creative SB Audigy	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	48x/40x/12x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
	<b>4</b> Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com	4	Jun 02	118	£849	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.68GHz	256MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Asus A7 A266-E	M1647	56K	4	Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/yes	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
	<b>5</b> Systemax Inspire 7122 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	5	Sep 02	121	£999	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/1.8GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/80GB	MSI 6380E	Via KT3 Ultra	56K	6	CTX EX950F	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	GeForce4 Ultra 650	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite, CD/DVD bundle
	<b>6</b> PC World Advent 3813 BTO 01442 355 802 www.pcworld.co.uk	6	Oct 02	119	£999	1-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Gigabyte GA7VRXE+	Via KT333	56K	2	Samsung SyncMaster 957 DF	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 9000 Pro	ATI Radeon 9000 Pro	64MB	Creative SB Audigy	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	40x/32x/12x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2002
	<b>7</b> Multivision Vision Pro 0870 066 0882 www.multivision.co.uk	7	Jun 02	120	£999	2-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.68GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Seagate/60GB	MSI 6390 LE2	Via KT266A	56K	4	Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	ATI Radeon 8500 LE	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
	<b>8</b> Systemax Reliance P2260E 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	8	Jul 02	116	£949	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	Intel Pentium 4/2.2GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/80GB	Intel 845E	MSI MS-6566E	56K	4	CTX PR705F	17in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4200	64MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Videologic ZXR 500	5/yes	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Lotus SmartSuite
	<b>9</b> Best Price Poweroid 2100 0870 220 0444 www.poweroid.co.uk	9	Jun 02	116	£899	1-year parts and labour, 4-year labour	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Soyo K7 Dragon Plus	Via KT266A	56K	8	Iiyama LS902	19in	0.26mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500 DV	ATI Radeon 8500	64MB	Creative Labs 8738 Integrated	Cambridge DTT2200	5/yes	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, remote control, sim card reader
	<b>10</b> Time Mercury 2200+ PQ 0870 830 3116 www.timecomputers.com	10	Sep 02	122	£1,199	3-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2200+/1.8GHz	512MB DDR RAM	2 x Seagate/80GB	Gigabyte GA7VRXP	Via 8233A(CE)	56K	4	Samsung Samtron 71s	17in flat-panel	0.26mm	1,280x1,024	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Labs Audigy 1394	Creative Labs Inspire 5300	5/yes	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, Star Office, GT XP

### 1 Multivision Vision Elite 4 Ti

Multivision hangs on to its Best Buy award with the Vision Elite 4 Ti. Rather than opt for AMD's 2200+ Athlon XP chip, Multivision has opted for its predecessor, the 2100+. Despite not offering the speediest performance in the chart, its WorldBench 4 score of 118 is respectable and, in everyday use, it's unlikely you'll notice the difference. Combine this with its strong all-round package and warranty and you can see why the Elite takes the top spot.

↓ The Multivision's outstanding specifications keep it at number one for a third month



Both 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and 80GB hard drive have become standard offerings in the Budget chart, so it comes as no surprise that Multivision has opted for this spec.

The Ti's display setup is good – Iiyama's Vision Master Pro 454, with its built-in speakers, performs well and adds an extra two USB ports to the five that are on the tower. The 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4200 graphics card, which can easily cope with graphics-intensive applications, is combined with the now almost standard Creative Audigy sound card and a set of Videologic ZXR 500 surround speakers. If you're after an entertainment system then the Multivision Vision Elite is an ideal choice.

Giving this Best Buy system the edge is a 48-/48-/12-speed (read/write/rewrite) Teac CD-RW drive, a speedier model than the competitors have to offer. The warranty runs to a comprehensive three years onsite followed by a further three years labour only. Multivision also scores highly on the software front – as well as Lotus SmartSuite, its generous multimedia bundle will keep you amused for days.

### 2 Evesham Axis 2200+

Evesham opted for AMD's fastest processor yet – the Athlon XP 2200+ – but the Axis still remains at number two this month. The 2200+, running at 1.8GHz, uses a 0.13 micron production process rather than the 0.18 micron design of previous AMD chips. The smaller the core the less power it needs, allowing it to run faster without generating as much heat. This should translate to better system performance, but the difference between the 2100+ and the 2200+ turns out to be negligible.

The Evesham Axis' WorldBench 4 score of 120 makes for decent performance, but it's certainly not streets ahead of other systems in this category which use slower processors. The performance in our graphics tests was strong again, producing frame rates a little higher than the Best Buy Multivision, although there was very little to choose from between the two systems in the video encoding tests.

There's plenty of room inside the Axis, providing good upgradeability, and you don't even need a screwdriver to take the



↑ With decent performance and great value for money, the Evesham is a deserved second place

case off. Even more conveniently, there are six USB ports – two of which are front-mounted – so you can easily plug and unplug devices without have to delve round the back of the PC.

The Evesham's monitor is a Samsung SyncMaster 957 DF, which is a decent display for a Budget system, while the warranty is good – although not the strongest in the chart – with two-year onsite and one-year return-to-base cover. At just under £1,000 the Evesham Axis offers good value for money and deserves its Recommended award.

### 3 Mesh Matrix 2200+ RD Pro

Even with the latest AMD Athlon and Intel Pentium 4 chips hitting the streets, high WorldBench 4 scores have been hard to find. Notching up a healthy 123, the Mesh Matrix shows a clean pair of heels to the rest of the competition. This is partly due to the Athlon XP 2200+ processor, although the 512MB of fast PC2100 DDR (double data rate) RAM helps as well. There's no shortage of storage space, and the poised Maxtor hard drive offers a plentiful 80GB.

The 19in Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92 is an excellent monitor that has stood the test of time. Its 0.25mm dot pitch, vivid colour scheme and sharp picture allows it to make full use of the Mesh's video card. Unsurprisingly, the ATI Radeon 9000 Pro gets a better airing on the Matrix, and its video tests are amazing, making this the best Budget PC for video encoding. Games performance, on the other hand, is disappointing, with higher resolutions proving too much.

The sound system is more impressive, and Creative's popular Audigy card is lent



↑ The Mesh Matrix 2200+ RD Pro achieves the fastest WorldBench 4 score, notching up 123 points

resonance by Videologic's ZXR 500 speaker system. CD drives tend to be much of a muchness these days, but the Teac CD-RW has fared well in our CD burner top five, and its 40-/12-speed CD-R/RW facilities result in a smooth performance that make it almost as fast as anything on the market.

The Mesh's software bundle (Windows XP Home and Lotus SmartSuite) isn't the most expensive, but the solid internal arrangement and adequate three-year collect-and-return warranty are pleasing.

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## 4 Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC

Last month saw a further £50 slashed from the Matrix XP 2000+ BPC's price tag, so Mesh retains its Recommended award for a sixth successive month. The Athlon XP 2000+, running at 1.68GHz, is now AMD's third-fastest processor and is twinned here with a sizeable 80GB hard drive. Unfortunately, the system only includes 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM; with another 256MB the WorldBench 4 score of 118 could have been higher.

As an entertainment PC the Matrix won't let you down. It might not have a 128MB GeForce4 graphics card like the Best Buy Multivision, but on a price-to-performance ratio ATI's 64MB Radeon LE is an easy winner, providing great visuals. It's twinned with the Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 92 – currently the best monitor in the chart. Together they produce high frame rates and a beautifully crisp picture, which will be perfect for graphics-intensive applications.

↓ Sticking at fourth place this month, the Mesh Matrix XP 2000+ BPC is a great entertainment system



↑ The Systemax Inspire performed well in our tests, exploiting its components well

## 5 Systemax Inspire 7122

Systemax sits at number five this month, just missing out on an award in the process. The Inspire 7122 might not offer a top-notch spec, but it features the brand-new AMD Athlon XP 2200+ chip, which afforded it a WorldBench 4 score of 121 – respectable, considering it only houses 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM.

The 80GB hard drive provides ample storage space and, even though the GeForce4 Ti 4200 graphics chip only has 64MB of RAM, it performed well in our tests. The 19in CTX EX950F is always a good choice, so the 7122 will be well received by gamers and users of graphics-intensive applications. The warranty is a reasonable one-year onsite and two-year return-to-base, and there's a generous software bundle including Lotus SmartSuite.

It's likely that with another 256MB of memory the Inspire 7122 would have performed better and gained a higher chart placing.

## 6 PC World Advent 3813 BTO

PC World treads much of the same ground as the third-placed Mesh – only with less flair. Take the performance: the Advent's WorldBench 4 score of 119 is disappointing for a machine with a strong base system – one that uses the same AMD Athlon 2200+ chip as the Mesh, and teams it with the same 80GB hard drive and 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM. Somehow, though, the Advent fails to shine in the speed tests.

The 19in Samsung SyncMaster 957DF is a competent monitor, although we wouldn't place it on a par with the CTX and Mitsubishi models. As with the Mesh, the ATI Radeon 9000 Pro is better at encoding video than games and, overall, you sacrifice that extra bit of video speed with the Advent. We can't fault the audio, though, and the Advent gets great voice from the Creative Audigy/Videologic ZXR 500 partnership. The 32-/12-speed CD-R/RW and 16-speed DVD drives are solid rather than stunning examples of their kind.



↑ The Advent features the same processor and hard drive as the number three Mesh, but isn't as speedy

## Shopping on a budget: where to compromise

Even though compromises sometimes have to be made when considering which Budget system you want to buy, you can still expect a reasonable graphics card in a sub-£1,200 system. There are several different models in the chart this month and they all offer good performance for games and graphics-intensive applications. Some are better than others, though, so before going ahead and choosing a system you'll need to work out how important graphic handling capabilities are to you.

Time has managed to squeeze the 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 into its system by compromising the quality of other components. This system can produce 78.8fps (frames per

second) at a resolution of 1,024x768, but is rather let down by the flat-panel monitor which can only handle resolutions up to 1,280x1,024. The Multivision uses a 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4200, the little brother of the Ti 4600. It still produces 73.1fps at 1,024x768, but this drops down to 63.3fps if you increase the resolution to 1,600x1,200.

If graphics are not so important to you, a card with 64MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM will be adequate. The ATI Radeon 9000 Pro in the Mesh Matrix 2200+RD Pro and the Advent 3813 BTO still produce frame rates in the high 70s at 1,024x768, but this falls below 45fps when resolutions are raised to 1,600x1,200.

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↑ The Vision Pro was one of the best Budget PCs of its time, and is still holding on to its mid-table position

## 7 Multivision Vision Pro

Pushed down from second to sixth place two months ago and dropping another spot to seventh last month, the Multivision still has plenty of impressive features to keep it in the Top 10. Apart from the attractive Logitech keyboard and mouse, the Vision Pro is a plain-looking system, but it proved to be one of the best Budget PCs in its time.

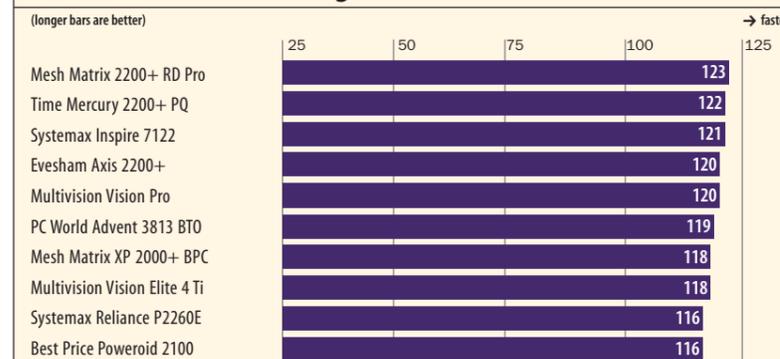
Multivision opted for 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM to go with the 1.68GHz Athlon XP 2000+ chip, and the Vision Pro's WorldBench 4 score of 120 reflects this spec. The 60GB hard drive is barely average these days but, even so, it should still prove near-impossible to fill.

With a 64MB Radeon LE graphics card from ATI and Mitsubishi's 19in Diamond Plus 92 monitor, the visual setup is superb and renders impressively sharp results. Likewise, the Videologic speakers are on a par with the popular Cambridge DTT2200s, and the Audigy sound card gives you the benefit not only of good audio, but also a FireWire port.



↑ The Systemax's Pentium 4 chip holds up well in a chart full of Athlons, with an unbeatable graphics setup

## PC WorldBench 4: Budget PCs



## 8 Systemax Reliance P2260E

The only Budget PC to boast an Intel processor, the Reliance's WorldBench 4 score of 116 makes it the slowest system in the chart, so if a speedy performance is paramount then this is not the PC for you. The Pentium 4 does have an edge over the AMD processors in terms of graphics, however, and the P2260E has nVidia's GeForce4 Ti 4200 card, which performed strongly in our games tests.

Balanced throughout, there's little evidence of cost-cutting in the £949 Systemax Reliance. The IBM hard drive offers 80GB of storage space and the P2260E's sound system pairs Creative Labs Audigy with Videologic speakers.

## 9 Best Price Poweroid 2100

The Best Price still ranks above Time's system which boasts a 2200+ processor. The Poweroid 2100 houses an Athlon XP 1900+ processor, 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and an 80GB hard drive. ATI's 64MB Radeon 8500 DV graphics card offers TV functionality, but you need to use the bundled adapter to hook up the monitor as it only features a DVI (digital visual interface) port. The monitor isn't the greatest either with a dot pitch of 0.26mm.

There are four USB ports on the front of the Poweroid, plus two at the back. With another two on the keyboard you can connect peripherals to your heart's content.

The warranty covers you for a full five years, but you will only get onsite cover for the first year – the remainder only covers you for labour cost.



↑ Best Price's Poweroid 2100 gets good results from its 1.6GHz chip, and has a five-year warranty

## 10 Time Mercury 2200+ PQ

We didn't expect systems powered by AMD's Athlon XP 2200+ to feature in the bottom half of the chart, but this Time system only manages tenth place. The Mercury houses good-quality components including two 80GB hard drives. The WorldBench 4 score of 122 makes for an extremely speedy PC, but its inflated price of £1,199 prevents it from moving further up the chart.



↑ Though it is speedy and good-looking, the Time Mercury's high price tag lets it down