reviews

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

Hardware categories
• Features **This rates the specification of a product by current standards. For example, a 2GHz PC with 512MB of RAM and 80GB hard drive would score highly.**
• Build quality **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.**

Software categories
• Ease of use **Describes how easy software is to install and use.**
• Features **Indicates how much the package contains. An office suite that 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.**

Scoring
• Software **Overall ratings for software take into account the three main assessment categories above and any other factors that are covered in the detailed review.**
• Hardware **Our product charts rank hardware from 1 to 10 across a category, so we do not give overall scores. To gauge how well a hardware product has fared against the competition, look at where it falls in the relevant Top 10 chart.**

All our rankings are based on a calculation of features and performance compared to price, so the highest-scoring products also represent the best value for money. For those products not featured in our charts, anything we consider particularly outstanding is awarded a Recommended logo. Charts are introduced, amended or removed as and when necessary to cover any emerging hardware sectors, advances in technology or changes in the industry.

PC Advisor Gold award
This is given to an outstanding standalone product. It may indicate that the product will enter our charts in next month's issue, but it may also be awarded to a product that is not covered in our existing charts.

The Top 10 chart awards
A Best Buy product offers a superlative combination of features, performance, value for money and customer service. Those that earn a Recommended award are almost as good, offering great value, quality and performance.

Prices
All the prices printed in *PC Advisor* are quoted by the manufacturer or distributor and exclude VAT. Prices are only intended as a guide, and you may see products on sale for less or more than our quoted price. If you're interested in purchasing any of the products reviewed in *PC Advisor,* please contact the manufacturer or supplier direct, mentioning both the magazine and the issue in which you saw the product. If they won't supply the product as reviewed, please contact reviews@idg.com. Please note manufacturers are under no obligation to feature reviewed products on their website.

PC Advisor's recommendations are for guidance only and are not a guarantee of suitability. The publisher takes no responsibility for purchasers' decisions.

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When Intel and AMD aren't fighting it out in the desktop processor market they can be found going for a round or two in the mobile arena. Last month saw their fastest processors yet and this month we're looking at their latest chips for notebooks. In this contest, though, speed must be balanced with battery life. On page 54 we've got an exclusive on Evesham's new notebook featuring AMD's Mobile Athlon XP 2000+. Dell, on the other hand, has sided firmly with Intel and its new Inspiron 8200 packs in a Mobile Pentium 4 running at 2.2GHz.

Snappy dressers
Digital cameras come in all shapes, sizes and price ranges. If you're looking to take your first steps into digital photography then you might consider the new entry-level FinePix F401 Zoom from FujiFilm. If you've got a little more to spend, however, we've got an exclusive review of Sony's new model. The Cybershot DSC-F717 won't suit all, but if you've got the money to spend then turn to page 55 to see what we thought.

Fill your pockets
Pocket PC 2002 has boosted the PDA (personal digital assistant) market with new entrants and models this month. The launch of Intel's latest low-power processor, XScale, has also provided an incentive for manufacturers to update their ranges. Whether you want fully functional or super slim, there's something to suit you as we take a peek at Compaq's latest addition to the iPaq range and Asus' MyPal A600 on page 56.

Notable devices
Tablet PCs have long been talked about, but with the launch of Windows XP Tablet PC edition they're finally coming to the market. Tablet computing promises to bring the ease of use of paper to the world of PCs. If you want to take notes in a meeting or make drawings, the touch-sensitive screen means you can do it directly into your Tablet PC. To see if Acer's device lives up to the hype, turn to page 58.

Open season
With PC prices falling to new lows, the cost of the operating system is consuming a larger proportion of the total price. Lindows thinks it has an answer with its low-cost Lindows operating system. Based on Linux, the free-but-hard-to-understand OS also provides support for so-called 'bridge' applications. This means you can run Word 2000 on your Lindows system without any problems. Evesham has wrapped this all up into an incredibly low price, just £249 inc VAT. If you want to find out if Lindows is for you, turn to page 67.
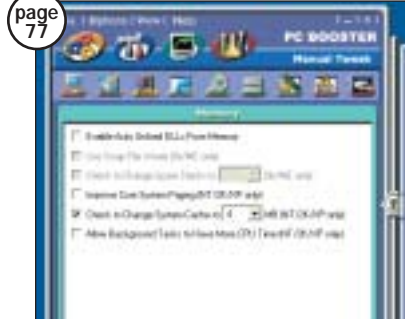
Zipping ahead
CD-RW drives have become a commodity and you'll rarely find a new PC without one. Iomega is still pinning hope on its Zip format, however, with its new Zip 750 drive (page 70). Offering more storage, albeit only slightly more, than a CD-RW with the promise of fast write and rewrite rates, Iomega thinks it's on to a winner.

Seek understanding from your PC
On the software side this month we've taken a look at the latest version of IBM ViaVoice. Voice recognition has been much talked about, but hasn't really caught on in the mainstream. To find out if we'll all soon be chatting away to our PCs, turn to page 78.

Brain scan
We've also taken a look at the newest OCR (optical character recognition) software from OmniPage, so if you fancy living in a paperless office have a look on page 79. Finally on page 77 there's PC Booster, an application that promises to keep your PC running in tip-top condition and hopefully make it faster too. ■

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