DIGITAL PROJECTORS AND FLATBED SCANNERS

Digital projectors Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Brightness (Ansi lumens)	Lamp life (hours)	Lamp power (Watts)	Replacement bulb	Weight	Maximum resolution	Dimensions (width x depth x height)
1 Sharp PG-M25X 0800 262 958 www.sharp.co.uk	NEW	Nov 02	£3,675	3-year	1,900	2,000	210W	£275	2.6kg	1,024x768	223x318x83mm
2 Optoma EP753 01923 691 800 www.optoma.co.uk	2	Sep 02	£2,295	3-year	1,600	2,000	200W	£289	2.9kg	1,024x768	277x225x85mm
3 Dell 3100MP 0870 907 3304 www.dell.co.uk	NEW	Nov 02	£1,999	2-year	1,000	1,000	130W	£289	1.6kg	1,024x768	176x225x56mm
4 Eizo IX421M 01483 719 505 www.eizo.co.uk	3	Jun 02	£2,440	3-year	1,000	1,000	130W	£230	1.5kg	1,024x768	230x177x48mm
5 NEC LT150Z 0845 404 020 www.nec.co.uk	4	Jun 02	£2,799	3-year	1,000	1,000	135W	£313	1.5kg	1,600x1,200	243x196x53mm

Flatbed scanners Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Maximum scanning area	Interface connection	Supported operating systems	True colour bit	Graphics/optical character recognition software
1 Canon CanoScan D1250U2 08705 143 723 www.canon.co.uk	1	Aug 02	£75	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1 and USB 2.0	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	ArcSoft PhotoStudio/ ScanSoft OmniPage Pro
2 Umax Astra 4500 0870 906 4400 www.umax.co.uk	2	Aug 02	£68	2-year	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	MGI PhotoSuite SE/ TextBridge 2.0 SE
3 Visioneer OneTouch 8700 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com	3	Jan 02	£83	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	USB	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	MGI PhotoSuite, Paperport Deluxe/TextBridge Pro
4 HP Scanjet 4400 08705 474 747 www.scanjet.hp.com	4	Aug 02	£78	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1 or parallel	95/98/Me/ NT/2000/XP	48bit	ArcSoft PhotoImpression/ HP PrecisionScan Pro
5 Visioneer OneTouch 8920 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com	5	Aug 02	£127	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	Adobe Photoshop Elements/ TextBridge Pro

DIGITAL PROJECTORS

1 Sharp PG-M25X

The Sharp PG-M25X offers so many cutting-edge features it's hard to know where to start. Arguably, the wireless networking facilities are its most radical touch. Any PCs equipped with a suitable wireless network card can log on and take control of the projector. In fact, thanks to the Wi-Fi standard, a presenter can operate the projector from a different room.

The PC Card slot doubles up as a memory card slot, so if you're taking the projector on the road you can copy your presentation to a storage card and leave the notebook in the office. With an operating noise of 37dB the Sharp isn't that quiet, but in an office environment it won't prove obtrusive. Its brightness rating of 1,900 Ansi lumens ensures that images can be seen in virtually all light conditions. The projector works beautifully at its native resolution of 1,024x768 (XGA) and stretches happily to 1,280x 1,024. The DLP technology boasts the most up-to-date refinements and the 1,000:1 contrast ratio promises fantastic depth of colour. All this culminates in a sharp and focused image with a glorious colour palette.

FLATBED SCANNERS

1 Canon CanoScan D1250U2

Canon stays at the top of the chart with the CanoScan D1250U2, due to its excellent image quality and speedy interface. Canon has embraced the new USB 2.0 technology and the results are worth it. Where USB 1.1 scanners averaged around three and half minutes to scan an A4 colour document at 600dpi (dots per inch), the CanoScan romped home at 49 seconds. The resulting scans also needed little correction. Colours were vibrant and the detail of the original photograph was retained. Setup was simple and, although the supplied driver wasn't certified for Windows XP, it worked flawlessly. The software package is generous, comprising a copy of ArcSoft PhotoStudio and ScanSoft OmniPage Pro. The CanoScan also features a handy locking mechanism that will prevent damage to the unit during transit. To make the most of this scanner's USB 2.0 facilities, though, you'll need the relevant interface.

DIGITAL PROJECTORS

2 Optoma EP753

Optoma is making a concerted attempt to become a significant force in the projector market and, if the EP753 is anything to go by, its chances of success are high. The 1,600 Ansi lumens makes it perform well in the boardroom, while the combination of a 600:1 contrast ratio and smooth DLP (digital light processing) technology results in fantastic image quality. Pictures are as colourful and vibrant as the text is clear and focused, and the low 32dB noise level ensures that the EP753 fades into the background. The Optoma might not have the big screen capabilities of the Toshiba or Eizo, but if you want fine performance this device is an excellent choice.

3 Dell 3100MP

The 3100MP's styling is a lesson in sophistication and its 1.6kg frame means that carrying the Dell around is never a chore. The slightly complicated onboard menu system covers all the essentials including DVI and remote mouse facilities. Surprisingly for a DLP (digital light processing) model the 3100MP's contrast ratio is 280:1, although 1,000 Ansi lumens is adequate for all but broad daylight. The colour scheme might not be the richest in the chart, but there's enough subtlety for most apps and DVD movies. Character definition is sharp, and it works well in both 800x600 and the native XGA resolution of 1,024x768.

NEW

4 Eizo IX421M

The Eizo IX421M's 1.5kg frame marks it out as one of the most portable models in the charts. The image is incredibly sharp, with text and graphics all beautifully defined. Aided by the excellent 650:1 contrast ratio, the colour scheme is similarly vibrant, although particularly well suited to darker shades. The brightness of 1,000 Ansi lumens may seem fairly miserly compared to some of the other projectors, but the value-for-money Eizo is proof that there's far more to a strong image than a high brightness rating.

5 NEC LT150Z

NEC sits at five this month, despite delivering probably the best image quality here. The LT150Z has native XGA resolution support, which can be increased to 1,280x1,024 with only minor deterioration in image quality. Even when the lamp is switched to a lower power mode, though, fan noise is high. Neither is the NEC cheap. But for unmatched images and the PC Card option, the NEC is worth a look.

FLATBED SCANNERS

2 Umax Astra 4500

Umax may not have embraced the new USB 2.0 interface, but the Astra makes the most of its older USB 1.1 technology. The 4500 can't match the speed achieved by the Best Buy Canon on the 600dpi (dots per inch) A4 image, but it proved competent elsewhere. A colour photo at 300dpi took just 21 seconds, with 600dpi taking a further 15 seconds. The resulting scans, however, were slightly dark. The Umax Astra comes with a good software bundle and there's even a lock and stand included. Combine the 4500's low price of £68 and its surprisingly fast USB 1.1 interface and you can see why the Astra holds on to its Recommended award – a great option for those on a budget.

3 Visioneer OneTouch 8700

Visioneer's OneTouch 8700 remains our number three flatbed scanner this month. Couple the optical resolution of 1,200x4,800dpi (dots per inch) with 48bit colour depth and you get crystal-clear quality combined with speedy delivery. However, you won't see the benefits of a faster interface such as USB 2.0. The 8700 will please both novice and advanced users: you can stick with one-touch scanning or opt for detailed gamma and colour correction. This isn't the prettiest or smallest scanner on the market, but its landscape shape makes it easy to house.

4 HP Scanjet 4400

HP combines good image quality with value for money. The Scanjet may not be the fastest scanner around but, if you're prepared to wait, the results won't disappoint. Scanning a colour photo at 300dpi (dots per inch) took 27 seconds, but upping the resolution to 600dpi added an extra minute to the time. Even line art was a struggle; where other scanners averaged 30 seconds at 600dpi the 4400 limped in at one minute 37 seconds. Setup was simple thanks to the included quick-start sheet.

5 Visioneer OneTouch 8920

The OneTouch 8920 resembles the 8700 but offers more features – for a price. If you're interested in scanning transparencies and negatives then this is ideal as it includes a built-in transparency adapter. Software support is good and speed-wise the 9820 held its ground despite only offering USB 1.1. Colour photos took 19 seconds and 50 seconds at 300dpi (dots per inch) and 600dpi respectively with a colour A4 document taking 32 seconds at 300dpi.