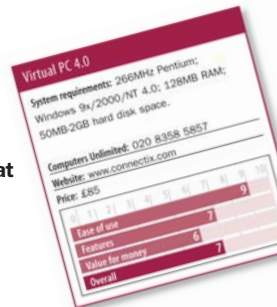# reviews

## Scoring and testing explained

**E**ach 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 1.5GHz PC with 256MB of RAM and 60GB 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 it is to install and use the software.**
• Features **As with hardware, this rating indicates how much the software package contains. An office suite that only came with a word processor 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 **Because we provide product charts which rank hardware from 1 to 10 across a category, we do not provide 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.

### The Best Buy and Recommended 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.**

**page 65**

**W**e've got some pretty special products on test this month, including a full review of Microsoft's new games console the Xbox, the low down on Apple's redesigned iMac and a thorough test of Dell's first mobile workstation, among other things.

### Little black box
The Xbox has long been touted, but the actual units are in short supply in this country as they are not due for launch until March. However, we managed to get our hands on one, so we can tell you what lies behind the hype. To find out if the Xbox is a triumph or a turkey for the Microsoft empire, turn to page 59.

### Big apple
Bill Gates' archrival, Apple, has also been busy of late, totally revamping the iMac desktop PC. It's got a new futuristic style and plenty of substance to offer, so if you fancy a change from the beige box there has never been a better time. Take a look at the alternative on page 58.

### Power walking
If you need real power on the move, Dell has got the perfect solution with the Precision M40. Its industrial-strength specifications put paid to the myth that you have to sacrifice power in the name of portability. To find out more on what it can offer your business turn to page 65.

### In the frame
We know how much you like digital cameras so this month we have no less than three for you to choose from including Sony's DSC-F707 and Pentax's Optio 430 on page 60 and Toshiba's PDR-M-25 on page 64. If webcams are more your thing we have a review of Creative's versatile PC-Cam 600 on page 62. And don't forget our Digital cameras chart on page 114.

**page 59**

### Refreshed rates
This month sees a complete refresh of all our monitor charts, so whether you are after a 19in or 17in CRT screen, or fancy a flat-panel display, don't make your choice before you've taken a look at our recommendations which start on page 98.

**page 130**

### Saving grace
In our regular *Technofile* feature on page 75, DVD-writers are under the microscope. We unravel all the differing standards in this area, as well as looking at how you can benefit from this technology. Also check out *Hot off the press* on page 29 for some cutting-edge technology, including a look at a PC using nVidia's new GeForce4 graphics card.

### Pictures in a gallery
Software is strong this month with a beta review of Adobe's QuarkXPress rival, InDesign 2.0, on page 70. Plus we take a look at Fix-It Utilities and SystemSuite, to sort out all your PC problems. To find out whether they can deliver see pages 71 and 68 respectively.
    MGI claims its Cinematic makes creating your own film child's play, but can it really make a masterpiece out of your home movie? We reveal all on page 69. If you want to take more control over your footage then a step up from Cinematic is CyberLink's PowerDirector (page 69). This might be the tool for you if you see yourself as a budding Spielberg.

**page 124**

### Next month
Next month we refresh the Power PCs and CD drives charts, plus introducing a new DVD-writer chart. We also follow up this month's monitor round up with a *Technofile* feature on monitor technology, plus all our usual reviews. ∎

**page 60**

## Index