






TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS AND CD DRIVES


Graphics cards			Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Graphics processor	Installed RAM	DDR RAM	Ramdac	4xAGP	Maximum resolution@ refresh rate	Colours@ 800x600	
Details														
	1	Gainward GeForce3 Ti/450 Golden Sample 0870 220 0700/0049 89 898 9955 www.gainward.de	NEW	Apr 02	£135	3-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million	
	2	Creative 3D Blaster GeForce3 Titanium 200 www.creative.com	NEW	Apr 02	£170	3-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million	
	3	Elsa Gladiac 721 020 7294 0114 www.elsa.com		1	Jan 02	£155	6-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million
	4	ATI Radeon 8500 01628 477 788 www.ati.com		2	Jan 02	£212	3-year	ATI Radeon 8500	64MB	Y	400MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @85Hz	16.7 million
	5	Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 200 020 8665 1881 www.hercules-uk.com		3	Jan 02	£212	3-year	nVidia GeForce3 Titanium 200	64MB	Y	350MHz	Y	2,048x1,536 @75Hz	16.7 million

CD drives											
Details		Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Interface type	Read/write/rewrite speed	Data buffer size	Average access time (milliseconds)	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	
	1	Philips 20x10x40x 0800 896 324 www.pcstuff.philips.com	1	Jan 02	£119	1-year	EIDE	40x/20x/10x	2MB	100ms	146x200x40mm
	2	Plextor PlexWriter 24/10/40A 01932 828 828 www.plextor.com	2	Nov 01	£129	1-year	EIDE	40x/24x/10x	4MB	140ms	146x202x42mm
	3	Teac CD-W516EK 020 8906 9111 www.teac.de	3	Aug 01	£131	1-year	EIDE	40x/16x/10x	2MB	85ms	146x192x42mm
	4	Cyberdrive 16x12x40x 01256 707 070 www.cyberdrive.com	4	Jan 02	£80	1-year	EIDE	40x/16x/12x	2MB	100ms	148x206x42mm
	5	Memorex 24x10x40x 0870 727 1771 www.memorexlive.com	5	Feb 02	£107	1-year	EIDE	40x/24x/10x	2MB	80ms	146x196x40mm



TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS

1 Gainward GeForce3 Ti/450 Golden Sample

 Gainward may not be the easiest range of graphics card to get hold of (although online merchants Watford and Simply now carry the products), but with its combination of low prices and high quality components, it's worth hunting down. The GeForce3 PowerPack Ti/450 is a perfect example. Employing the mid-range GeForce3 Titanium 200 chip from nVidia's Titanium family, this card delivers sizzling speed, easily shattering 120fps (frames per second) at a resolution of 1,024x768. Pile on the detail and, even under the most demanding circumstances, you'll find the frame rate hugging the 50fps mark. The hardware specifications are as good as any Titanium 200 card on the market, offering 64MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM, and extensive 2,048x1,536 resolution support. TV-out allows you to enjoy television facilities, although the lack of a DVI (digital visual interface) is one effective method of keeping the price to a minimum.

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TOP 10 CD DRIVES

1 Philips 20x10x40x

 Philips holds the top spot for another month with a drive that confounded us with its superior performance. Philips' drive may have a slower write rate of 20-speed compared to that of Plextor's 24-speed drive, but it beats it hands down for overall performance. The 20x10x40x drive took just three minutes 25 seconds to write our mixed test files to a CD-R – the fastest time we've seen by a long way. This performance didn't diminish when we tested it with CD-RWs. It took just over five minutes to transfer the same files to a CD-RW. The Philips drive is compatible with every CD format under the sun and comes with buffer underrun technology. Philips has also bundled an abridged version of Nero and InCD. This is a complete package for anyone who wants to burn their own CDs. And, at only £119 it's worthy of our Best Buy award.


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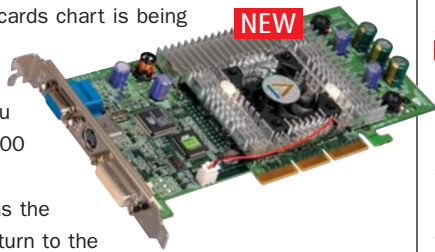




TOP 10 GRAPHICS CARDS

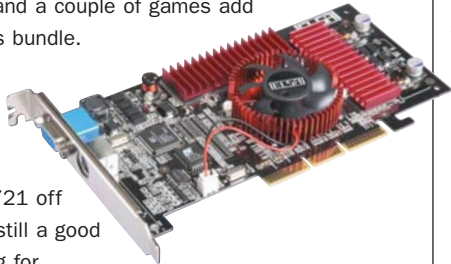
2 Creative 3D Blaster GeForce3 Titanium 200

 The Graphics cards chart is being dominated by nVidia, which isn't surprising when you consider the Titanium 200 chip features the same advanced architecture as the GeForce3. Creative's return to the graphics card market is more surprising but, although the 3D Blaster GeForce3 Titanium 200 is a strong addition to the market, its high price tag leaves it trailing behind the Gainward. The presence of a DVI (digital visual interface) connector ensures that Creative owners will be protected if a digital revolution finally kicks off, and TV-out and a couple of games add spice to the Creative's bundle.



3 Elsa Gladiac 721

This month's superb new entries may have knocked the Gladiac 721 off the top spot, but it's still a good option if you're looking for GeForce3 capabilities at a reasonable price. The Gladiac 721's chip, the GeForce3 Titanium 200 – or Ti 200 – is the mid-range option in nVidia's new line of processors. Although it lacks the cutting-edge acceleration of nVidia's GeForce3 Ti 500 cards, you'll only notice the difference under demanding conditions. Better still is the price tag: £155 is an excellent deal considering the hardware's ability.



4 ATI Radeon 8500

The latest incarnation of ATI's Radeon chip, the 8500, offers a host of stunning features on paper. Hydravision enables multimonitor support, while TruForm breaks up surfaces into a number of smaller sections, allowing graphics to be more detailed. However, the 8500's unstable performance and poor Windows XP compatibility mean you have a card that appears to have been rushed out before it's ready. With the competition hotting up, the Radeon's high price of £212 no longer offers value for money.



5 Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium 200


This Titanium 200 card from Hercules is impressive, but it has been knocked off the third spot by the new entries. The Lightspeed Memory Architecture manages 64MB of fast DDR (double data rate) RAM and the programmable nFinite FX engine delivers stunning graphics. The Ti 200 chip is no slouch, though, as it can achieve great acceleration at most resolutions.





TOP 10 CD DRIVES

2 Plextor PlexWriter 24/10/40A

 This former Best Buy is still a top-notch drive. This was one of the first CD drives with 24-speed writing and it didn't disappoint. The drive took just four minutes 22 seconds to write 336MB of mixed files to a CD-R. However, Plextor admits some media may not be suitable for 24-speed writing and lists the ones it supports on its website. The 24/10/40A is bundled with an abridged version of the versatile Nero 5.5 and InCD packet writing software for the drive.



3 Teac CD-W516EK

Teac's CD-W516EK drive made a good impression on us but, with the quality of competition in our chart, it only made the number three spot. The CD-W516EK lives up to its promise, taking just four minutes 15 seconds to write the mixed test files to a CD-R. While the CD-W516EK has a buffer of only 2MB, it does include WriteProof technology, Teac's own version of BurnProof, which prevents recording problems.



4 Cyberdrive 16x12x40x

Cyberdrive is a relatively new company from Taiwan that hasn't yet established its reputation in this country. But this drive can hold its own, delivering good performance and value for money. It managed to write our 336MB test files to a CD-R in four minutes 18 seconds and the same files to a CD-RW in four minutes 26 seconds. However, the one thing that troubled us was the lack of buffer underrun support, which could lead to wasted media.



5 Memorex 24x10x40x

This 40-/24-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) drive features Just-Burn buffer underrun technology to ensure that your valuable media doesn't get ruined. In tests the drive took six minutes 36 seconds to write 336MB of mixed files to a CD-R, which is the kind of speed we were getting from CD-RW drives six months ago. However, at £107, this is a cheap, reliable option for burning your own CDs.

