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.

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.

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

Virtual PC 4.0
System requirements: 266MHz Pentium; Windows 9x/2000/NT 4.0; 128MB RAM; 50MB-2GB hard disk space.
Computer Unlimited: 020 8358 5857
Website: www.connectix.com
Price: £85

page 68

I
t hardly seems possible that the July issue is on the shelves already, but time flies in the world of technology and once again our pages are filled with bags of new products for your perusal. This issue is dedicated to digital imaging to reflect the growing interest in this sector, so we have our most in-depth Digital camera charts ever, plus a brand new DV (digital video) camcorder chart, while Technofile takes a look at what's on offer in the scanner market.

In the frame

Our Digital camera charts start on page 108, and have been divided into three categories in order to offer you the most comprehensive buying guide. Top of the range is the Professional digital camera chart, where prices start at £701. This chart is aimed at serious photographers who demand the best image quality and features that provide them with real control over their shots.

Next is the Intermediate chart, where prices start at £301. This is similar to our previous Professional digital camera chart and profiles cameras with the best combination of price and picture quality. Beginner cameras make up the final chart and cost under £300. Don't be put off by their low prices, as even in this range you can find some impressive models.

New direction for movies

DV camcorders have really come into their own of late, and you can now pick up a top-notch model for under £1,000, which means more and more people are looking

page 68

to upgrade to digital, or take their first step into capturing footage with one of these devices. To help you make the choice we have rounded up the best of the bunch in our chart on page 116.

Scanning the horizon

Despite the rise of digital photography, there is still demand for scanners, both from those photographers who have yet to go digital, and from those who either want to scan in existing shots or other material. We look at what the latest models have to offer in Technofile on page 79.

Is size everything?

Once you've had your fill of digital imaging, perhaps we can tempt you with our reviews of the latest PDA (personal digital assistant) from Toshiba, a Pocket PC Palm-alike, on page 56. Or maybe you would be more interested to find out how Intel's latest processors are stacking up in our tests? Check out the 2.2GHz Pentium 4 and the 1.7GHz Celeron reviews which are both on page 57. For more PC reviews also turn to page 102 for the refreshed Superbudget PC chart.

Personal shopper

If you are planning to invest in a new computer then you will find Reader's choice particularly useful. This month, Spencer's challenge was to find our reader a budget PC for home use. To find out which one we chose and why, and whether we ended up with a satisfied customer, turn to page 86.

Cast your net wide

Our software reviews have an online flavour this month with a round-up of all the latest products from Macromedia. To find out how they can revitalise your internet presence turn to page 72. For those of you who simply use their PCs as a productivity tool, our reviewers have been playing around with this year's release of Works Suite, so to find out what's new for 2002 see page 74.

Next month

Next month we refresh the Scanner and Power PC charts, Technofile deals with digital projectors and we are on the hunt for a new monitor in Reader's choice. ■

page 58

page 64

page 57

page 56

Index