

POWER PCs

Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	PC World-Bench 4	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Processor type/speed	RAM	Hard disk/capacity	Mother-board	Chipset	Modem	USB ports	Monitor	Screen size	Dot pitch	Max resolution @75Hz	Graphics card	Graphics chip	Graphics card memory	Sound card	Speakers	No of speakers/subwoofer	DVD-ROM speed	CD-RW read/write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software & other extras
1 Evesham Axis GeForce4 2000 0800 038 0800 www.evesham.com	1	May 02	125	£1,399	2-year onsite, 1-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/120GB	Asus A7V266-E	Via KT266A	56K	4	LG Flatron 915FT Plus	19in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Audigy	Creative Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, StarOffice 5.2
2 Hi-Grade Meridian XP 2G PV05 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com	2	May 02	125	£1,339	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	MSI K7N420	nVidia nForce	56K	2	LG Flatron 915FT Plus	19in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	onboard nForce	Cambridge CSW4300	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works
3 Systemax Inspire A2000BA 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	3	May 02	121	£1,299	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.67GHz	256MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/100GB	MSI MS-6380LE	Via KT266A	56K	4	CTX EX950F	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	Gainward GeForce4 Ultra/750	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Audigy	Videologic ZXR-500	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, games bundle
4 Atlas Meridian XP 2100 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com	4	Jun 02	128	£1,399	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2100+/1.733GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/60GB	MSI 420D	nForce 420	56K	4	LG Flatron 915FT	19in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	128MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works 6.0
5 Mesh Matrix 1900 T15X 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com	5	Feb 02	121	£1,299	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Asus A7A266-E	Ali-Magik	56K	4	Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 920	19in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	24x	32x/24x/10x	Windows XP, Microsoft Works Suite 2001
6 Systemax A1900FZ Pro 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	6	Feb 02	117	£1,289	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/1.6GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/60GB	MSI MS-6380LE	Via KT266A	56K	2	CTX PR960F	19in	0.24mm	1,600x1,200	Gainward GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	32x/16x/10x	Windows XP, games bundle
7 Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 2400 PA06 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com	7	Jun 02	119	£1,499	3-year onsite	Intel Pentium 4/2.4GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/60GB	MSI	Intel 845	56K	2	LG Flatron 775	17in	0.24mm	1,280x1,024	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	128MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2002
8 PC World Advent 3969SP 0870 546 4464 www.pcworld.co.uk	8	Feb 02	120	£1,216	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/80GB	Gigabyte GA-7DX	Irongate 4 761	56K	2	Samsung 957DF	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	Leadtek GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Labs Live 5.1	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	32x/16x/10x	Windows XP, Microsoft Works Suite 2001
9 NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 A2000+ 0870 010 6326 www.nec-online.co.uk	10	May 02	120	£1,499	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Seagate/80GB	MSI K7N420	nVidia nForce	56K	4	NEC HR19 MultiSync	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	64MB	Creative Labs Live 5.1	Cambridge DTT3500	5/Y	16x 2x DVD-R 1x DVD-RW	24x/8x/4x	Windows XP Home, Word/Money, Britannica, games bundle
10 Best Price Poweroid 2008 020 8904 3347 www.poweroid.com	9	May 02	119	£1,599	3-year return, to base, 2-year parts and labour	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	IBM/120GB	Soyo K7V Dragon +	Via KT266A	56K	2	Iiyama VM Pro 454	19in	0.25mm	1,600x1,200	ATI Radeon 8500	ATI Radeon 8500	64MB	onboard CMI	Creative Inspire 5300	5/Y	16x 2x DVD-R 1x DVD-RW	24x/8x/4x	Windows XP Pro

1 Evesham Axis GeForce4 2000

Evesham continues its stay at the top of the chart with this impressive system, the Axis GeForce4 2000. All but one of the Power PCs in this month's Top 10 employ an Athlon processor, with the top three opting for the Athlon XP 2000+. Although the latter chip runs at a clock speed of 1.67GHz, AMD estimate its performance to be equivalent to the 2GHz Intel Pentium 4 chips. As proof, the Evesham's WorldBench score of 125 is higher than any of those generated by Intel's finest.

The 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM is fast becoming the standard for



optimum Windows XP performance, while the 120GB hard drive will be more than enough storage for all but the most dedicated video enthusiasts.

The Evesham's GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card comes with a gigantic 128MB of DDR RAM onboard, so it's no surprise to find frame rates going through the roof. Those who rely on graphics-intensive applications will relish the performance of this Evesham Best Buy machine. The impressive LG Flatron 915FT Plus monitor, which is included with this package, wins the Recommended award in our 19in monitors chart on page 134. The Creative Audigy sound card and Inspire 5300 speaker system are ideal for those who appreciate the best in audio playback, while the 32-speed CD-R facilities, array of USB and FireWire ports and spacious interior and documentation are all impressive.

It's pretty hard to fault the Evesham and this well-priced system is close to being the perfect Power PC.

← With the Evesham Axis remaining our Best Buy PC, there's no change at the top of our chart this month



↑ The Hi-Grade Meridian, with its WorldBench score of 125, hangs on to its Recommended award

2 Hi-Grade Meridian XP 2G PV05

In a fierce battle for first place, the Hi-Grade Meridian XP was only just pipped to the top spot by the Evesham Axis, with both systems achieving an identical WorldBench score of 125. Backing up the Recommended Hi-Grade's Athlon XP 2000+ processor is 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM.

The 80GB Maxtor hard drive offers ample storage – it may not be the largest hard disk in the chart, but it should still



↑ Our number three PC, the Systemax Inspire, provides a 100GB hard drive and an excellent graphics setup

prove difficult to fill. The Hi-Grade does, however, lose out to its Evesham rival on drive facilities – the 24-speed CD-R speed is good, but doesn't match the Axis' sizzling 32-speed writing ability.

Both the Best Buy and Recommended machines use the 19in LG Flatron 915FT monitor, but Hi-Grade's GeForce3 Ti 500 graphics card can't quite keep up with the frame rates of the GeForce4 range. The audio is also slightly disappointing and, despite the excellent Cambridge speakers, the Creative Audigy sound card would have been preferable to the onboard nForce

audio controller. Despite these slight niggles, the Meridian XP 2G PV05 is a first-class power performer with some heavyweight components and is worthy of its Recommended award.

3 Systemax Inspire A2000BA

Traditionally, the top Power PCs have tended to deliver blistering pace with scant regard for cost. This month's top six all have price tags under £1,400, but pack an unbelievable amount of processing power. The Recommended Systemax Inspire proves no exception, employing the AMD Athlon XP 2000+ processor to generate a high score of 121 in our WorldBench 4 tests.

This result might have been more impressive had the Inspire been equipped with 512MB rather than 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM. However, it offers a massive 100GB of storage space and an excellent 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 card. The CTX monitor is a decent 19in screen, while the Creative Audigy sound card and Videologic speakers ensure the audio won't let you down. Carefully arranged internally, and equipped

with plenty of USB and FireWire ports, there's also little to fault in the Systemax's presentation.

4 Atlas Meridian XP 2100

Atlas is usually one of the first manufacturers to include cutting-edge technologies in its PCs, and the Meridian XP 2100 is no exception. All this adds up to a very impressive PC. The 2100+ processor more than rivals the faster-rated 2.2GHz Pentium 4 chip from Intel. Combined with 512MB of DDR (double data rate)



↑ Our final Recommended Power PC is the Atlas Meridian XP 2100, which features a terrific specification

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↑ This excellent offering from Mesh hangs on in the chart due to its low price tag and fast turn of speed

RAM and a 60GB hard drive it easily achieved a speedy WorldBench 4 score of 128.

Aiding this performance is the GeForce4 Ti 4400 graphics card. It wasn't long ago that we were looking at Power PCs with 128MB of RAM and now we're seeing this amount of memory devoted solely to graphics. The 19in LG Flatron 915FT Plus screen is our Recommended choice in the Monitors chart (see page 134) and the DTT2200 speakers are excellent as always.

Backup duties on the Recommended Atlas Meridian are satisfied by a 40-/24-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive and there's a 16-speed DVD-ROM. On top of all this, a three-year onsite warranty protects your investment.

5 Mesh Matrix 1900 TI5X

It's of considerable credit to Mesh that the Matrix 1900 TI5X continues to command a place in the chart for a sixth month. Indeed, the ever-decreasing price tag has helped the Matrix just as

much as its surprisingly impressive WorldBench 4 score of 121.

There's more to the Mesh than just a fast processor, though. Inside you'll find 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM, which now looks like an invaluable addition, and an 80GB Maxtor hard drive. You could be forgiven for thinking that this size disk is lacking, but we'd challenge the majority of users to fill up this space fast.

The 19in Diamond Pro 920 monitor produces a crisp display and, although the GeForce3 Ti 500 has now been overtaken by the brand new GeForce4 Ti family, it remains a fast card capable of top-quality performance and high frame rates. The Creative Audigy sound card provides top-notch audio and equips you with a FireWire port for faster data transfer. Indeed, the Matrix's large range of USB and FireWire ports means that users have plenty of connectivity options.

6 Systemax A1900FZ Pro

The Systemax is the slowest model in the Power PC category, as it only managed a WorldBench 2000 score of 117. However, the A1900FZ Pro retains a place mid-table due to its competitive pricing strategy and high-calibre components.

This lack of speed is surprising considering the presence of the AMD Athlon XP 1900+ processor. However, the Systemax's 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM could be a major factor as it is just half the amount the majority of Power PCs are supplied with. On saying this, it's unlikely that you'll see that much difference unless you're running lots of applications simultaneously.



↑ The Systemax A1900FZ may be the slowest PC in the chart, but its components are top notch

In truth, then, this power system from Systemax is fast enough to satisfy the desires of all but the most demanding users. Similarly, you'll be hard pushed to fill the slightly meagre 60GB hard drive unless you were doing some serious video-editing.

The 19in CTX monitor may be getting on a bit, but it remains one of the best displays on the market, and the sound partnership of the Creative Audigy and DTT2200 speaker system is fairly hard to beat. Cheap and well worth a look, the Systemax is still a good buy.

7 Hi-Grade Ultis PV4 2400 PA06

Intel may have upped the speed of the Pentium 4, but it's still playing catch up to AMD. Hi-Grade's Ultis PV4 2400 PA06 was the first system we saw that uses Intel's latest 2.4GHz chip. Equipped with a massive 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM, the Ultis only managed a WorldBench 4 score of 119 – a full nine points short of the Atlas Meridian XP 2100. Both systems employ the same

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↑ The Hi-Grade Utis needs to sort out its performance-price ratio if it is to move higher up our chart

128MB GeForce4 Ti 4400 card and, although it provides blistering frame rates, the Athlon still kept its edge over the Pentium 4 processor.

Sound comes from the quality combination of Creative Audigy and DTT2200 speakers and there's a TV card thrown in for good measure. On the optical front you'll find a 16-speed LG DVD-ROM and a 40-/24-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) LG CD-RW. In addition to a copy of Windows XP Home there's also Microsoft Works Suite 2002 – and it's all covered by a generous three-year onsite warranty. The Hi-Grade Ultis isn't a bad system, it's just let down on performance and value for money.

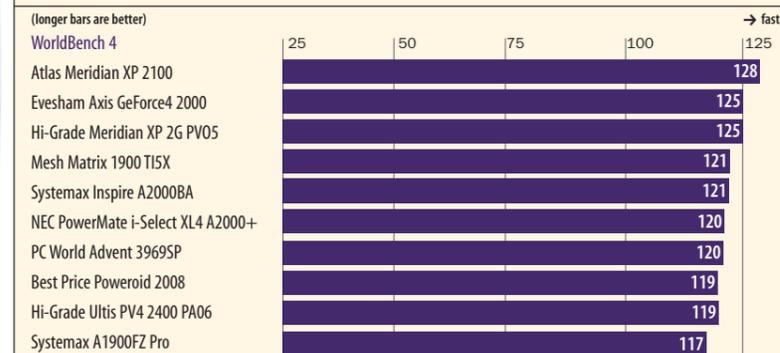
8 PC World Advent 3969SP

With a rock-bottom price tag which only just misses qualifying it for Budget PC status, the Advent does well to hold on in the Power PCs chart. Its WorldBench 4 score of 120 is still an impressive achievement from the Athlon XP 1900+ chip, and the 512MB of DDR (double data

↓ The PC World Advent is more suited in the Budget PC chart, but its price just misses that category



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rate) RAM and 80GB Maxtor hard drive are more than you could reasonably expect at this price level. However, the 19in Samsung monitor is no match for the LG, CTX and Iiyama models found elsewhere in the chart. Likewise, the GeForce3 Ti 500 performs a notch below the new GeForce4 cards and, rather than opting for the Audigy sound card, PC World has instead chosen its predecessor – the Creative Live 5.1 – which can't reproduce the clear audio of the Audigy and doesn't have the option of FireWire. This PC World machine is a 'build to order' system, so ask for it as such when you visit the store.

9 NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 A2000+

A close relation of the Best Price Poweroid, the NEC swaps places with that system due to a price drop. Speed is an issue again, and the repeat pairing of an Athlon XP 2000+ processor and 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM produces an anticlimactic WorldBench 4 score of 120. The 19in NEC-branded monitor is a decent model but not on par with the vibrant screens that top our Monitor chart on page 134. However, the 64MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card is an excellent component that guarantees top frame rates. As with all NEC PCs, you get excellent backup support, plenty of software and clearly written instruction manuals.

10 Best Price Poweroid 2008

The Poweroid 2008 is another well-constructed PC that will appeal to buyers with money to throw around. If the WorldBench score of 119 from the



↑ PowerMate's specifications cannot challenge the higher entries, but NEC has dropped its price

Athlon XP 2000+ processor and 512MB of DDR (double data rate) memory is faintly disappointing, the 120GB hard drive and Pioneer DVD-RW drive certainly demand attention. The crisp Iiyama 19in monitor is a smooth performer, albeit not quite as attractive as the CTX and LG screens seen elsewhere in the Power PCs chart. The ATI Radeon 8500 is also an unusual choice, but only the GeForce4 Ti cards consistently better its high frame rates.

↓ The Best Price's DVD-RW drive and 120GB hard disk help compensate for its relatively low speed



Long in the Bluetooth

Bluetooth, the wireless networking technology, has had plenty of hype, but as yet has still to become a standard addition to devices. New phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants) are starting to include it, but it tends to come as an expensive add-on, rather than an out-of-the-box feature. Notebooks manufacturers have also started to offer Bluetooth, though only the most innovative, such as Sony, actually build it into devices.

On the desktop Bluetooth has yet to make an appearance, though Microsoft has introduced a mouse and keyboard, which use Bluetooth to communicate with your PC instead of the

current radio technology used for such wireless devices. A more common application for Bluetooth on the desktop is to add on a USB adapter, so you can sync up a Bluetooth PDA or other similarly equipped device with your PC.

The benefits of Bluetooth are that it doesn't require line of sight in the same way that infrared technology does, and it can transmit data far faster. However, if you are looking for a more robust wireless network to link up a number of PCs and notebooks then WiFi, the 802.11 standard, is a better solution as it provides high-speed wireless ethernet access.