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:
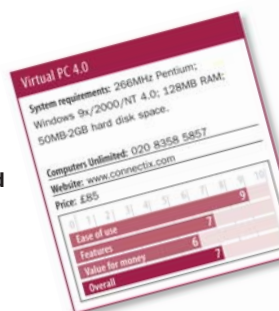**1 to 3 – poor   4 to 6 – average   6 to 8 – good   8 to 10 – excellent**

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.**

Virtual PC 4.0

System requirements: 266MHz Pentium; Windows 9x/2000/NT 4.0; 128MB RAM; 50MB-2GB hard disk space.

Computers Unlimited: 020 8358 5857
Website: www.connectix.com
Price: £85

Ease of use	9
Features	7
Value for money	6
Overall	7

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.

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While our cover date might suggest sunny days ideal for the beach, outside our office window the rain is pouring and the sky remains resolutely grey, so conditions are far more suited to staying indoors and poring over a new piece of kit. If your summer is shaping up to be as British as ours, then we have plenty of stay-at-home diversions for you. If, however, by the time you read this you are basking in sunshine either here or abroad, you might like to record such moments for posterity. We have tested plenty of devices that will enable you to do just that.

PC for all seasons
For those who are stuck indoors, how about a new PC to while away the hours? We have tested an Evesham system that uses the latest Pentium 4 processor, running at 2.53GHz. To see if this phenomenal clock speed has enabled Intel to catch up with AMD's Athlon XP chip turn to page 54. If you are after a sleeker system to grace your living room then AJP's NeoPC 4 (page 64) could be the answer.

Project the right image
Once you have your new system up and running, why not use its DVD player in combination with a projector to create a home cinema setup? In this month's Technofile on page 76 we take an in-depth look at the digital projector market, exploring which models are best for use at home, on the road and in the office.

Make an impression

Sadly many of us will pass the summer cooped up in an office. But perhaps buying a new printer could take some of the stress and monotony out of the working day. We look at Brother's new network printer that promises top-speed colour laser printing. To see what we made of it, turn to page 65.

Get snappy

When the sun finally does put its hat on you'll want to snap your friends and family relaxing and enjoying its warmth. Well, we have a few options for you to choose from the low-cost Fashion Cam on page 63, which offers a great introduction to digital photography, to the desirable Panasonic SV-AV10 (page 55), which also acts as a digital camera, MP3 player, camcorder and voice recorder – all for under £300. If you are after a more traditional model then we've got an exclusive review of the new Digital Ixus from Canon on page 55, and we take a look at Ricoh's Caplio RR120 on page 62.

Once you have taken your snaps you'll need to output them. If you fancy doing it yourself then a photo printer should be your next purchase. Epson is a leading name in this field and we put its Stylus Photo 950 through its paces on page 56.

If you have yet to make the leap into digital photography, then you will have a collection of photos that you can't view and use on your PC, which is a waste. However, invest in a scanner and you can easily digitise all your images. This month we have refreshed our Scanners chart providing you with our low-down on the Top 10 models on page 104.

And the rest…

There's simply no space to tell you about all the other products our team has been hard at work testing for you this month. But suffice to say on our software pages (68-75) we've got packages to help you design a website, create a number one record, carry out presentations and kill off PC viruses. Plus, in Reader's choice (page 82) we pick out a flat-panel, there's a refresh of our Power PC chart on page 86 and finally check out Hot off the press on page 35 for the latecomers. ■

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