



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 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.

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In our first issue with a 2002 cover date, we herald the arrival of a new operating system from Microsoft and, no, it's not Windows XP. We introduce Pocket PC 2002 with a round-up of all the latest PDAs (personal digital assistants). We've also got the latest in graphics technology in our updated and expanded Top 10 Graphics cards chart on page 124.

Old mother handheld

You'll notice that the Top 10 Personal digital assistants chart on page 118 has been amended slightly. We've placed all the devices back into a single Top 10 chart, rather than splitting them up into palmtops and handhelds with keyboards. The improvements in handwriting recognition provided by the Pocket PC operating system and the demise of Psion's PDA business, has led to the handheld cupboard looking rather bare, which is why we have dropped it.

Following the launch of Pocket PC 2002 there are plenty of new entries to choose from. So whether you want a simple organiser or something closer to a mini notebook, we've got the pick of the bunch for you to choose from.



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Getting the picture

Graphics cards are ever-evolving components. To ensure that we keep you up to date with the latest developments, for this issue we've expanded our chart to cover 10 entries. Die-hard gamers can check out how nVidia's new Titanium card stacks up against the competition, while bargain hunters can seek out the best buys to beef up their PC's image processing.

And the rest...

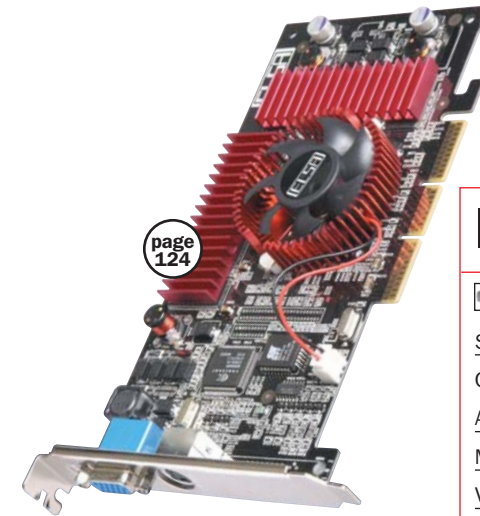
We know that digital cameras are popular, so to meet demand we've reviewed no less than five new models – some you'll find in our hardware pages, while others make their appearance in our Top 10 Professional and Beginner digital camera charts on page 138. Both categories have a new Best Buy, so you're really seeing the cream of the crop this month.

Other hardware highlights include an exclusive review of Mesh's brand-new Matrix XP 1900-R85, the first PC we've seen using what is currently the fastest Athlon XP. Turn to page 79 to see how much speed we managed to squeeze from this system.

Our other coup is a first look at Fujitsu Mobile Celsius A notebook. This speedy performer has some handy security features up its sleeve – to find out more turn to page 84.



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Software selection

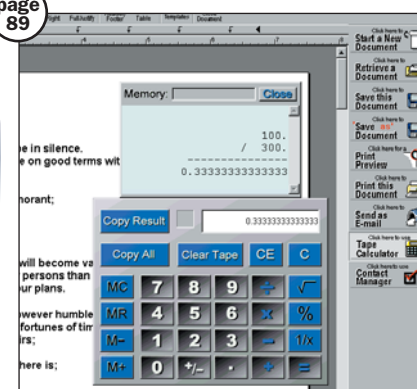
Of course, we don't limit ourselves to hardware; we've got plenty to tempt you in our software section, too. Not least is the astonishingly low-cost office suite, EasyOffice. If you don't fancy shelling out hundreds of pounds for Office XP, don't despair as we have an alternative suite on page 89. Our deputy reviews editor's former favourite package also makes an appearance in the form of GoBack. To find out if he still loves it as much as he did last time, turn to page 90.

Graphic designers and illustrators will welcome the new version of Illustrator from Adobe. This high-end package provides you with all the software tools you need to create professional designs. To find out what extra features Illustrator 10.0 offers, read page 88.

Coming soon

Next month sees our regular refresh of all our PC charts. Plus there's the introduction of the latest version of WorldBench, which has been updated to accommodate Windows XP. We've also got a feature on DV (digital video) camcorders, aimed at all those budding moviemakers out there. Make sure you don't miss February's issue of *PC Advisor*. ■

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