

welcome

While it's hard to buy with absolute security, you can do so wisely thanks to our reviews and ConsumerWatch pages. And remember: one bad PC sale does not a rogue trader make

One type of letter which we frequently receive at *PC Advisor* runs something like this: "Dear sir, I purchased a Tekko Mega Pro PC as recommended by your review. The PC never arrived/wouldn't work when I got it/went wrong within days (delete as applicable). I am now engaged in a lengthy dispute with Tekko because their customer support is pants. Why don't you warn people of this in your review? Yours sincerely, Major P D Biscuitbarrel (retired), Nether Stoatstrangler, Devon."

Anything more than a cursory glance at *PC Advisor* will show that we do warn readers about the perils of aftersales service.



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be said for individual customer's experiences of aftersales service. Just because Major Biscuitbarrel has had a bad customer care day, doesn't mean all the customers will.

For example, this month, I have received three complaints from Dell customers, two from Mesh, two from Multivision, two from Time, one from e-Buyer, one from Evesham, one from Samsung, one from Epson and three from PC World.

Between them, these companies have sold thousands of products. To tell potential buyers to avoid them based on a tiny percentage of annoyed customers would be unfair.

So what can a prospective buyer do? Read our reviews, read ConsumerWatch, visit the ConsumerWatch forum and, as ever, evaluate sensibly and thoroughly. Even in these days of increased consumer protection, caveat emptor still applies. ■

Andrew Charlesworth, editor

There's a section called ConsumerWatch which retells the anecdotes of many an abused customer as well as offering practical advice for consumers. Our site includes the ConsumerWatch forum (www.pcadvisor.co.uk/consumerwatch) with extensive, searchable data from real customers. And in every November issue we publish an annual customer satisfaction survey based on thousands of responses from readers.

In the introductory pages of the Reviews section we state that our reviews are based on price performance, features and customer service where we have data. Note that last phrase: *where we have data*.

We do, very rarely, withhold the Best Buy or Recommended awards on the grounds of customer service issues, and have done so only twice in the last three years when we couldn't honestly recommend a system that had such flimsy backup from the supplier.

Service with a smile?

Reviews are about the price and performance of new computer equipment. When writing reviews we make the assumption that if we test one Tekko Mega Pro, all the others from the same company, rolling off the same production line and bearing the same name, will be identical. However, the same cannot

reader information

Competition rules of entry

The following rules and conditions apply to all competitions and giveaway offers in the magazine. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. There is no cash alternative to the prize or prizes offered. Employees of IDG Communications, the company or companies donating prizes and their relatives are not eligible for entry. Winners' details will be printed at the bottom of this panel in the next available issue of the magazine. Neither *PC Advisor* nor IDG Communications can be held responsible in the unlikely event that a company is not able to fulfil its obligation and provide a prize, for whatever reason.

Liability

While every conceivable effort is taken to ensure that all details printed in the magazine are correct at the time of going to press, the publishers cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information contained in the editorial, nor for the consequences of any actions taken as a result of this information. The views of contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

Cover disc

The publisher shall have no liability without limitation for any losses or damage arising from using software on cover discs, including any loss of profit, damage to equipment or data, interruption of business, or any other damage, direct or accidental. It is recommended that you make a full backup of all the programs and data on your hard disk before installing any new software. Telephone numbers or website addresses given for cover disc software registration may only be valid for a limited period. If you experience problems with the cover disc call our helpline on 0870 739 7630.

Product reviews

Products submitted for reviews in *PC Advisor* are accepted on the basis that the same product will be available to the consumer. This ensures we give our readers the most accurate analysis of commercially available products. If, after reading a review in *PC Advisor*, you contact the manufacturer or vendor and find the specific model is not being offered, please let us know at reviews@idg.com.

Prices

Prices quoted throughout the magazine exclude VAT except where otherwise stated.

Technical helpline

We cannot answer technical queries over the phone, except via our Expert Advice Hotline (see page 147). Calls are charged at £1.50 per minute, up to a maximum of six minutes. *PC Advisor* offers a full money-back guarantee. If you are dissatisfied with the service, please contact us on 020 7291 5970.

Consumer hotline

Whether it's consumer-related or a general enquiry, our experts can help with all your legal problems. The *PC Advisor* Consumer Hotline costs £1.50 per minute. Call 0906 906 0276, 8am to 10pm, seven days a week. English law applies to all advice given.

February competition winners

Digitette Duo MP3 players: Mr R Penn, Eastbourne; Mrs C Rayner, Northampton.

Toshiba SDR-50002 DVD rewriter: Mr Feldberg, London NW5.

Philips SBC HC8850 surround sound headphones:

Mr S High, Coventry; Mr E Grant, Cheshire.

Jadotec USB Pen Drive: Mr J Burd, Lowestoft.

US Robotics wireless PCI adapters: Mr J Fay, Leicester;

Ms L Simpson, Hants; Mr S Houghton, Lancs;

Mr I Walshaw, Shrewsbury.