



Evesham Axis 32SB



PRICE £595 (£699 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Evesham Technology 0870 160 9500

VERDICT More expensive than others on test, but the specification makes it more than worth the premium. It boasts an excellent monitor, warranty and great performance.

A quick look at the specifications of the Axis 32SB reveals that Evesham has chosen to add many more bells and whistles than others this month. It costs an extra £200 over the PC Nextday, but remains a great-value PC – and it's also very versatile and upgradable.

There are two optical drives, so you can copy DVD discs on-the-fly; the writer is a Sony drive that can burn dual-layer discs at 4x.

Integrated into the floppy drive are four card readers, which are useful extras for anyone wanting to quickly transfer files from compatible cameras and MP3 players. Hiding behind a silver door at the base are two USB 2 ports,

FireWire and audio connections, with the latter connected to the onboard six-channel Realtek chip.

Removing the side panel also reveals a plastic ducting tube, so that the CPU fan can

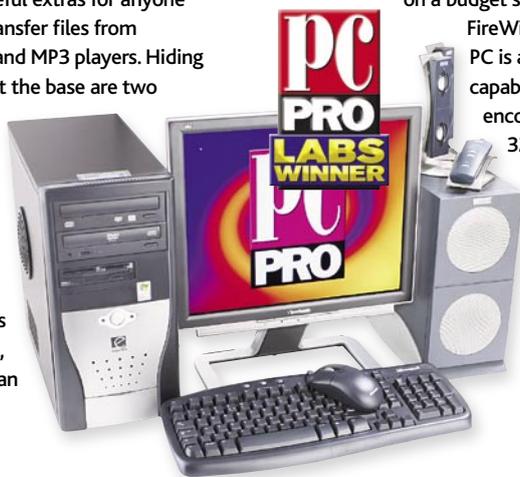
draw cool air from outside the case onto the large heatsink. As there aren't any other major heat-generating components, the fan can spin more slowly and, along with the 120mm fan in the PSU, it makes the Evesham incredibly quiet. At idle, it registered 25.1dBA, and the hard disk wasn't too noisy when seeking either.

The disk is a Western Digital Caviar SE with a respectable 160GB capacity, and video editors on a budget should note the two

FireWire ports here. This PC is also more than capable of high-speed encoding: the Athlon 64

3200+ powered through our benchmarks to score a speedy 1.96.

The motherboard is better featured than most, with



S-Video, composite and coaxial S/PDIF outputs, which are useful if you want to use this as an entertainment system. We were delighted to see a decent set of Altec Lansing 2.1 speakers too: these are more powerful than most on test and won't leave wires trailing everywhere like a six-channel set.

As standard, the Axis is 'blessed' with the mediocre Radeon Xpress 200 GPU. This takes 64MB of the 512MB main memory and managed only 28fps in Far Cry at 800 x 600 with low quality settings. ViewSonic's VX715 17in TFT compensates though, as it not only looks great but also offers the best image quality on test. It's just a shame that the DVI interface is left unused – the Axis 32SB only has a VGA output. However, it could come in handy if you decide to install a PCI Express graphics card (with a DVI output) in the empty slot.

With a three-year on-site warranty, a comfortable keyboard and mouse, plus a reasonable software bundle, we simply can't fault the Evesham, even at this relatively high price. It deservedly takes the main honours.

PC PRO RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
QUIETNESS	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★