



Elonex Artisan LX

PC PRO
A LIST

PRICE £932 (£1,095 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER Elonex 0870 780 1010

VERDICT Subtly improved from the original version, the Artisan once again takes the A-List crown thanks to great styling, all the connectivity you could need and supremely quiet operation.

In our last Media Center Labs, the Elonex Artisan LX was a deserving winner (see issue 125, p102), and it's no surprise to see the company vigorously fighting to regain the A-List slot. Still named the Artisan LX, it's a refined version that irons out the wrinkles of its predecessor with impressive results.

Where the equally impressive Hi-Grade has a retro metallic styling, the Artisan opts for a sleek black approach. With its prominent blue-lit volume dial, there's no denying it looks good. The front panel has a scrolling digital display along with panels hiding USB and mini-FireWire ports, a card reader and a set of playback controls.

Boot the system up and you'll realise there's a decent PC inside, demonstrated by a score of 0.83 in our 2D benchmarks and 15fps in Far Cry. Switch off AA and AF and you'll have a perfectly playable frame rate – the same will apply for most current titles, thanks to the



GeForce 6600 under the hood. The Artisan was also near-silent when idle. We measured a whisper-quiet 27.2dBA from the front, but it's a shame the DVD drive was audible (33.2dBA) when playing a movie.

At the heart of the Artisan is a 3GHz Pentium 4 630 on the new 945 chipset, backed up by 1GB of DDR2 memory. Storage comes in the form of a 200GB hard disk and a dual-layer DVD burner. You can also opt for a Pentium 4 660 and a 400GB hard disk for an extra £281.

Shipped with dual hybrid TV tuners, you can choose whether to use both analog or both

digital tuners, depending on your home setup. 7.1-channel sound is integrated and you can hook up speakers via optical or coaxial S/PDIF, stereo RCA connectors or standard mini-jacks. On the video side, there are DVI, VGA and S-Video outputs, as well as S-Video and composite in. The rear panel has four more USB ports, a FireWire connector and an array of modem, network, serial, parallel and PS/2 ports. Wireless 802.11g connectivity comes courtesy of a D-Link PCI card.

Plenty of cables are bundled and the three-year collect-and-return warranty is the minimum we'd expect when spending this much money. If there's one gripe, it's the cheap-feeling infrared keyboard with its hard-to-use joystick pointer. You'll probably want to plug in your own mouse and keyboard.

It's hard to choose between the Artisan and DMS II, as both offer good performance, low noise and superb connectivity. However, the Artisan snatches the award thanks to its flexibility when it comes to TV cards: the Hi-Grade doesn't have the option for dual digital tuners.

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