



● POWER NOTEBOOK

PC PRO
A LIST

Rockdirect Xtreme Ti

PRICE £1,878 (£2,207 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £20 (£24 inc VAT)

INTERNET www.rockdirect.com

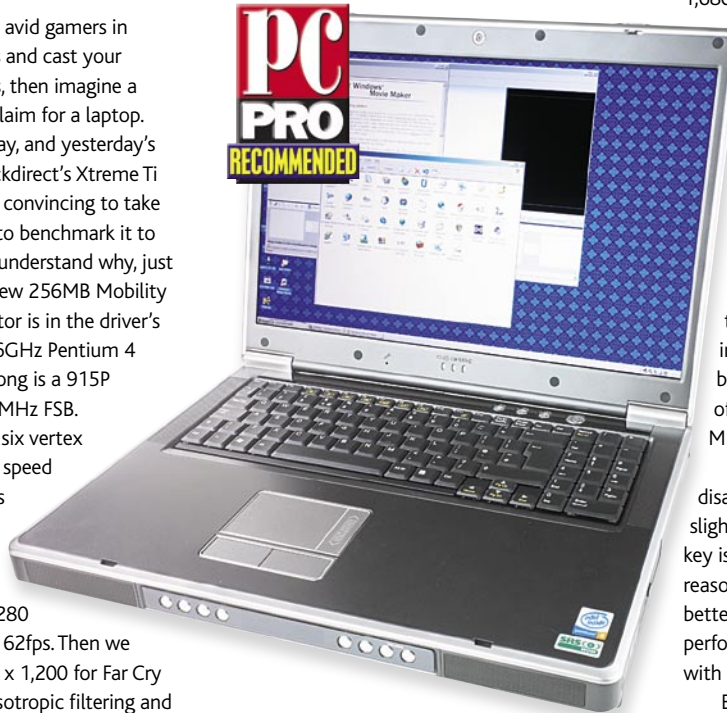
SUPPLIER Rockdirect 08709 909 090

VERDICT You'll have to part with a lot of cash, but this is a monster of a gaming machine in more ways than one.

Designed and built with avid gamers in mind. Close your eyes and cast your mind back a few years, then imagine a manufacturer making that claim for a laptop. Come back to the present day, and yesterday's dream is a reality. When Rockdirect's Xtreme Ti came in, we didn't need any convincing to take it seriously; we just wanted to benchmark it to see how good it really is. To understand why, just look at the hardware: ATI's new 256MB Mobility Radeon X800 graphics adaptor is in the driver's seat, backed up by Intel's 3.6GHz Pentium 4 560. Speeding everything along is a 915P Express chipset with an 800MHz FSB.

With 12 pixel pipelines, six vertex shader pipelines and a clock speed of 400MHz, the X800 is ATI's fastest mobile GPU. For a quick warm-up, we tried our standard Unreal Tournament 2004 test at 1,280 x 1,024, and it flew along at 62fps. Then we jumped straight up to 1,600 x 1,200 for Far Cry with 4x anti-aliasing, 2x anisotropic filtering and very high detail. It replied with 39fps. Doom 3 with ultra-high detail was harder, but it still clung onto a playable average of 28fps. This machine will play all current games at decent settings. It even churned through Half-Life 2 at an amazing 58fps, running at the screen's native resolution of 1,680 x 1,050.

Not only that, but thanks to the PCI Express interface, the graphics card can be upgraded –



Big, bold and blindingly fast, the Xtreme lives up to its name.

after a couple of years, your laptop could once again be at the cutting edge. You won't be able to do it without breaking the warranty, though, so you'll need to send it back to Rockdirect.

Although the system's 'Xtreme' moniker might suggest there's an Intel Extreme Edition CPU inside, the 560 is a 3.6GHz standard variety with 1MB of Level 2 cache. Our machine came with 1GB of DDR2 533MHz memory, which our application benchmarks welcomed with an overall score of

1.84. With so much power onboard, we were concerned about fan noise, but although certainly audible when working hard it was never a burden. Surprisingly, battery life isn't completely terrible, lasting one hour under an intensive load, but just nine minutes longer with light use.

Storage capacity is courtesy of a RAID0 array, with 120GB striped over two 60GB 7,200rpm hard disks. Although Rockdirect's website lists up to 100GB of storage in a single drive, we're told that about 80 per cent of customer orders for the Xtreme Ti have been for RAID0 configurations. Bear in mind there are two drives that could potentially go wrong, though, so regular backups will be important.

That's made easier by the 8x dual-layer, dual-format DVD writer. There's even another drive bay just below it; ours was blanked out, but you can get a second optical drive for direct copying.

One thing that makes this machine immediately striking is the 17in glossy wide-screen. The strong surface reflections can be annoying when word processing all day, but it doesn't distract from the otherwise satisfyingly bright and vibrant picture. The pixel count of 1,680 x 1,050 works well spread over a 17in display and, although there's quite a lot of twist in the lid, there's a satisfactory amount of shielding inside to protect the back of the TFT panel.

The audio side is no slouch either, courtesy of Intel's High Definition Audio with 7.1 surround sound. Output is via headphone and S/PDIF, and there's also an audio line-in jack. Stereo speakers are fitted at the front of the case and beside the keyboard, and together with the integrated subwoofer they give superb built-in sound. The front panel also has a set of audio-control buttons to play audio and MP3 CDs without booting into Windows.

Keyboard quality is a touch disappointing. Although it feels solid, there's a slight lack to the key depth, and the left Shift key is frustratingly small. Layout is otherwise reasonable, but would-be novelists would do better with an external keyboard. The trackpad performs well, although it's likely to be bypassed with a mouse for gaming anyway.

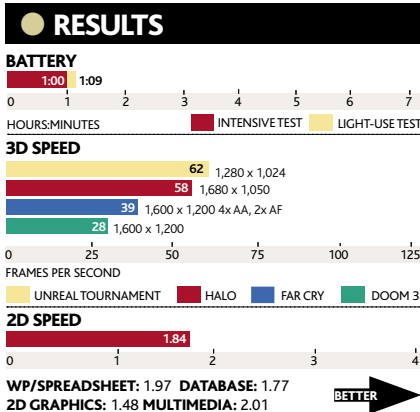
But that's our only complaint. There's an impressive port count that includes two mini-FireWire, four USB 2, DVI-I, S-Video, gigabit Ethernet and Bluetooth, as well as a 7-in-1 card reader. The basic design for the chassis has been around for a while, though, as evidenced by the closely packed USB ports (which are also upside-down) and the annoying rubber bung that provides dust protection for the card reader.

But these are mere trifles in a machine designed primarily for power. In an era where laptop prices are tumbling, the Xtreme Ti requires a substantial outlay, but it certainly delivers results. With a stunning screen, unsurpassed 3D power and good looks, it secures a place on the A List as our power notebook of choice.

ROGER KIRKWOOD



The Xtreme Ti boasts all the features you'd expect from a full-sized PC.



PC PRO RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★
SPECIFICATIONS 3.6GHz Pentium 4 560; 1GB PC4300 DDR2 SDRAM; 120GB hard disk (2 x 60GB RAID0); Clevo D900T motherboard; NEC ND-6500A DVD writer; 256MB ATI Mobility Radeon X800 graphics; 17in 1,680 x 1,050 X-Glass TFT; 56k modem; gigabit Ethernet; Bluetooth; 802.11b/g WLAN; 4 x USB 2; 2 x FireWire; Type II PC Card slot; DVI-I; S-Video; 7-in-1 card reader; Windows XP Home. 3yr C&R warranty. Dimensions: 398 x 299 x 53mm (WDH). Weight: 5.7kg.	