



WORDS & TESTING: MARK WALSH PICTURES: HUGH THRELFALL



ALL for one & ONE for all

We look at the latest £999 family PCs that are both practical and fun so that there's something to satisfy everyone's needs

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As the days grow shorter and harsh winter winds invade our homes, now is the time to think about the needs of your family. And what would light up their little faces more than a PC with all the trimmings for under £1,000 all in – VAT included. This is a sturdy price point, giving manufacturers enough room to offer 3D gaming, stable DVD playback and reliable office performance – all in a tidy package. Ten top integrators rose to the challenge and came up with the systems that we've put to the test here.

We expected plenty of 1.4GHz Athlon processors and we weren't disappointed; it can't be beaten when it comes to performance over value. We selected Windows Me as the operating system and put the emphasis on peripherals, particularly what software was supplied. It was also important, though, that the inclusion of peripherals such as printers and scanners did not mean the system itself was of a low quality. Unfortunately, this sometimes turned out to be the case.

As component prices continue to fall, CPUs are the hardest hit. As soon as there is a hint of a new model on the horizon the desirability of the current crop drops like a stone. AMD's 1.4GHz Athlon chips are now setting manufacturers back just \$80 (£50), and other components are following suit. If you're looking to buy, the market is currently stacked in your favour so expect to pick up a few bargains.

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GROUP TEST £999 PCS FOR EVERYONE

Atlas/Hi-Grade Meridian A1400

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Atlas 020 8532 6515

PROS Excellent performance **CONS** Onboard sound

OVERALL Great performance and features make this one of the best systems on test

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

Whether the beige and purple combination on the case is to your liking, there's no denying that Hi-Grade has supplied a very good system.

A 1.4GHz AMD Athlon processor rests on an Asus A7V266 motherboard, which is based on VIA's much lauded KT266 chipset. A single 256MB stick of PC2100 DDR SDRAM is plenty of memory and there are two spare DIMMs should you want to build on it at a later date.

A 40GB Maxtor hard drive gives you plenty of storage space, spinning at 7,200rpm. LG provides the optical storage drive, this particular model recording at up to 16-speed, with 10-speed rewrite and 40-speed read. The Hitachi DVD drive runs at 16-speed, too.

On the graphics side, the Gainward GeForce2 Pro card is an excellent choice, and it features TV-out. Performance under 3DMark 2001 was reasonably good, if a little less than we were expecting. It came through with

2,694 points; less than many other GeForce2 Pro cards, but still perfectly adequate for today's gaming.

LG's 795FT monitor is also included. This is much loved among the PCW team; it has an excellent image, a max resolution of 1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz and a USB hub at the back.

Hi-Grade has chosen to use the Asus motherboard's onboard six-channel sound. Although it is a shame not to see a separate card, the output is surprisingly good, and it's coupled with Creative's DTT2200 speakers. The system is supplied with a fairly average Hi-Grade-branded mouse and a Logitech keyboard. Two extra USB ports are mounted on a backing plate, making a total of four.

Performance is superb with the Hi-Grade topping the chart with a SYSmark 2001 score of 152 overall under Windows Me – level-pegging with Multivision's offering. Ultimately you get a quality build and an excellent choice of components.



evesham.com Axis 1.4

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** evesham.com 0870 160 9500

PROS FireWire; excellent performance **CONS** Small hard drive

OVERALL Just pips the competition to the post to win the Editor's Choice this month

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■



Yet another excellent system from evesham.com. Asus' excellent A7M266 motherboard houses a 1.4GHz Athlon processor from AMD and 256MB of PC2100 DDR SDRAM.

Evesham.com's case has two front-facing USB ports as standard, bringing the total count to four. The inclusion of a three-port FireWire card in one of the PCI slots is ideal for use with the digital camcorder Santa may bring. Two further PCI slots are filled; one with a SmartLink 56K modem, and the other with the great value Creative SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 sound card. The bundled Cambridge SoundWorks DTT2200 six-channel speakers are an ideal budget solution for 5.1 sound.

Strangely, Leadtek's GeForce2 Pro card didn't perform that well when it came to testing under 3DMark 2001. Scoring 2,792, it falls low in the GeForce2 Pro card league. However, under Quake III Team Arena, it gave the highest frame rate at

80.3 frames per second (fps) – higher than the GeForce2 Ultra. The monitor is also excellent; like Atlas/Hi-Grade, evesham.com has opted for the LG Flatron 795FT, one of the best 17in monitors on the market.

The system is let down by the hard drive. Although the Maxtor model is fast and reliable, at only 30GB, it pales in comparison to the rest on test. The Samsung optical drives are good, the CD-RW recording at 16-speed, and the DVD drive reading at 16-speed. However, another weak point is evesham.com's mouse. Ambidextrous mice are nearly always awkward for both left and right-handers, and evesham.com's own design is one of the worst offenders.

System performance was tip-top and second highest on test. At 151 SYSmarks overall, it is a particularly impressive performer. It seems as if evesham.com is almost incapable of supplying a bad machine.

Ideal Suminus M

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Ideal 0870 748 1468

PROS Good overall system performance **CONS** Poor graphics and no sound card

OVERALL A great bundle, but lack of a sound card or decent graphics card lets it down

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

Ideal's showing starts off very well. A 1.4GHz Athlon sits on a Chaintech motherboard with a VIA KT266 chipset. 256MB of PC2100 DDR SDRAM is ample, although there is a spare DIMM slot should you wish for more.

What lets the system down is its disappointing graphics scores. As the graphics card here uses a GeForce2 MX200 chipset, we expected to see low scores, but not this low. At first, we assumed there was something wrong, such as a missing driver but, despite our best efforts, we could not raise the scores any higher than 632 on 3DMark 2001, and Quake III Team Arena gave a mere 10.3fps.

The inclusion of both a PrimaScan scanner and an Epson printer with this system could explain the use of a cheaper graphics card. As much as we like to see extras such as these, they should not come at the expense of the PC itself.

Further proof is the use of onboard sound. Granted this six-channel,

C-Media chipset setup is of reasonable quality, but a separate sound card could have been afforded within the price limit. The sound is pumped out through a set of Mercury SR-301E six-channel speakers.

Four PCI slots on the motherboard are left free, although the six-channel sound adaptor blocks one of them. The fifth slot houses a CXT 56K modem. LG's good-value Flatron 775FT monitor is included, with a 16in viewable screen and a 1,600 x 1,200 top resolution.

A 40GB IBM Deskstar hard drive handles data storage perfectly well and optical storage comes from a Samsung CD-RW, with slightly slow eight-speed recording. The DVD drive runs at 16-speed.

System performance was excellent, with an overall SYSmark 2001 score of 146. Sadly, as the money has gone on external features, key components are not up to scratch and therefore cannot be recommended.



Mesh Matrix 1400 XP

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Mesh 020 8208 4706

PROS Fast; great features and large hard drive **CONS** Average 3D performance

OVERALL A system that offers excellent components, but 3D performance lets it down

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

Although the XP moniker is a little dubious, primarily due to the lack of Windows, Office or Athlon XP, there's no denying the Matrix 1400 XP is a solid system.

A 1.4GHz Athlon rests in an Asus A7A 266 motherboard. This comes with a 256MB stick of PC2100 DDR SDRAM and leaves one spare DDR memory slot, as well as all three Single Data Rate DIMM slots.

All standard stuff, but open up the Mesh case and you're in for a shock. Instead of the flat EIDE cables we are used to seeing, they have been 'folded' to make them more compact and then encased in yellow rubber, making the innards a lot neater.

Attached to these new cables, aside from the floppy drive, are two optical drives and an impressive 60GB hard drive from IBM that spins at 7,200rpm; the biggest single drive on test. DVD playback comes in at 16-speed courtesy of Pioneer. The Teac BurnProof CD-W516E also

records at 16-speed. Sound is handled by Creative; the great value SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 card outputs to a set of DTT2200 six-channel speakers. A 56K modem takes up another PCI slot, and three are left free for expansion.

Two USB ports, aside from the two already on the motherboard, are situated just above the Leadtek GeForce2 MX400. Stocked with TV-out and 64MB of memory, this outputs to a 17in Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 730.

The system hardly leaps out from the crowd on the display and graphics side, as neither are anything special. When tested on 3DMark 2001, the Mesh scored 1,441, and it gained just 41.1fps on Quake III Team Arena, running at 1,280 x 1,024 with a 32bit colour depth.

2D performance is decent though, with an overall SYSmark 2001 score of 144, and it felt much faster than the competition when it came to everyday usage.

Multivision Vision Max Bundle

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Multivision 0870 066 0885

PROS Large monitor; excellent performance **CONS** No 5.1 sound

OVERALL A well featured system, but it's let down by the lack of six-channel sound

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

Multivision's effort instantly gets extra Brownie points for the inclusion of a 19in monitor and Epson printer, especially when this is not at the expense of the system as a whole.

Yet another 1.4GHz Athlon processor sits on an MSI K7T Turbo motherboard featuring VIA's KT133 chipset. A massive 512MB of PC133 SDRAM is included. System performance was among the best on test, with SYSmark coming in at 152 overall.

The motherboard is stuffed with excellent components. The Vivid! XS graphics card, based on the Kyro II chipset, is currently the best value graphics card on the market. 3D performance was typical for the card, coming in at 2,133 on 3DMark 2001 and 33fps on Quake III Team Arena. Granted, other cards, such as the GeForce2 Pros and GeForce2 Ultras included in other machines, have gained much higher scores, but this is still an excellent card for the gamer on a budget.

The 19in Hansol monitor is the biggest on test. Image quality is reasonable, with a 1,600 x 1,200 maximum resolution and a bright display.

Two PCI slots are left free below the graphics card, and below that is a FireWire card, which is particularly welcome on a family-based system such as this. A 56K modem from Elsa sits beneath this, followed by the Hercules Muse XL sound card. Unfortunately, the sound setup lets the system down, as only four-point speakers are included.

The 40GB Seagate Barracuda hard drive is roomy enough, and spins at 7,200rpm. The optical storage drive is made by Mirai and is one of the fastest 16-speed drives available. It also features BurnProof. Pioneer supplies the DVD drive, also running at 16-speed.

With fantastic performance and a huge monitor, this is one of the best systems on test; it's just a shame about the lack of six-channel sound.



Panrix Magnum 1400

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Panrix 0113 244 4958

PROS Excellent graphics card **CONS** Only four-point speakers

OVERALL One of the best systems here, it's fast and features a GeForce2 Ultra

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■

VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

The appearance of a 1.4GHz Athlon is far from special, nor is a 256MB stick of PC2100 DDR SDRAM backing it up. They are both good, but the rest of this Panrix

First, we have two hard drives. Both come from Fujitsu, and boast 40GB apiece, running through a RAID 0 setup. The Promise controller for this comes built into the MSI motherboard.

Panrix has also managed to squeeze a GeForce2 Ultra into the package. This version comes from Hercules and, although it is the highest calibre card on test and has some particularly impressive scores, it ranks below some GeForce2 Pros. With a 3DMark 2001 score of 3,158 the GeForce2 Ultra is slightly below par for an Ultra card, but its frame rate on Quake III Team Arena was more like it, at 78.5fps.

The Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 730 17in monitor is nothing special in

terms of image quality, but has a 1,600 x 1,200 top resolution at 75Hz.

Two PCI slots are filled, one by a Supra Express modem and the other houses yet another Creative SoundBlaster Live! 5.1. The lack of six-channel speakers is the real downfall, but Panrix does say Creative's DTT2200 will now be included. There is a total of six USB ports at the rear, two from the motherboard and four at the bottom. Sadly, this blocks one of the free PCI slots, leaving just one available for expansion, and the CNR slot. Still, these can be removed should the slot be needed.

Both optical drives are from Samsung. The CD-RW drive runs at 12x 8x 32x, and the DVD drive at 16-speed. Overall, SYSmark 2001 came in at 137. Not top of the list, but still more than enough for the average user.

Aside from the speakers, this system has some excellent components making it worth a look.



Poweroid.com 3014

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Poweroid.com 0870 220 0444

PROS Fast **CONS** Slow 3D graphics performance

OVERALL Performance is good, but its features just don't compete with the top runners

FEATURES **PERFORMANCE**

VALUE FOR MONEY **OVERALL**

Poweroid has included a 1.4GHz Athlon on an Abit KG7 motherboard. It has also squeezed 512MB of PC2100 DDR SDRAM into its system. Sadly, not only does this fill both of the motherboard's DIMM slots, but it also makes very little difference to system performance, with 146 SYSmarks putting it roughly in the middle of the results table.

The ATI Radeon All-in-Wonder cards have fantastic features, and the latest incarnation looks set to be truly stunning. However, by today's standards, the original card, included here, has a tough time competing. The Radeon could only notch up 1,399 on 3DMark 2001, and a frame rate of 28.1 on Quake III Team Arena. Nor does the Iiyama Vision Master Pro 411 monitor sparkle when placed next to the competition.

Two of the six PCI slots on the Abit motherboard are full. The first has Creative's 5.1 sound card, which is, as ever, coupled with DTT2200 six-

channel speakers. The other contains a Conexant 56K modem.

Two extra USB ports have been added at the back, though they unfortunately block the lower PCI slot. It also seems a shame that these USB ports could not have been placed behind the flap intended for USB ports at the front of the case.

The optical drives are reasonable, with a Teac 12x 10x 32x CD-RW drive, which is a decent performer but not particularly fast by today's standards, and a 12-speed LG DVD drive.

The Maxtor 40GB UltraDMA100 drive has plenty of room, but other manufacturers have given us more. Drive bay expansion is provided, with two 3.5in bays and a single 5.25 bay free in the case.

A Microsoft Internet keyboard and the ambidextrous Intellimouse are included, along with a copy of Lotus SmartSuite Millennium to get you working straight away.



Systemax A1400RV Lifestyle

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Systemax 0870 7297 366

PROS Excellent software package **CONS** Weaker monitor

OVERALL Fast, with enough games to keep the kids locked away until next Christmas

FEATURES **PERFORMANCE**

VALUE FOR MONEY **OVERALL**

Here is another system with a 1.4GHz Athlon processor, coupled with PC 2100 DDR SDRAM memory. Regardless of price point, it seems that OEMs can always squeeze a 1.4GHz Athlon in their cases somewhere. Once the Athlon XP appears the 1.4GHz Athlon will inevitably fall in price.

Biostar's M7MIA motherboard comes with VIA's KT266 chipset and a pleasing plethora of ports. Three of the five PCI slots are filled. One houses a Creative SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 card. As is pretty much standard in this test, this pairs up well with the supplied DTT2200 six-channel speakers. In the next slot is a TV card from ATI, which is particularly welcome on these family-focused PCs. A Smart HCF 56K modem fills the third slot.

Gainward graphics cards tend to outperform the competition, mainly due to the company overclocking its chipsets. This GeForce2 Pro model is home to 64MB of graphics memory and an S-Video out socket.

Tests on Quake III Team Arena gave 51.2fps, and 3DMark 2001 gave an impressive score of 3,262. The 17in CTX EX710F monitor has a maximum resolution of 1,600 x 1,200 at a 75Hz refresh rate. Part of CTX's Executive Flat series, it looks a little odd, and it doesn't fare well against the competition.

A 40GB UltraDMA100 IBM hard drive is plenty for the time being, and Samsung gives us a CD-RW drive, running at 12x 8x 32x, and a 16-speed Pioneer DVD drive.

The software bundle really is something special. Although office work is catered for by Lotus SmartSuite, it will be hard to draw the kids away from the screen once they find the Eidos games bundle, including Deus Ex and Project IGI. A Sidewinder joystick is also supplied.

Performance under SYSmark 2001 was near top of the board, with an overall score of 147. All in all, a fabulous system.



GROUP TEST £999 PCS FOR EVERYONE

Time Machine 1400-7c VQ Flex

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Time 0870 830 3116

PROS Plenty of external components **CONS** No sound card

OVERALL Great bundle let down by the system itself

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■
VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■

Boot up this Time system and the omnipresent 1.4GHz Athlon and 256MB of PC2100 DDR SDRAM crops up once again. This combination gives the most consistently impressive performance on the market, being just as competent at Internet-based applications as it is with office work. In this case, SYSmark 2001 performance was not top of the field but it still gives enough oomph to run any application on the market, coming in at 139 overall.

Seagate hard drives are well respected and this PC's 40GB UltraDMA100 Barracuda is no exception. Optical storage comes from LG, with 12-speed CD writing, and the 16-speed DVD drive is from Toshiba.

All was rosy until we opened up the case. Everything is neat and tidy inside, but that is mainly down to the lack of components. There is no reason a sound card could not be afforded at the £849 price point, especially on a family PC where features such as this

are particularly important. Except for an HSP 56K Modem four of the five PCI slots are empty.

An unimpressive GeForce2 MX400 fills the graphics hole, and gave average performance. The 3DMark 2001 score was 1,596, although Quake III Team Arena was marginally better with 41.8fps. Again, as the family angle was as important on this test, it seems a shame such a card is used.

LG's Flatron 775FT is a good-quality 17in monitor with a 16in viewable screen, but the 795FT is a superior model and has been provided elsewhere in this test, so the Time system loses out once more.

But the Time claws back points lost by its internal disappointments with an excellent software bundle. Also, an Epson printer, USB joystick and joystick (which can plug into the two extra USB ports at the rear) and a webcam. It's just a shame it doesn't have the components to take full advantage of these extras.



Tiny Entertainment Plus 1500

PRICE £999 (£849 ex VAT) **CONTACT** Tiny 0800 731 3467

PROS Great monitor **CONS** Slowest machine on test

OVERALL Poor performance prevents recommendation

FEATURES ■■■■■ **PERFORMANCE** ■■■■■
VALUE FOR MONEY ■■■■■ **OVERALL** ■■■■■



The biggest shock in the Tiny system, aside from the 1960's sci-fi-style case, was the fact that it features a 1.5GHz Pentium 4 processor and still comes home within the £849 budget. Traditionally Intel chips are seen as more expensive. Sadly, again this Intel processor failed to beat AMD in our tests, with this system gaining an overall SYSmark 2001 score of 129.

Even with the high CPU cost and the cramped case, there's little missing here; 256MB of RDRAM gives the juice the P4 needs, this coming as two sticks. The MSI motherboard still has two slots remaining, which is more than enough. However, its diminutive stature leaves little room to expand. Just one of the three PCI slots is free. One filled slot houses a Creative SoundBlaster Live! 5.1. It's a shame to see the card's six-channel sound go to waste, as only two-channel speakers are supplied. However, these Altec Lansing speakers are top notch.

The graphics card is a real let-down, being only a GeForce2 MX200 from MSI. 3D performance reflected this fact, with 3DMark 2001 giving 1,434 and Quake III Team Arena 39.9fps. It is also disappointing considering the excellent monitor. The LG Flatron 795FT has great image quality, a superb OSD and a USB hub.

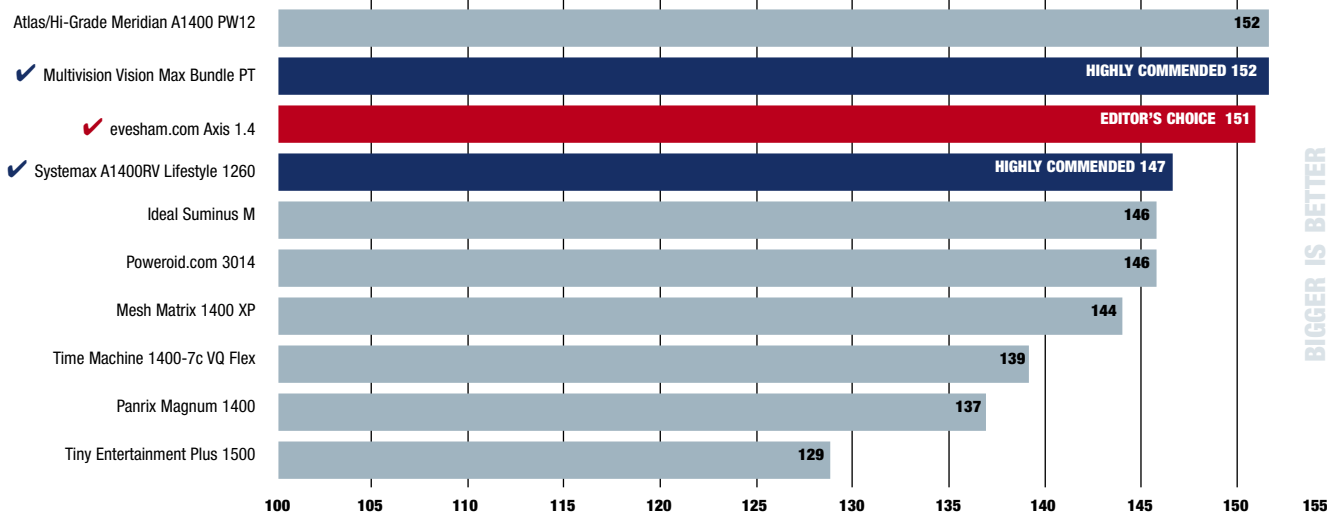
A 40GB UltraDMA100 hard drive from Maxtor is plenty to be getting on with, and the optical drives do not disappoint. Teac CD-RW drives are costly but fast and reliable, and this drive in particular records at a blinding 20-speed. The 16-speed AOpen DVD drive is also excellent.

The software supplied is Microsoft Works Suite 2001 and a Tiny education bundle 'for the kids', as well as an all-in-one printer, scanner and fax from Lexmark.

Aside from disappointing performance, this is a well-featured showing from Tiny.

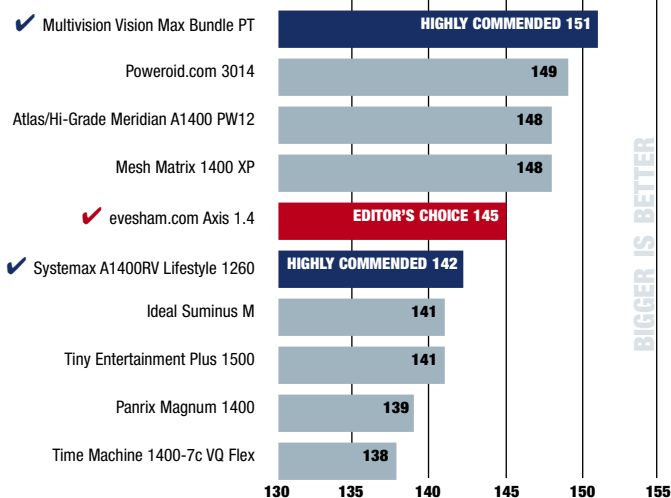
LAB RESULTS

SYSmark 2001 overall



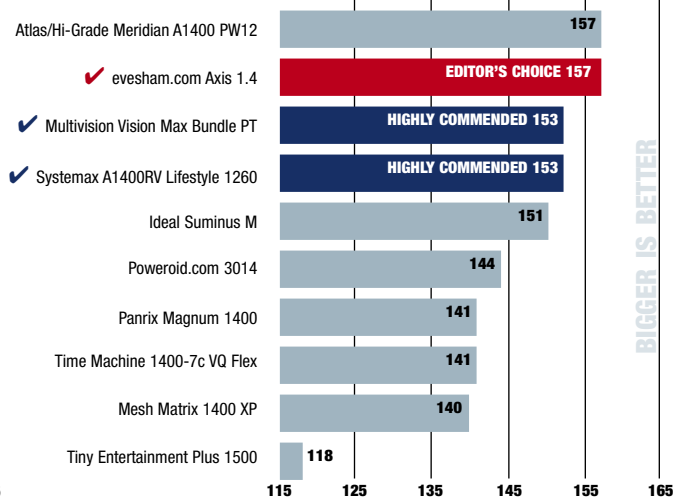
BIGGER IS BETTER

SYSmark 2001 Internet content creation



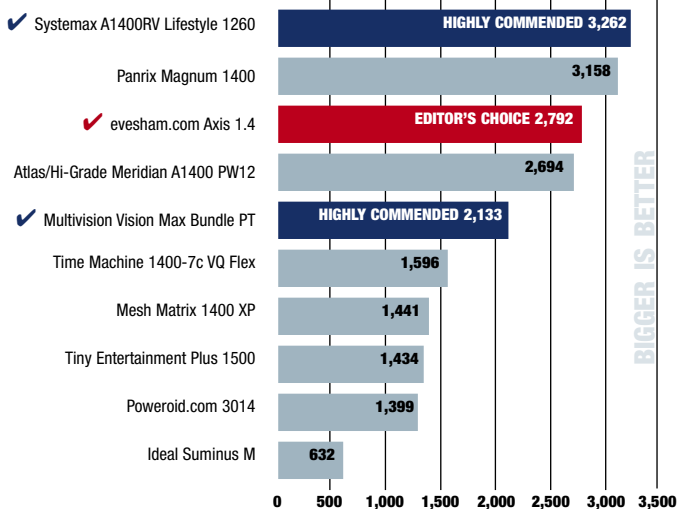
BIGGER IS BETTER

SYSmark 2001 office productivity



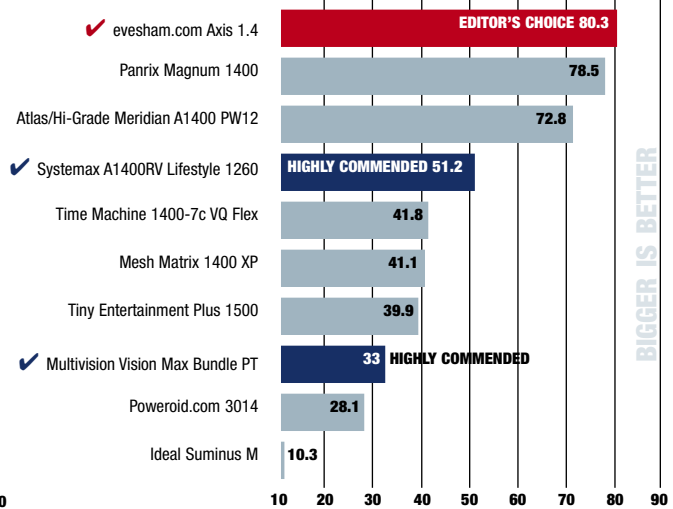
BIGGER IS BETTER

3DMark 2001 (1,280 x 1,024 at 32bit)



BIGGER IS BETTER

Quake III Team Arena (fps) (1,280 x 1,024 at 32bit)



BIGGER IS BETTER

Please see page 58 for an explanation of how we tested the PCs

TABLE OF FEATURES



MANUFACTURER	ATLAS/HI-GRADE	EVESHAM.COM	IDEAL	MESH
MODEL NAME	MERIDIAN A1400 PW12	AXIS 1.4	SUMINUS M	MATRIX 1400 XP
Price inc VAT (ex VAT)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)
Sales telephone	020 8532 6515	0870 160 9500	0870 748 1468	020 8208 4706
URL	www.hi-grade.co.uk/atlas	www.evesham.com	www.ideal-computing.co.uk	www.meshcomputers.com
HARDWARE SPECS				
Processor	Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz
RAM/type	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM
Occupied/spare RAM slots	1/2	1/1	1/1	1/2
Max memory in this configuration	1.2GB	768MB	768MB	1.2GB
Maximum memory supported by motherboard	1.5GB	1GB	1GB	1.5GB
Hard disk (manufacturer, model and spin speed)	Maxtor DiamondMax 7,200rpm	Maxtor DiamondMax 5 T030H3 7,200rpm	IBM DeskStar 7,200rpm	IBM DTLA 307060 7,200rpm
Hard disk size/interface (UltraDMA66/100 or SCSI)	40GB UltraDMA100	30GB UltraDMA100	40GB UltraDMA100	60GB 7,200rpm/UltraDMA100
CD-RW manufacturer and model	LG 16x 10x 40x	Samsung SW216B 16x 10x 32x	Samsung SW-408B 8x 8x 32x	Teac CD-W516E 16x 10x 40x
MOTHERBOARD COMPONENTS				
Motherboard manufacturer	Asus	Asus	Chaintech	Asus
Model/chipset	A7V266/VIA KT266	A7M266/VIA KT266	KCTKV4/VIA KT266	A7A 266/AiMagik1
EXPANSION AND I/O				
No of 3.5/5.25in bays	2/4	3/3	3/3	3/3
No of free 3.5/5.25in bays	1/2	2/1	1/1	1/1
No of PCI/ISA/shared/AMR slots	5/0/0/0	5/0/0/0	5/0/1/1	5/0/1/1
No of free PCI/ISA/shared/AMR slots	4/0/0/0	2/0/0/0	4/0/1/1	1/0/1/1
No of USB/serial/parallel/PS/2	4/2/1/2	2/2/1/2	2/2/1/2	4/2/1/2
MULTIMEDIA				
DVD manufacturer/model	Hitachi	Samsung SD616	Samsung SD616	Pioneer DVD 116
DVD speed/interface	16x EIDE	16x EIDE	16x EIDE	16x EIDE
Sound card manufacturer	Onboard	Creative	Onboard	Creative
Sound card model	N/A	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1	N/A	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1
Speakers (manufacturer and model)	Cambridge Soundworks DTT2200	Cambridge Soundworks DTT2200	Mercury SR-301E	Cambridge Soundworks Desktop Theater 5.1 DTT2200
Graphics card manufacturer and model	Gainward	Leadtek	HSI	Leadtek nVidia GeForce2 Pro
Chipset	GeForce2 Pro	GeForce2 Pro	GeForce2 MX200	GeForce2 MX400
Memory and type	64MB	64MB	64MB	64MB
Graphics card interface	AGP	AGP	AGP	AGP
Monitor manufacturer and model	LG Flatron 795FT	LG Flatron 795FT	LG Flatron 775FT	Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 730
Max viewable diagonal	17in/16in	17in/16in	17in/16in	17in/16in
Maximum resolution at VESA refresh	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz
OTHER INFORMATION				
Modem manufacturer and model	Allied Data Technology 56K	SmartLink 56K	CXT 1085 56K	Etec 56K Voice Modem
Misc hardware		VIA FireWire card	PrimaScan Colorado 2400u, Epson Stylus C40LX	FireWire
Bundled software	Lotus SmartSuite Millennium	Lotus SmartSuite	MS Works Suite 2001	Lotus SmartSuite Millennium
Standard warranty*	1yr on site	1yr on site	1yr on site	1yr on site & 2 years RTB

* RTB = return to base, C&R = collect and return



MULTIVISION	PANRIX	POWEROID.COM	SYSTEMAX	TIME	TINY
VISION MAX BUNDLE PT	MAGNUM 1400	POWEROID 3014	A1400RV LIFESTYLE 1260	MACHINE 1400-7C VQ FLEX	ENTERTAINMENT PLUS
£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)	£999 (£849)
0870 066 0885	0113 244 4958	0870 220 0444	0870 7297 366	0870 830 3116	0800 731 3467
www.multivision.co.uk	www.panrix.com	www.poweroid.com	www.systemaxpc.co.uk	www.timecomputers.com	www.tiny.com
Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4 GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz	Athlon 1.4GHz	Pentium 4 1.5GHz
512MB PC133	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	512MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB PC2100 DDR SDRAM	256MB RDRAM
2/1	1/2	2/0	1/3	1/1	2/2
1GB	1.2GB	512	1.2GB	768MB	512
1.5GB	1.5GB	1GB	1.5GB	1GB	1GB
Seagate Barracuda 7,200rpm	2 x Fujitsu 7,200rpm	Maxtor 40GB 7,200rpm	IBM 60GXP 7,200rpm	Seagate Barracuda 7,200rpm	Maxtor 7,200rpm
40GB UltraDMA100	2 x 40GB UltraDMA100	UltraDMA100 EIDE	40GB UltraDMA100	40GB UltraDMA100	40GB UltraDMA100
BP 1500 Mirai 16x 10x 40x	Samsung 12x 8x 32x	Teac 12x 10x 32x	Samsung 12x 8x 32x	LG 12x 10x 32x	Teac W516e 20x 10x 40x
MSI	MSI	Abit	Biostar	Gigabyte	MSI
K7T Turbo/KT133	KT266 Pro 6380/VIA KT266	KG7/AMD 761	M7MIA/VIA KT266	GA-7DX/VIA KT266	MS 6385/Intel 850
2/4	3/3	1/0	2/3	2/3	3/2
1/2	1/1	1/2	1/1	1/1	1/0
5/0/0/1	5/0/0/1	6/0/0/1	5/0/0/1	5/0/0/0	3/0/1/1
3/0/0/1	3/0/0/1	4/0/0/1	2/0/0/1	4/0/0/0	1/0/1/1
2/2/1/2	6/2/1/2	2/2/2	2/2/1/2	2/2/1/2	2/2/1/2
Pioneer DVD 116	Samsung	LG DVD	Pioneer DVD	Toshiba SD-M1502	AOpen 1640 Pro
16x EIDE	16x EIDE	12x EIDE	16x EIDE	16x EIDE	16x EIDE
Hercules	Creative	Creative	Creative	Onboard	Creative
Muse XL	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1	N/A	SoundBlaster Live! 5.1
Creative FPS1000	Cambridge Soundworks DTT2200	Cambridge Soundworks DTT2200	Creative DTT2200	Creative FPS1500	Altec Lansing
VideoLogic Vivid! XS	Hercules 3D Prophet II Ultra	ATI Radeon All-in-Wonder	Gainward GeForce2 MX400	MSI GeForce2 MX400	MSI MS8829
Kyro II	GeForce2 Ultra	Radeon	GeForce2 Pro	GeForce2 MX	GeForce2 MX200
32MB	64MB DDR SDRAM	32MB	64MB	64MB	32MB
AGP	AGP	AGP	AGP	AGP	AGP
Hansol 920D	Mitsubishi Diamond Pro 730	Iiyama A705 Vision Master Pro 411	CTX EX710F	LG Flatron 775FT	LG Flatron 795FT
19in/18in	17in/16in	17in/16in	17in/16in	17in/16in	17in/16in
1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz	1,600 x 1,200 at 75Hz
Elsa Microlink 56K	Diamond Supra Express 56K	Connexant chipset/56K	Smart HCF 56K V.90	HSP 56K PCI	Tiny 56K
			MS Sidewinder ATI MTV Tuner	Epson Stylus Color 480, webcam, joystick, jypad	Lexmark 3in1
Multimedia software pack	MS Works Suite 2001	Lotus SmartSuite Millennium	Lotus SmartSuite Millennium Project IGI, Insane, Deus Ex, Rune, FIFA 2001, Tomb Raider Chronicles	MS Works Suite 2001	MS Works Suite 2001, Education Pack
1yr on site , 2yrs C&R	1yr on site, 2yrs C&R	1yr on site 2yrs RTB	1yr on site	1yr on site	1yr on site

Editor's Choice

This group test proves that for a pound short of £1,000 including VAT you can get a well-equipped, all-round system. Many manufacturers produced what we would have expected to have cost considerably more just a couple of months ago. This is again indicative of the state of the industry; prices continue to drop in an attempt to spark interest among the buying public. Towards the high end of the test, 3D performance was the battleground, with GeForce2 Pro cards fighting against Kyro II. To our surprise, we even found that a GeForce2 Ultra had been slipped into one system, giving some excellent scores.

Some manufacturers – and they were in the minority – opted for onboard sound solutions. There have been some tremendous improvements in this field, such as the six-channel sound on the new Asus motherboards, but they still cannot compete with dedicated sound cards. Considering the price point we found this rather disappointing, especially as sound cards are now so cheap.

Average hard drive space, even for under £1,000 was over 40GB, with only one system failing to make the grade. The inclusion of two optical drives, one DVD, one CD-RW, is an improvement on the sub-£1,000 systems we have seen in the past; another sign of the times.

There was very little to separate some of these systems. Small things, such as the quality of the sound card or whether the system came with six-channel speakers, became very important factors in distinguishing between them, as the core components were often near identical.

The winners

In the end we judged the **evesham.com Axis 1.4** system most deserving of the **Editor's Choice** award. There was very little in terms of performance and features between the top few systems, but this was the best all round. It gave the second fastest score in SYSmark 2001, and only by one point. The staple 1.4GHz Athlon processor had 256MB of DDR memory; any more and you'll see very little extra return for your money. The system has a total of four USB ports, which is ideal for joysticks, digital cameras and the like. There's also a

FireWire card. The GeForce2 Pro graphics card gave the fastest frame rate in Quake III Team Arena, and although its 3DMark score was not top notch, it was perfectly competent. The LG Flatron 795FT monitor **evesham.com** has chosen to use is superb and features a USB hub. There's a fabulous Dolby 5.1 setup, with a 5.1 channel sound card from Creative, six-channel speakers and Samsung DVD drive. The Axis 1.4 is a thoroughly versatile system with excellent performance.

Our first **Highly Commended** award goes to the **Systemax A1400RV Lifestyle 1260**. It only just missed out on the Editor's Choice, and that was purely down to the monitor, as the CTX panel was a slightly weaker option when compared to **evesham.com**'s LG Flatron 795FT. Performance was superb in both 3D and 2D tests, achieving the highest score on 3DMark 2001.

There's also an impressive selection of Eidos games and a Sidewinder joystick. Two good-quality optical drives and a 40GB IBM hard drive complete the excellent package.

The winner of the second **Highly Commended** award is the **Multivision Vision Max Bundle PT**. It surprised us by including a 19in monitor and a printer with its well-stocked system. The 1.4GHz Athlon setup performed particularly well, clocking up the highest SYSmark score in the test, coming home one point ahead of the **evesham.com Axis 1.4**. The graphics card's Kyro II chipset worked its budget magic and, while the scores were not on a par with some of the GeForce2 Pro or GeForce2 Ultra cards on test, it was still perfectly capable. It also had two 16-speed optical drives, and was one of only two systems to feature a FireWire card.

The only thing that stopped Multivision being the Editor's Choice was the lack of six-channel sound. A family-oriented PC must focus on the entertainment angle as much as business. It must adequately handle DVDs and games, and both are greatly enhanced with the introduction of Dolby Digital sound. Four-point alternatives just don't measure up.

Special mention must go to Atlas/Hi-Grade, whose system had a solid list of features and was an excellent performer, but was just pipped at the post by the systems named above.



evesham.com Axis 1.4



Systemax A1400RV Lifestyle 1260



Multivision Vision Max Bundle PT

For a pound short of £1,000 you can get a well-equipped system