



Most users base their **buying decisions** on others' experiences.

## Run with the pack

**Word of mouth** is what really makes something successful. Whether it's a film, a play or the latest console game – that's the secret ingredient for making anything 'hot' these days. OK, there are hundreds of journalists, critics and shop assistants out there to tell you what they *think* is a damn good car, sound system or TV set. And marketing departments will spend millions putting their brand or product in front of your eyes or near your ears. But nothing is going to make you more confident than hearing that other purchasers fared well.

It's human nature that sometimes we like to run with the pack, no matter how strong our individualism. I'm naturally an individualist, but this summer I did a lot of pack work: I thrilled to the *Phantom Menace*, watched sadly as the Dirty Dan saga unfolded on *EastEnders*, and bought a new Sony MiniDisc machine and a bigger Dyson vacuum cleaner. In each case, I seemed to be doing what most other people were doing, and if everybody's doing it, then you know it must be good. (And if it isn't, then you really have something to talk about!)

**This month, once again**, we invite you to sample a little word of mouth about the best manufacturers to buy from. We invite you to run with the pack by contemplating where the pack is running to buy machines. In our May issue we asked readers to take part in our second annual Service and Reliability Survey and more than 2,300 of you answered that call. So, here are the results of the UK jury...

The pack is running once again to a pantheon of key names: Dell, Dan and Mesh on the systems front; Toshiba and IBM for notebooks; Psion and 3Com for handhelds; and Epson, Hewlett-Packard and Brother for printers.

Not that that's endorsement in itself. There are readers who have had bad

experiences with these companies as well. But for most of the companies that feature in our report, there are at least three or four satisfied customers to every one who has had a problem.

**For most of the companies in our report, there are three or four **SATISFIED CUSTOMERS** to every one who has had a problem**

And therein lies the rub. Our survey doesn't stop at the advice you're given over the phone or in the shop. (Internet purchasing, we note, is still regarded as a minority activity, but that will be a different story in 12 months' time, with the likes of jungle.com prowling the market.) Nor do we stop at the condition of your order when it arrives. Instead, we go on to ask you to assess what happened when something went wrong. How good was the advice you received? How soon were problems fixed? Both pre-sales and post-sales service are a measure of a good company. Because no matter how good a company is, once in a while there will be a cock-up. That's Sod's Law.

**So, the manufacturers** that will wind up ruling the roost are the ones that care not only about providing a good system, but also about making sure the fixes run smoothly in the event that something does go wrong. If, in the words of those great pop philosophers, Simon and Garfunkel, they are trying to keep their customers satisfied, then they're halfway to making word of mouth work for them.

**Bobby Pickering, Editor**

## Editorial

Bobby Pickering **Editor** • [bobby\\_pickering@vnu.co.uk](mailto:bobby_pickering@vnu.co.uk)  
 Riyad Emeran **Deputy Editor** • [riyad\\_emeran@vnu.co.uk](mailto:riyad_emeran@vnu.co.uk)  
 Clive Akass **Associate Editor (News)** • [clive\\_akass@vnu.co.uk](mailto:clive_akass@vnu.co.uk)  
 Adele Dyer **Features Editor** • [adele\\_dyer@vnu.co.uk](mailto:adele_dyer@vnu.co.uk)  
 Nik Rawlinson **Reviews Editor** • [nik\\_rawlinson@vnu.co.uk](mailto:nik_rawlinson@vnu.co.uk)  
 Nigel Whitfield **Hands On Editor** • [nigel\\_whitfield@vnu.co.uk](mailto:nigel_whitfield@vnu.co.uk)  
 Jason Jenkins **Staff Writer** • [jason\\_jenkins@vnu.co.uk](mailto:jason_jenkins@vnu.co.uk)  
 Will Head **Staff Writer** • [will\\_head@vnu.co.uk](mailto:will_head@vnu.co.uk)  
 Claire Morley **Editorial Assistant** • [claire\\_morley@vnu.co.uk](mailto:claire_morley@vnu.co.uk)  
 Editorial Phone 0171 316 9000 Fax 0171 316 9313 website [www.pcw.co.uk](http://www.pcw.co.uk)

## Production/Art

Debbie Oliver **Production Editor** • [deborah\\_oliver@vnu.co.uk](mailto:deborah_oliver@vnu.co.uk)  
 Matt Chapman **Senior Sub-editor** • [matthew\\_chapman@vnu.co.uk](mailto:matthew_chapman@vnu.co.uk)  
 Matt Whipp **Sub-editor** • [matt\\_whipp@vnu.co.uk](mailto:matt_whipp@vnu.co.uk)  
 Stuart James, Jon Mason **Art Editors**  
 Chris Dias **Assistant Art Editor** • [chris\\_dias@vnu.co.uk](mailto:chris_dias@vnu.co.uk)  
 Ciaran Bradley **Graphics**

## Publishing

Mick Andon **Publisher** • [mick\\_andon@vnu.co.uk](mailto:mick_andon@vnu.co.uk)  
 Martin Hill **Publishing Director** • [martin\\_hill@vnu.co.uk](mailto:martin_hill@vnu.co.uk)  
 Ruud Bakker **Chief Executive**  
 Brin Bucknor **Managing Director**  
 Tosh Bruce-Morgan **Financial Director**  
 Angelo Zgorelec **Founder**

## Marketing

Dafina Harrison **Marketing Manager** • [dafina\\_harrison@vnu.co.uk](mailto:dafina_harrison@vnu.co.uk)  
 Katy Lefevre **Marketing Executive** • [katy\\_lefevre@vnu.co.uk](mailto:katy_lefevre@vnu.co.uk)

## Circulation

Jonathan Hardy **Newstrade Circulation Manager** • [jonathan\\_hardy@vnu.co.uk](mailto:jonathan_hardy@vnu.co.uk)  
 Gaynor Silsbury **Subscriptions Marketing Executive** • [gaynor\\_silsbury@vnu.co.uk](mailto:gaynor_silsbury@vnu.co.uk)

## Advertising

Sean Ferris **Head of Sales** • 0171 316 9246  
 Vicky Shaw **Sales Manager** • 0171 316 9572

## Portfolio Account Handlers

Amanda Dorrington 0171 316 9834 Tim Griffiths 0171 316 9832  
 Jon Westbrook 0171 316 9306

## PC Consumer Sales

Nunzio Mosca 0171 316 9305 • Ugo Emezi 0171 316 9724 • Gavan Collins 0171 316 9529  
 Jim McGinty 0171 316 9295 • Ian Carrington 0171 316 9773

## Micromart Sales

Gillian Wilson 0171 316 9435 Julie Twaddell 0171 316 9727  
 Chantelle Johnson **Advertising Customer Services** 0171 316 9523  
**US Sales Representative** Global Media Representatives 001 415 306 0880  
**Taiwan Sales Representatives** Grace Chu/Kent Lai 001 886 2717 7663

## Central Production

Stav Athanasiou **Group Production Controller** 0171 316 9227  
 Louise Conroy **Production Controller** 0171 316 9228  
 Richard Briggs **Production Manager** 0171 316 9483

## New Media

Steve Rogers **CD Editor** • Matt Honeyball **Software Researcher** •  
 Rozalia Mair **Software Researcher** • Claire Calcluth **CD Programmer**

## VNU Labs

VNU's European Labs fulfil the testing needs of VNU's portfolio of magazines. Together, the six labs across Europe in London, Amsterdam, Milan, Brussels, Paris and Madrid provide testing for all of VNU's European titles. All of the Labs use the same methodology and benchmarks.

Wisse Hettinga **European Labs Manager** • Gordon Thorn **UK Labs Manager** •  
 Alan Rider **Operations Manager** • David Eade **Labs Tester** •  
 Labs Phone 0171 316 9064 Fax 0171 316 9059

VNU Business Publications, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG.  
 Main switchboard phone 0171 316 9000

No material may be reproduced in whole or in part without written consent from the copyright holder © VNU Business Publications 1999.

Original design by WB Associés, Paris.

Advertisement typesetting by Typematters, London.

Origination by Westside Digital Media, 32 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DE.

Printed and bound in the UK by St Ives plc, Plymouth.

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 247 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0AU



## CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Enquiries or complaints regarding any advertiser in this magazine should, initially, be presented in writing to:  
 ANTHONY GEORGE  
 Manager,  
 Customer Relations  
 Department,  
 VNU Business  
 Publications,  
 VNU House,  
 32 - 34 Broadwick  
 Street, London  
 W1A 2HG  
 Tel: 0171 316 9186

Readers are reminded that we are unable to provide technical help/support

services, either written or verbal; and that the opinions expressed and results published in connection with reviews and laboratory test reports are confined to, and are representative of, only those goods as supplied.

## REPRINTS & EXTRACTS

We offer a full reprint service for reproduction of all or part of previous articles (minimum: 1,000 copies). For orders, please call LOUISE CONROY on 0171 316 9228. We are happy for people to use quotations and segments for internal or promotional purposes. For clearance, please call MICK ANDON, Publisher, on 0171 316 9000, or ANTHONY GEORGE, Customer Relations Manager, on 0171 316 9186.

## PRICES

Unless otherwise stated, all prices quoted in *Personal Computer World* are inclusive of VAT.

Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed and results published in connection with reviews and laboratory test reports carried out on computing systems and/or other related items are confined to, and are representative of, only those goods as supplied and should not be construed as a recommendation to purchase.

## READER & SUBSCRIBER ENQUIRIES

**Tel: 01795 414870**

**Fax: 01795 414555**

**Email: [pcwsubs@galleon.co.uk](mailto:pcwsubs@galleon.co.uk)**

## By Post to:

**Personal Computer World,  
 Subscriptions Dept,  
 PO Box 301, Sittingbourne ME9 8BN**

## Subs prices

(including postage and packing)

3-year subscription **£57.95**

1-year subscription **£24.95**

Back issue cost **£5 (UK)**

## Overseas subscription

Europe **£95**

Rest of the World **£125**



141,746  
 Jan-June '99

**vnu business publications**