buying advice



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CREDIT CARD PROTECTION

fordering goods over £100, we recommend you use your credit card. A credit card not only provides similar protection as that guaranteed under the 'Buyers Charter' but, more importantly, it offers the additional advantage of reimbursement to your account of all monies paid for goods not received — usually within 28 days — when a company ceases to trade.

All the best buys are here

ometimes you just want to know the names of the best products, when they were reviewed, how much they cost and where you can get them. That's where our no-nonsense buyer's guide comes in. Over the following five pages we've picked out the outstanding PCs, peripherals and software packages that we can recommend without hesitation. To make it even easier, we've included the current manufacturer's contact number and price (including VAT), as well as details of when and where we reviewed the product. For the full review, why not check out PCW on CD-ROM? Updated quarterly, PCW on CD-ROM contains the full editorial from the past 24 issues, in searchable Adobe Acrobat format — it even comes with a copy of Acrobat for viewing, searching and printing. Each CD costs just £9.95 including postage and packing, or £8.96 for subscribers. Call 01795 414870 to order your copy or turn to PCW Reader Offers on page 278 for further details. If you can't wait for the

next quarterly CD, try out our new Faxback service (p580) which provides 24-hour access to your favourite features and reviews.

> GORDON LAING Editor

Personal Computer World Buyer's Charter

If things go wrong Mail order protection scheme

Anthony George, our Customer Services Manager, is here to help you if things go wrong or if you have a complaint about advertisements that have appeared in Personal Computer World. Write to him with details of the complaint and he will contact you

Anthony George Customer Relations Department

VNU Business Publications VNU House, 32 - 34 Broadwick Street London W1A 2HG

Buvers Charte



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1. You have not received the goods or had your money returned.

2. You have followed the 'Personal Computer World'

guidelines when placing your order.

3. Have taken all reasonable steps to effect delivery or

4. You have retained proof of purchase, for verification

a) A copy of the original advertisement from which the goods were ordered b) A copy of Personal Computer World's 'Details of

Transaction Form' (on opposite page). c) Comprehensive proof of payment.

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After a supplier who has advertised has become subject to either liquidation or bankruptcy proceedings, Personal Computer World guarantees to process as expeditiously as possible those private individual readers' claims made and submitted, in accordance with those procedures outlined, up to the following limits.

a) £2,000 in respect of any claim submitted by one Private Individual Reader

b) £100,000 in respect of all advertisers so affected in any one year.

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As soon as legal confirmation that a state of liquidation or bankruptcy exists, the processing of claims will immediately commence. If, however, assets are available and the receiver/liquidator appointed confirms that an eventual payment will be made by way of a dividend, all claims under the 'Buyers Charter' will be subject to re-processing and will take into account any shortfall which may then exist. Payments under the scheme will take into consideration the obligations and liabilities of other interested parties such as credit card and/or insurance

This guarantee only applies to advance postal payments

made by private individuals in direct response for goods itemised/illustrated in display advertisements. It does not cover goods ordered from advertising inserts or cards, classified advertisements or MicroMart, or catalogues obtained from, or supplied by, any

The 'Buyer's Charter' is designed to safeguard the PRIVATE individual reader. It does not provide protection to any companies, societies, organisations, unincorporated bodies or any other commercially orientated outlet of any description. Similarly, cover is not provided for orders placed from or to any overseas companies or for goods purchased for resale.

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The protection of the 'Buyers Charter' only applies to display advertisements carried in this publication. It is not designed for, nor will it protect the consumer, in circumstances whereby goods have been subsequently ordered and paid for as a direct result of any advertisements appearing on the Internet. While limited protection still exists when Internet purchases are made from companies based in the UK, no such protection exists — other than that afforded by certain major credit card companies - relative to goods ordered from overseas organisations' web sites. We would strongly urge all readers to consider the following before purchasing via the Internet: Advertised prices invariably exclude transportation charges, do not account for currency fluctuations, Customs & Excise duties, VAT, documentation and/or importation restrictions. Statutory rights are virtually non-existent, guarantees - if any impossible to enforce, replacement of faulty goods and/or refunds difficult to obtain, no official regulatory organisation to call upon for assistance when things go wrong, and no protection under the 'Buyers Charter

best buys

DESKTOP PCS

ue to the fast moving nature of the PC industry, we can only recommend particular PCs in the month we have seen them. Prices change almost weekly as component prices from third-party suppliers fluctuate according to availability. So, for this month's best PC buy, for instance, look at the group test on p70. When buying a PC there are a few basic steps you should take: always buy with a credit card; ask for a complete specification and the final price to be sent to you before you confirm the order; ask for a definite delivery date; keep a copy of all correspondence and remember to use the PCW order form (p572). Also take into account what kind of warranty you will need and consider spending more for an extended or improved warranty with on-site or speedy maintenance if you depend on your PC for your work. Obviously, everyone's ideal PC will have a different mix of components, with gamers needing a very good 3D graphics card, probably a 3D sound card and excellent speakers, and business users will need a good monitor and plenty of RAM.

ENTRY-LEVEL PCs

Budget-conscious buyers, might consider going for a non-Intel processor, such as an AMD. However, be aware that if you choose a Socket 7 chip you might find it hard to upgrade in future. Similarly, if you go for a Slot 1 processor, make sure you specify a motherboard with a BX chipset which will allow for greater upgrading options in the future. We would recommend the following specification:

- 333MHz AMD K6-2 or Intel Celeron processor
- 32Mb RAM
- 4Gb hard drive
- · Graphics card with 4Mb video RAM
- 15in monitor
- CD-ROM drive

You can expect to pay between £499 and £699 (ex VAT) for this configuration, with either a sound card and speakers or a modem.

MID-RANGE PCs

In the mid-range, around £1,000 (ex VAT) will get you a good allround machine. As the PII 333 disappears, and with even PII 350s becoming scarce, it might be as well to look for a faster processor. Look for a minimum of:

- Intel PII or AMD K6-2 400MHz processor
- 64Mb RAM
- 8Gb hard disk
- · Good 3D graphics card with 8Mb video RAM
- 17in monitor
- CD-ROM drive
- · Sound card, speakers, 56K modem

Most of all look, for a machine that is easy to upgrade, so specify plenty of slots and no on-board chips on a good motherboard and lots of free bays in the case.

HIGH-END PCs

If you are after a state-of-the-art machine, be prepared to spend around £1,500 (ex VAT). What you require at this price will be specific to your needs, depending on how you intend to use the machine. However, as a basic specification we would want:

- PII 450
- 128Mb 100MHz RAM
- 16Gb hard drive
- Good 3D graphics card with 12Mb video RAM
- 19in monitor
- DVD drive
- · Sound card, speakers, 56K modem
- Bundled office suite

You might also want to wait until next month to get hold of Intel's latest processor, the Pentium III.

HIGH-END NOTEBOOK

Compaq Armada 7800

With everything you could need in a replacement to your desktop PC, the Armada 7800 even incorporates a DVD drive for movies-on-the-move. Based around a 300MHz PII it doesn't hang around and benefits from an 8Gb hard drive and 64Mb memory. With up to five hours' battery life it should be able to keep going longer than its users, and the power adapter is integrated - goodbye power brick.

PCW March '99, p79

Price £3878.68 Contact Compaq 0181 332 3000
Also recommended Panasonic Toughbook CF-71 Price £2701.32 Contact
Panasonic 0800 444220 • IBM ThinkPad 770 Price £3795.25 Contact IBM 0870 601 0136 (both PCW March '99)

MID-RANGE NOTEBOOK

Sharp PC-A150

Light and portable, this notebook also has enough power to run your office apps and a big enough screen, which is good enough to be used in presentations. It is robust, with a magnesium alloy casing. With its excellent keyboard and external floppy drive it could even be used as a desktop replacement.

PCW March '99, p183

Also recommended AJP 1100M Price £1,350.08 Contact AJP 0181 208 9744 • Sony Vaio 505 Price £2301.83 Contact Sony 0870 2402408 (both PCW March '99) Price £2,109.13 Contact Sharp 0800 262958

PDA

Hewlett-Packard

Jornada 820e

Fed up with ever-faster processors when all you need is a machine to take notes and check your email? The Iornada could be the answer to your prayers. You can work for a full day without fear of the battery dying and with an Intel StrongARM processor running at 190MHz, 16Mb RAM and

an integrated 56K modem, it has everything you need when on the move. And its 8.2in STN screen with a resolution of 640x480 is large enough to see exactly what you are doing.

PCW February '99, p120

Price £849 Contact HP 0990 474747 Also Recommended Psion Series 5
Price £429.9 Contact Psion 0990 143050 • 3Com PalmPilot Pro
Price £229 Contact 3Com 0800 225252 (both PCW May '98)

COLOUR INKIET

Hewlett-Packard

Desklet 895CXi

For all-round excellence you cannot do better than the HP 895CXi. The quality of its output for both text and graphics is impressive given the swift speed at which they are produced. Even its 'econofast' mode could be used for vital documents, saving both time and ink. It takes a huge range of papers and replacing ink cartridges is a breeze.





Price £292.58 **Contact** HP 0990 474747 **Also Recommended** Epson Stylus Color 740 **Price** £272.60 **Contact** 0800 220546 • Epson Stylus Color 850 **Price** £318.43 **Contact** 0800 220546 (both PCW February '99)

BUDGET LASER PRINTER

Kyocera **FS-600**

This personal 6ppm laser printer easily beats all other laser printers in its class. Its speed is impressive, printing out a steady six pages per minute no matter what the paper coverage, and the quality of its output is second to none, both for graphics and text. It is easily upgradeable, taking an impressive 36Mb of RAM. It has a PostScript option and there is even an ethernet port that comes as standard.

IIII PCW February '99, p199

Price £299 Contact Kyocera 0118 923 0660
Also Recommended Panasonic KX-P6300 Price £257.32 Contact Panasonic 01344 853081 (PCW February '99)

MULTIFUNCTION DEVICE

Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 3100

Good laser-print quality from this quiet machine. It's intelligent enough to detect a document dropped into its feeder and it will launch an idiot-proof menu for scanning, copying and emailing. Fast, accurate OCR and 2Mb memory for incoming faxes when the paper supply is

exhausted, makes the 3100 an ideal multifunction device.

PCW June '98, p83

Price £629 Contact HP 0990 474747 Also Recommended Canon MultiPASS MPC20 Price £370.13 Contact Canon 0181 773 3173 (PCW January '98)

COLOUR PHOTO PRINTER

Epson

Stylus Photo 700

Colour inkjets have split into two categories, with this type clearly designed to reproduce the most realistic colour photographic prints. Epson has for a long time been the undisputed leader and its Stylus Photo 700 is our choice for inkjet photo printing.

However, Lexmark comes very close behind with its 5700.

PCW September '98, p188

Price £273 Contact Epson 01442 261144 ded Lexmark 5700 Price £229 Contact Lexmark Also Recommended Lexmark 5700 P 01628 481500 (PCW September '98)

BUSINESS LASER PRINTER

Lexmark **Optra K1220**

It is rare that you find a printer which is both good value and produces exceptional quality output, yet the Optra K1220 is just such a laser printer. With a rated speed of 12ppm it produces text in good time, but most of all its outstanding quality, both for text and

graphics, puts it second to none amongst laser printers.

PCW February '99, p201



FLATBED SCANNER

Umax

Astra 610P

Once again, the Umax Astra 610P parallel-port scanner has won our budget flatbed scanner group test, boasting an unbeatable combination of performance and value. Note that our three recommended scanners require enhanced

parallel ports found only on modern PCs, so users wanting top performance, or those with older systems, should stick to SCSI.

PCW September '98, p229





best buys

DIGITAL CAMERA

Kodak **DC260**

Once again Kodak has produced the best digital camera for under £1,000. Not only does it have a high resolution, producing excellent images at 1,536x1,024 pixels, but it also has a 3X zoom. Add



its advanced features, including scripting facilities and you have a highly desirable and indispensable camera.

PCW October '98, p226

Price £899 Contact Kodak 0800 281487 Also Recommended Epson PhotoPC 700 Price £587.50 Contact Epson 0800 289622 • Ricoh RDC-4300 Price £599 Contact Ricoh 01782 753355 (both PCW October '98)

Морем

Diamond SupraExpress 56e Pro

With ever-shifting goalposts, it makes sense to go for a modem which supports all the current standards, as well as simultaneous voice and data. Combine this with a roaring speed, superb ease of use and a low



price, and you have the best-value modem around.

PCW December '98, p211

Price £75 Contact Diamond Multimedia 0118 944 4401 d Zoom FaxModem 56Kx Price £89 Contact SCS Data Communications 01494 748904 (PCW December '98)

SOUND CARD

Creative Labs

Sound Blaster Live!



PCW December '98, p92

Also Recommended Terratec EWS64S Price £149.23 Contact Terratec 01600 772111 (PCW July '98) Price £149 Contact Creative Labs 01189 344744

MONITOR

Nokia

Multigraph 447Za

No matter what you do, it's vital to get a good monitor with a clean, flicker-free display. In April 1998's group test we looked at 17in models and found Nokia's Multigraph 447Za to be the best in our entry-level category. Those with more to spend should check out the Mitsubishi (see the details panel, below) which was our Editor's Choice in the high-end section.

PCW April '98, p204





Price £440.63 Contact Nokia 01793 512809 Also Recommended Mitsubishi DiamondPro 700 Price £569.88 Contact Mitsubishi 01707 276100 (PCW April '98)

REMOVABLE STORAGE

Sony

With the same form factor disks as a 3.5in drive, this could replace your floppy but crams a whopping 200Mb onto each disk. Early units will be parallel-only affairs, but will soon be joined by internal ATAPI and PC Card versions. It's a little slow but easy to use.

PCW March '99, p91

Price £149 Contact Sony 01932 816660 Also Recommended lomega Jaz 2Gb Price £270 Contact lomega 0800 973194 • Imation SuperDisk 120 Price £105 Contact Imation 01344 402200 (both PCW, August '98)

GRAPHICS CARD

Diamond

Viper V550

Sporting Riva's latest TNT chipset, the Viper V550 graphics card provides absolutely storming 3D performance, with a full 3D feature set and good image quality to boot. Its 16Mb of RAM provides ultra-high 2D desktop resolutions in standard Windows applications.

PCW November '98, p198



Price Approx £150 Contact Diamond Multimedia 0118 944 4400 Also Recommended MetaByte Wicked 3D Price £211.50 Contact Watford Electronics 01582 745555 (PCW November '98)

ACCOUNTING

Intuit

Quickbooks 6

Touted as the easiest accounting package for small businesses, QuickBooks has a long history and a large user base. Version 6 is the first 32-bit incarnation. It even monitors company performance and sounds the alarm should you fall behind.



➡ PCW March 99, p92

Price £199 (Pro version) Contact Intuit 0800 585058 Also Recommender MYOB Price £229.13 Contact Bestware 01752 201901 • TAS Books Price £116.33 Contact Megatech 01372 727274 (both PCW, June '98)

DATABASE

Microsoft Access 97

This industry-standard database application is also the best. With its wizards, infamous Office

Assistants and standard Windows interface, Access 97 is relatively easy for the novice. And its powerful relational

features and VBA integration make it suitable for developers, too.

PCW November '98, p220

Price £299 Contact Microsoft 0345 002000 ed FileMaker Pro 4 Price £169 Contact FileMaker 0845 603 9100 (PCW November '98)

IMAGE EDITING

Ulead

PhotoExpress 2.0

Ulead has succeeded in removing the frustration factor often involved in getting to grips with digital pictures. PhotoExpress 2.0 is a pleasure to use, with a great, clearly structured interface and fast, in-depth tools. It has pre-set editing



modes for the novice and custom adjustments for each editing function, so the power user will be kept happy, too.

PCW January '99, p202

Price £34.95 Contact BIT 01420 83811 Also Recommended Adobe PhotoDeluxe 3 Price £45.83 Contact Adobe 0181 606 4001 • Paint Shop Pro 5 Price £69.95 Contact Digital Workshop 01295 258335 (both PCW January '99)

PERSONAL FINANCE

Microsoft

Money Financial Suite 99

Microsoft Money Financial Suite 99 is our choice for personal finance. It offers online banking and updating facilities, as well as Sage compatibility, all at a bargain price.

PCW February '99, p80



Price £49.99 Contact Microsoft 0345 002000 ed Quicken 98 Price £39.99 Contact Intuit 0181 990 5500 Also Recomme (PCW June '98)

DTP

Serif

PagePlus 5

Inexpensive, easy-touse and surprisingly well equipped, PagePlus 5 offers extremely capable desktop publishing. Those wanting the choice of professional publishers will have to fork out more for Quark XPress 4X.

PCW June '98, p132





Price £99.95 Contact Serif 0800 376 7070 Also Recommended Quark XPress 4 Price £1,169 Contact Quark 01483 454397 (PCW June '98)

DRAWING

Corel

CorelDraw 8

Not one of Corel's classic years, but this is still the Windows drawing package to own. Version 8 of this giant suite boasts better drawing and new interactive tools. Artists on a budget should check out

Micrografx Windows Draw 6.

PCW October '98, p203



Price £464.13 Contact Corel 0800 581028 Also Recommended Adobe Illustrator Price £351.32 Contact Adobe 0181 606 4000 • Freehand Price £327.82 Contact Macromedia 01344 458600 (both PCW October '98)

INFORMATION MANAGERS

Starfish Sidekick 98





PCW August '98, p204

Price £39.99 Contact Starfish 0181 875 4455 nended Goldmine 4 Price £229 Contact AVG 0171 335 2222 (PCW August '98)

REMOTE ACCESS

Traveling Software LapLink Tech

The high-end version of this extremely versatile product, LapLink Tech, has all the features of the standard version but also lets you print from the host machine onto a remote printer, or vice versa, and talk to whoever is using the host machine. It includes anti-virus and hard-disk cloning utilities.



PCW December '98, p233

Price £169.95 Contact Traveling Software 01344 383232

Also Recommended Symantec pcAnywhere Price £75.08 Contact Symantec 0171 616 5600 (PCW December '98)

PROGRAMMING TOOL

Symantec Visual Café 2

Visual Café 2 is the most productive visual Java tool out there and has the option of nativecode compilation for Windows. Windows developers should go for Borland Delphi 3 which, although more complex, comes into its own on larger applications.



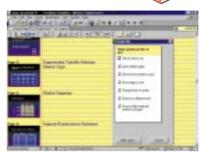
PCW April '98, p177

Price from £79 Contact Symantec 0171 616 5600 Also Recommended Borland Delphi 3 Price £95.18 Contact Borland 01734 320022 (PCW April '98)

PRESENTATION GRAPHICS

Lotus Freelance 97

This is our choice for electronic presentations. For you it may also come down to which office suite you own or are considering, but as part of Microsoft Office 97, PowerPoint won't let you down.



PCW March '98, p200

Price £49.35 Contact Lotus 01784 445808 ended MS PowerPoint 97 Price £325.47 Contact Microsoft 0345 002000 (PCW March '98)

WEB DESIGN

Adobe

PageMill 3.0

Ease of use is the key and PageMill takes this to the nth degree. Frames can be dragged into position from the borders and alterations are made in a contextsensitive dialog box. Even a child could create a web presence with this package.



Price £92.83 Contact Adobe 0181 606 4000 Also recommended Fusion 3.0 Price £233.83 Contact NetObjects 01189 829822 • Homesite 4.0 Price £88.13 Contact Allaire 01638 569600 (both PCW, March '99)

Anti-Virus

Norton AntiVirus 4.0

Norton AntiVirus 4.0 is our choice for protecting your PC. It offers the best combination of features, ease of use and performance. Its virus detection rate is first class and there are free online updates for the life of the product.

PCW April '98, p124





Price £49 Contact Symantec 0171 616 5600
Also Recommended Dr Solomon's HomeGuard Price £29 Contact Dr Solomon's 01296 318700 (PCW April '98)

Faxback Service

Missed a feature or a review? Try our 24-hour faxback service.

Updated every month, our easy-to-use Faxback service gives you instant access to a complete range of product reviews, features and workshops via your fax machine.

To use the service, simply follow the instructions below. Calls are charged at 50p per minute at all times, with an average duration of four minutes.

Our service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. (The faxback service is not available outside the UK.)

1 From the choices below, select the article(s) you wish to receive. Note the number of pages in the article.

2 Using the handset on your fax machine, dial 0660 600632. If you do not have a handset, press the fax machine's On Hook or Telephone button, then enter 0660 600632 on the keypad.

There will be a vocal introduction to the Faxback service which will ask you to enter the code of the article(s) you require. The voice will then ask you to press the Start / Send button on your fax machine.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

For the faxback service to work correctly, you must be referring to the current issue of *Personal Computer World*, and have your machine set to use tone dialling (you may need to switch your machine from "pulse" to "tone"). If you

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300MHz Celeron vs AMD K6-2 3DNow!	October-98	12	2003
450MHz PCs	November-98	11	2004
Undercover PC group test	December-98	20	2005
Xeon server round-up	December-98	4	2006
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Sound cards	July-98	11	2104
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PCW Faxback number: 0660 600632

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PCW Faxback number: 0660 600632



Order form

DON'T FORGET THE ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS ORDER FORM.
SEE THIS MONTH'S CD-ROM.

Use this form when you order by phone, fax or post.

ALWAYS KEEP A COPY!

SUPPLIER'S DETAILS		CUSTOMER DET	CUSTOMER DETAILS NAME COMPANY ADDRESS			
COMPANY		NAME				
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SIGNED	DATE/	DAYTIME TELEPHONE	NUMBER			