

Dear Santa...

Give us a wish for Christmas...



PCW'S WRITERS ARE DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS, WHITE WITH A CAPITAL IT. SO HERE'S WHAT THEY HAVE ASKED CYBER-SANTA TO DROP DOWN THEIR VIRTUAL CHIMNEYS THIS YEAR. DREAM ON RUDOLPH...

WHAT WOULD Christmas be without presents? A time to get drunk, eat too much and fight with your in-laws, that's what. But don't worry – the PCW team is here to give you some inspiration as to what gifts you should have your eye on this time around.

We sent each member of the team on a present-finding mission to seek out the ideal gifts for anyone who values their stylish anorak over any other worldly possession.

Over the next few pages the greedy hacks here at PCW outline what

they would most like to get their mitts on this Christmas. And they should know, they've used and abused them over the past year, all in the name of good honest reviewing.

The sexy goods range from a £25 book to a £7,500 42in Plasma screen, but like all good presents, the products have not been chosen on the basis of practicality or value for money, but on pure desirability.

So forget the pair socks from your mum, the jumper knitted by your grandma and the sensible shoes from your dad, sit back and lust over the best technology goods available to buy this Christmas.

Riyad Emeran

It's been a good year for the gadget junkie and I fall firmly into this category. Sony has refined its production of consumer electronic devices into an art over the years and two of the three items on my wish list come from this giant of Japanese industry.

First on the list is Sony's Memory Stick Walkman. In the middle of all the hype over MP3 personal music players with solid state memory, Sony has introduced its own slant on the concept. Using Sony's own Memory Stick solid state memory, this little beauty sports the dimensions of only 37x96.3x19.2mm (wxhxd) and weighs in at 65g including the battery. Turning its back on MP3, Sony has opted for its own ATRAC compression system for the Memory Stick Walkman which is already widely used by MiniDisc, and is of superior quality to MP3.



While on the subject of quality, I'd also like one of Sony's Super Audio Compact Disc players. The SCD-1 is a top-of-the-range player that takes advantage of the new Direct Stream Digital recording method for a more realistic sound stage. The SCD-1 is also backward compatible with standard PCM music CDs, but when playing an SACD, the quality is nothing short of staggering.

My third and final selection is Sega's new Dreamcast games console. This cutting-edge games machine is based on a 200MHz CPU, backed up by the PowerVR2 graphics subsystem from NEC/VideoLogic. The games are stored on proprietary 1.2GB optical discs and the joypads have both digital and analog controllers. You can be sure that the



Dreamcast will sport the most impressive video games you can buy, at least until the Playstation 2 appears that is.

PCW DETAILS

Memory Stick Walkman

Price Approx £250

Contact Only available in Japan at present www.sony.com

SCD-1

Price £2,700 (£2,297.87 ex VAT)

Contact Sony UK 0990 111 999

www.sony-europe.com

Dreamcast

Price £199 (£169.36 ex VAT)

Contact Sega UK

www.sega.com/console/index.shtmleur.com

Niall Magennis

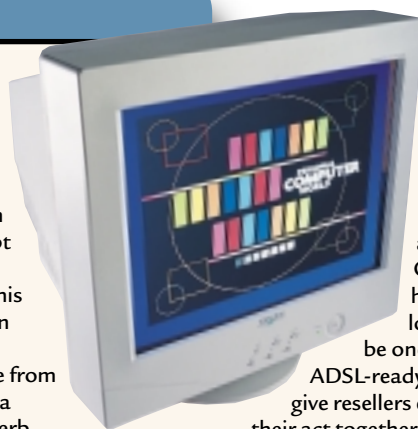
Being a bit of an audio freak, I'd really love Santa to leave a Maxi Studio ISIS sound card from Guillemot under the Christmas tree. This has eight analog inputs and four outputs all with 20bit resolution, making it ideal for turning your PC into a home recording studio. On top of this it also offers digital in and out in both optical and coaxial jack flavours for interfacing with a DAT machine and midi in, out and thru sockets. It even has a built-in synthesiser offering 64 voices. But what makes it really ideal for the bedroom studio is its ASIO drivers which, due to reduced latency, make audio sequencers such as Cubase VST and Logic Audio much more responsive.

Because I'd be using my PC more



due to the new sound card, I'd also need a new monitor. My old Samsung 15in is getting a bit long in the tooth, so I'd opt for the Ergovision 980 from Taxan. This is based on the 19in Natural Flat Diamondtron Tube from Mitsubishi and, as a result, it offers superb image quality, both in terms of geometry and colour. It's reasonably priced and even includes a USB hub with two ports on the left and right side of the base.

My last choice is made entirely out of frustration. I'm so fed up with the poor quality of the phone line in my house – it won't connect at anything over 33.6Kbit/sec – that I am desperately looking forward to BT upgrading my local exchange to ADSL. I live in



London, and BT was meant to have started the upgrade process around London in October, so I'm hoping that my local exchange will be one of the first to be ADSL-ready. This might just give resellers enough time to get their act together to offer ADSL services for Christmas.

PCW DETAILS

Guillemot Maxi Studio ISIS

Price £229.99 (£195.74 ex VAT)

Contact Guillemot 0181 686 5600

www.guillemot.com

ADSL

Price Around £40 per month

Contact www.bt.com/adsl/

Taxan Ergovision 980

Price £556.95 (£474 ex VAT)

Contact Taxan 01344 484 646

www.taxan.co.uk

Nik Rawlinson

We've seen so many flash gadgets pass through the PCW office this year that it really is difficult to pick just three items I'd like to find at the foot of my bed on Christmas morning.

I'd pick a Psion Series 5mx if I didn't already have one, so instead I'll opt for 3Com's brand new Palm IIIe. This shares the same first-class screen found on the PalmV and PalmIIIx and has enough built-in memory to organise my life for the next five years (that's 2MB, in case you were wondering). It's also see-through, although don't expect to see it do much – the insides have no moving parts so it's more of a novelty factor than anything else.

So, that's the toe of my stocking filled. For the middle I'm going to need something good and bulky to really fill it out.

The Fujitsu Stylistic LT should do nicely. This modular desktop-cum-pen pad allows you to take handwritten notes on the move right inside Windows 98 applications and then drop them on the server by popping it into the LAN-enabled docking station when you return to your desk. It certainly drew some admiring glances when it

arrived in our offices.

To finish with, as there's still plenty of winter left, I'll opt for a book to see me through the long cold nights. Philip and Alex's *Guide to Web Publishing* is a first-

class example of how to make a potentially dull subject inspiring and visually stimulating. Philip is a keen photographer, you see, as well as being on the staff of MIT, so his many pages of indispensable wisdom are peppered with examples of his work. Not only an essential resource for the keen web publisher, but an attractive one, too.

PCW DETAILS

3Com Palm IIIe Special Edition

Price £199.99 (£170.20 ex VAT)

Contact Palm 0800 731 1064

www.palm-europe.com

Fujitsu Stylistic LT

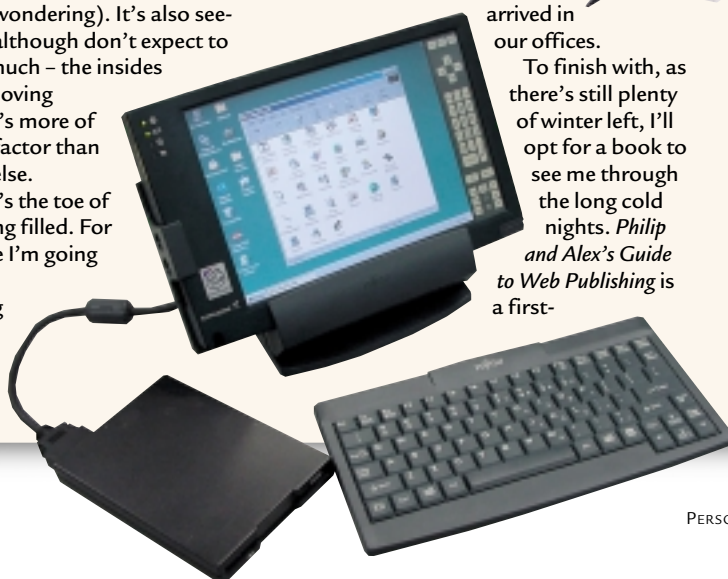
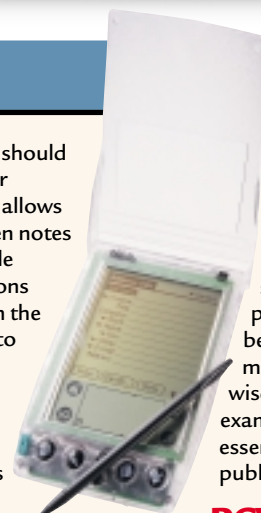
Price £2,606.15 (£2,218 ex VAT)

Contact Fujitsu Personal Systems 0181 573 4444

www.fujitsu.com

Philip and Alex's Guide to Web Publishing by Philip Greenspun

Price £24.95 ISBN 1558605347



Dear Santa...

Jason Jenkins

For me, Christmas day is about having fun, and Microsoft's Midtown Madness is just that. Taking control of a wide range of vehicles, you get to rattle around the major US cities at breathtaking speeds for no better reason than reaching checkpoints before your computer-controlled opponents. You can also choose to just take part in a straight race against the clock or drive round the city at your leisure. With great graphics, a pumping soundtrack and gameplay that's a cinch to get to grips with, the petrol-

head fun will keep you glued to your monitor for hours. To really



get the atmosphere going for Midtown Madness, I'd need some serious speakers and VideoLogic's DigiTheatre would certainly fit the bill. A grand total of five speakers, subwoofer, integrated six-channel amplifier and surround sound decoder is ample, not just for games, but also for the sonic thrills of the current Hollywood blockbusters. Both optical and S/P-DIF connections are included and the degree of control you can exert over the settings for each speaker is vast. Excellent sound quality at a fair price makes this system a must-have.

But to feel really decadent on the day I'd want NEC's new 42in plasma widescreen monitor, the PlasmaSync 4210W. A snip at only £6,500. NEC claims that its third-generation 42in screen features the world's thinnest panel. At only 91mm, it'd be hard not to believe this to be true. It accepts all the common signals such as PAL, NTSC and can even accept SVGA output from a PC.

If you want to use it for massive presentations, then it supports



resolutions up to 1,024x768 at 60Hz. Add some standalone speakers and you've got something that others will envy. Dream on Jason

PCW DETAILS

Midtown Madness

Price £34.99 (£29.78 ex VAT)

Contact Microsoft 0345 002000

www.microsoft.com/games

Videologic DigiTheatre

Price £249 (£211.91 ex VAT)

Contact Videologic 01923 277 488

www.videologic.com

NEC

Price £7,637.50 (£6,500 ex VAT)

Contact NEC 0645 404020

www.nec.com

Will Head

The first thing I will be asking Santa for this Christmas is one of Nokia's gorgeous new phones. Next year's must-have technology accessory is the wonderful 7110, featuring the first WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) browser in a phone. This will allow you not only to access the Internet but also to have content delivered in a suitable format for displaying on the small screen of a mobile phone – say goodbye to carrying around PC Card adaptors, three meters of cabling and a notebook. The phone will have everything you'll need on the

move, in a handset no bigger than today's current crop of mini mobiles. Even better, the slide mechanism is spring-loaded so it will shoot open at the click of a button.

For those times when I will need a full web browser and email software on the move, I think I'll opt for Psion's new Revo PDA. The Revo features sleek styling, it's small in size (about the size of a glasses case) and should link up to the 7110 nicely via infra red. The screen on the Revo is absolutely outstanding and as it runs Epoc you get a superb suite of applications on a stable platform.

Finally, as I want to put my feet up a bit over Christmas, I've decided that a nice, simple-to-configure server would be the thing to get.

Cobalt's Qube 2 is the ideal machine for those who want the



reliability of Linux without the hassle. The machine is only 18.4x18.4x19.7cm, looks like some contemporary accessory you would purchase from Habitat and consumes only 25w of power. It is configured entirely through a web browser, and the new version features a PCI slot, faster processor and large hard drive.

PCW DETAILS

Nokia 7110

Price Approx £200

Contact Nokia 01480 434 343

www.nokia.com

Psion Revo

Price £299 (£254.47 ex VAT)

Contact Psion 0990 143050

www.psion.com

Cobalt Micro Qube 2

Price From £1,034 (£880 ex VAT)

Contact Mintra 0161 256 4030

www.cobaltmicro.com

