

# Give us a wish for Christmas...

DEAR SANTA,  
PLEASE SEND EACH OF  
US OUR PRESENTS.  
WE PROMISE TO BE  
GOOD, RIGHT THROUGH  
NEXT YEAR.

**BEST WISHES,  
ALL AT PCW.**

It's the same story every year. You promise yourself that *this time* you are going to do your Christmas shopping early. Then, as it hits you that it's already Christmas Eve, you realise you can afford none of the presents on the Christmas lists you've been given. Worse, you haven't a clue what to buy as cheaper alternatives. So, as this is effectively PCW's Christmas issue, even though it has

January's cover date, we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to help you out of your shopping dilemma and into inspiration on the gift front.

**On these pages,** each writer on the PCW team has drawn up their list for Santa and selected three (although some greedy hacks wanted four or more!) items they would like to find in their Christmas stocking.

The products have been chosen from the various bits of kit that each writer has had the opportunity to get their mitts on, or has dreamt of getting their mitts on, during 1998. So forget the box of soaps or jar of pickled oranges and read on for some of the best technology to buy (or receive) this Christmas.

• Please note: Each item has been chosen purely on the basis of major desirability!

## Gordon Laing

During 1998 I've been turned on by developments in convergence and mobile communications. Having previously resisted relinquishing my trusty WH Smith narrow-ruled notebooks, I finally took the electronic plunge and I'm now I'm a Psion Series 5 evangelist. Sure, the screen is appalling under poor lighting conditions, but why use it in a dingy room when you could be outside? I've found myself banging out literally thousands of words on that great keyboard

while perched on a variety of park benches, and even in my parents' back garden — I wish they'd let me back in for dinner, though.

For mobile comms, Ericsson's SH-888 dual-band phone has built-in hardware which allows it to work straight away with any IrDA-compliant infrared device, including my Series 5.

In the home theatre DVD is finally beginning to look good, with decent titles employing high bit-rates and anamorphic widescreen. The most promising UK player this year is Pioneer's DV-717 with DTS audio compatibility and RGB on the SCART, due out this December.

**Top of my Christmas list,** after a naughty all-region modification, is a decent display. The best I've seen is one of Sony's 32in widescreen sets employing the perfectly flat FD Trinitron tube. Some models feature VGA inputs for true convergence.



**My final wish** is that Santa bullies the Digital TV broadcasters to use higher bit-rates and 5.1 digital surround sound, at least on premium-rate digital movie channels: James Bond should look and sound his best on Christmas Day.

## PCW DETAILS

### Psion Series 5

**Price** around £430

**Contact** Psion 0990 143050

[www.pSION.co.uk](http://www.pSION.co.uk)

### Ericsson SH-888

**Price** around £159 (inc subscription)

**Contact** Ericsson 0990 237237

[www.ericsson.co.uk](http://www.ericsson.co.uk)

### Pioneer DV-717

**Price** around £650

**Contact** Pioneer 01753 789789

[www.pioneer-eur.com](http://www.pioneer-eur.com)

### Sony 32FD1

**Price** around £2,800

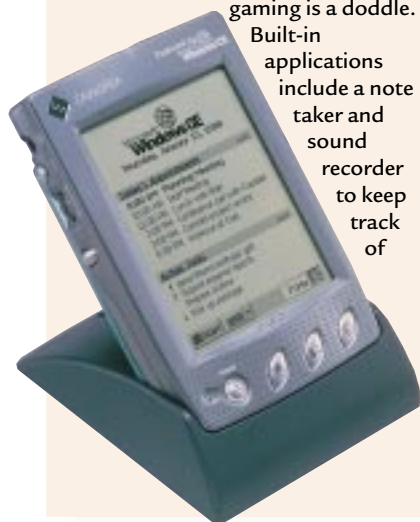
**Contact** Sony 0990 111999

[www.sony-europe.com](http://www.sony-europe.com)



## Nik Rawlinson

I suppose a puppy and a Chocolate Orange are out of the question? Hmm... I'll have to settle for something more practical, then. A PDA would certainly fit in a stocking, so how about a Cassiopeia E-11? These snazzy pen-based WinCE devices are small enough to fill the palm of your hand, and with an IrDA port on top, transferring data or engaging in two-player



gaming is a doddle. Built-in applications include a note taker and sound recorder to keep track of

your thoughts while you are on the move. And, all the software available on the net should keep me going until next Christmas.

I reckon I could easily fit a pager into the toe end of my stocking, so for a stylish start to the new year I'll opt for a Zero Zero from Vodafone. Just 6.6 x 4.35cm in size, it will clip on to a belt or slip into a pocket, and, coming in a choice of five stylish finishes, I'll not be shy to get it out in public. Software for paging straight from a PC can be freely downloaded from the Zap! web site, making it even easier for friends to stay in touch.

**For my third Christmas wish** I'm rather inclined to pick Encarta 99 to while away the long winter evenings and keep me up to date on the things I should know. Instead, though, I think I'll see if I can stretch



the open end of the stocking a bit wider and squeeze in a BayGen wind-up radio, just to prove that PCW journalists do have a life away from computers. The ultimate green product, less than a minute's winding will give a full hour of aural stimulation.

## PCW DETAILS

### Casio E-11

**Price** £299 (£254.47 ex VAT)

**Contact** Casio 0181 450 9131

[www.casio.co.uk](http://www.casio.co.uk)

### Vodafone Zero Zero Pager

**Price** £59.99 (£51.06 ex VAT)

**Contact** Vodafone 0800 101112

[www.zapit.co.uk](http://www.zapit.co.uk)

### BayGen Radio

**Price** £59.95 (£51.02 ex VAT) for the model illustrated here

**Contact** BayGen 0800 731 3052

[www.purleyradio.co.uk/baygen/](http://www.purleyradio.co.uk/baygen/)

## Etelka Clark

I can think of nothing better than a machine that you could use not only as a PC, but also as a TV, games arcade, music system and home cinema. A year ago I reviewed a PC that featured all of the above. Equipped with a DVD drive, Dolby surround sound, projector and screen, as well as two DVD movies and countless other pieces of PC software, I remain entranced with the Tiny Home Cinema System. Boy, did I feel sad when I had to give it back! One year on, and nothing else has come close.

I love products that are labelled as one thing

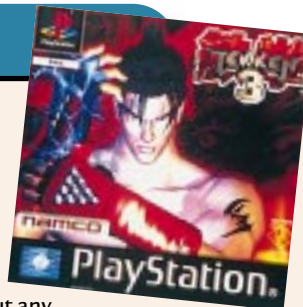
but turn out to have a million other uses: the Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness World Atlas falls



into this category. Reviewed in our July '98 issue, it calls itself an atlas, but really it contains so much more than just maps. You can learn virtually anything about any country: from economics, resources and environment to tourism, education and politics. You can take narrated "flights", based on satellite pictures, through the skies and above the land from the north coast of Australia to the treetops of the Amazon Basin. Available in both PC and DVD format, this atlas is breathtaking and beats every other.

**The best all-in-one deal** for Christmas must be the MotoCross Madness bundle. For only £49.99, you get the brilliant, new Freestyle Pro joystick for control with a flick of the wrist, and a copy of the game [review, PCW December '98].

One last thing, for those with a Sony PlayStation and a love of Tekken. Don't miss out on the third version, in the shops now.



The graphics have been dramatically improved and there are lots of new characters with whom to battle it out.

## PCW DETAILS

### Tiny Home Cinema System

**Price** £1,409 (£1,199 ex VAT)

**Contact** Tiny Computers 0800 821333 [www.tinycomp.co.uk](http://www.tinycomp.co.uk)

### Eyewitness World Atlas

**Price** £29.99

**Contact** Dorling Kindersley 0870 010 0350 [www.dk.com](http://www.dk.com)

### MotoCross Madness and Freestyle Pro

**Price** £49.99 (bundle)

**Contact** Microsoft 0345 002000 [www.microsoft.com/games](http://www.microsoft.com/games)

### Tekken III

**Price** £44.99

**Contact** Sony 0171 447 1600 [www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)



## David Fearon

**S**tarting from the unfeasible end of the scale, at the top of my wish list is Sony's gorgeous Vaio PCG-505G sub-notebook. This will be the ideal Christmas gift because all of its silvery bits will reflect the fairy lights and make it twinkle.

Next up is Lego's Mindstorms system. This blends loads of new high-tech bits, including sensor switches and a central CPU that you can program via an infra-red link to your PC, with the good-old knobby plastic bricks, cogs and axles that I remember from my carefree, childhood, days.

I've been waiting a long time for a reasonably small PDA with built-in wireless comms and it looks as if the coming Bluetooth



standard could be the answer to my prayers, but there are no products available yet.

**While I'm waiting** for a Bluetooth-enabled PalmPilot, the next item on my list has to be Nokia's new 9110 Communicator integrated mobile phone and PDA which replaces the original 9000. It's small enough to be pocketable, it has an embedded 486 processor, and it's a lot more stylish than the old one. Being a Nokia, the phone side of the equation should be pretty good, too.

Finally, I want a Qube microserver from Cobalt Micro. Not so much to use, but to put somewhere prominent and prove to my friends that nerdy things can look cool.

In fact, it looks so pretty and it's so small, I could even try hanging it on the Christmas tree.



## PCW DETAILS

**Sony PCG505G**

**Price** £2,300 (£1,959 ex VAT)

**Contact** Sony 0870 240 2408

[www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)

**Lego Mindstorms**

**Price** £160 (£136 ex VAT)

**Contact** Lego 0845 606 2043

[www.legomindstorms.com](http://www.legomindstorms.com)

**Nokia Communicator 9110**

**Price** (Not yet available in the UK)

**Contact** [www.nokia.com](http://www.nokia.com)

**Cobalt Micro Qube**

**Price** From £998 (£849 ex VAT)

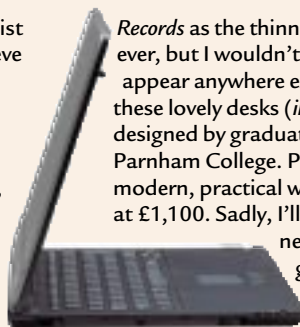
**Contact** Mintra 0161 256 4030

[www.cobaltmicro.com](http://www.cobaltmicro.com)

## Susan Pederson

**T**his year, my Christmas wish list centres on my desire to achieve some style as well as substance. A little more Conran, a little less Courts — you know the kind of thing. Number one on my must-have list is the Mitsubishi Pediton, a devastatingly stylish notebook that is a mere 18mm thick and weighs 1.45kg. The 266MHz MMX Pediton has a 13.3in TFT screen, 64Mb RAM and a 1Gb hard disk, as well as an optional "media pack" docking station with 20X CD-ROM drive and floppy drive. Santa will have to have deep pockets to buy this slimline beauty.

The Pediton will be appearing in the 1999 Guinness Book of World



*Records* as the thinnest notebook ever, but I wouldn't want it to appear anywhere except on one of these lovely desks (*illustrated, below*) designed by graduates from Parnham College. Prices for their modern, practical workstations start at £1,100. Sadly, I'll have to buy a new flat that's good enough to house such lovely furniture.

**Once the removal men** have cleared out and the dust has settled, I'll need only one other piece of equipment resting on my minimalist worktop: the Olympus C-1400L. At the price, it's not exactly the cheapest digital camera around but feels great in the hand and gives high-quality results. The C-1400L has a 3X zoom and the equivalent of a 36-110mm lens on a 35mm camera. It also provides resolutions of up to 1280x1024.

Oh, and while the Bewhiskered One is at it, he might as well throw in a copy of the fiendishly addictive Worms II, as well. So cute, so pink...

so evil. For only £29.99, Worms is a positively cheap way to spend the holidays — and a girl's got to have some fun, after all.



## PCW DETAILS

**Mitsubishi Pediton**

**Price** £2,349 (£1,999 ex VAT)

**Contact** Mitsubishi 0800 212422

[www.mitsubishi-computers.com](http://www.mitsubishi-computers.com)

**Parnham College computer desks**

**Price** From £1,100

**Contact** Parnham College  
01308 862204

**Olympus C1400-L**

**Price** £1,526 (£1,299.99 ex VAT)

**Contact** Olympus 0171 253 0513

[www.olympus.com](http://www.olympus.com)

**Worms II**

**Price** £29.99

**Contact** Team 17; 01924 267776

[www.worms2.com](http://www.worms2.com)



## Dear Santa...

Adele Dyer

**M**y mother always told me I ought to marry a rich man, and sorting out my Christmas wish list, I realise she was probably right. I have *very* expensive tastes.

It's time to soup up my PC. I need a new processor, a larger hard disk, an upgraded motherboard, case and RAM... OK, a new machine. But if I'm upgrading, then I'd like an LCD screen: no more flicker, no wasted space, and it's much easier on the eye. The lovely

18in Eizo FlexScan L66 would fit the bill nicely.

While I'm at it, I'd really like a thin, light-weight notebook.

Like everyone else in the PCW office I was



impressed by the Sony PCG-505G, but then again, the HP Sojourn and the Mitsubishi Pédion also caught my eye, as did the Digital

Ultra Hi-Note 2000, now called the Compaq Armada

6500. All are very slim without sacrificing usability.

**A digital camera** features high on my list and the latest Kodak DC260 Pro would be perfect. It costs £900, but it has a very high resolution (1536x1024) and comes with a wealth of features. Or, if Santa is feeling mean, I could make do with Kodak's DC200 for only £300.

Finally, I will have Microsoft Money 99 to help me keep track of all the money I'll be spending this Christmas.



### PCW DETAILS

#### Compaq Armada 6500

**Price** £3,954 (£3,395 ex VAT)

**Contact** Compaq 0845 270 4000

[www.compaq.co.uk](http://www.compaq.co.uk)

#### Eizo FlexScan L66

**Price** £2,784 (£2,369 ex VAT)

**Contact** PDS 01483 719500

[www.eizo.co.uk](http://www.eizo.co.uk)

#### Hewlett-Packard Sojourn

**Price** £3,230 (£2,749 ex VAT)

**Contact** Hewlett-Packard

0990 474747 [www.hp.com](http://www.hp.com)

#### Sony PCG-505G

**Price** £2,300 (£1,959 ex VAT)

**Contact** Sony 0870 240 2408

[www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)

#### Kodak DC200 / Kodak DC260

**Price** DC200: £300 (£255 ex VAT).

DC260: £900 (£767 ex VAT)

**Contact** Kodak 0800 281487

[www.kodak.co.uk](http://www.kodak.co.uk)

#### Microsoft Money 99

**Price** £49.99 (£42.54 ex VAT)

**Contact** Microsoft 0345 002000

[www.microsoft.com/uk](http://www.microsoft.com/uk)

Clive Akass

**L**ast year's crop of mini-notebooks changed my mind on mobile design. None had a keyboard better than the Psion Series 5 handheld's, and not one could be pocketed, so what was the point of making them so small? Far more important is to have a device light enough to carry, with easy input and a reasonable battery life. Which is why I fell instantly in love with Sony's Vaio PCG 505G. It weighs barely more than a paperback and slips easily into a shoulder bag. So yes, Santa, I want one, I want one.

My second choice is a Kodak DC260 Pro digital camera. It has a 1.6 megapixel sensor and a 3X zoom (6X with a digital extender),

a USB port for quick downloading, and scripting capability. A burst mode allows up to eight pictures to



be taken in rapid sequence (many digicams require half a minute between shots). The 260 comes with two 16Mb flash cards, but I think Santa should throw in a few more.

**My third present** is a cheat, as it's really three in one. Fender, Roland and Cakewalk have collaborated on developing MIDI guitar software and hardware. Fender has launched its Roland Ready Stratocaster, fitted with a Roland GK-2A pickup which can be switched between MIDI and standard mode. This just happens to need a Roland GI-10 MIDI-conversion box. It takes other pickups but Roland says tracking is best with the GK-2A. The nice thing

about the GI-10 is that it will take a mic input, too: plug it into your sound card and you can sing with the sound of a thousand violins.

### PCW DETAILS

#### Fender Roland-Ready Stratocaster

**Price** £599.95 (£510.60 ex VAT)

**Contact** UK dealer Arbiter

0181 202 1199 [www.fender.com](http://www.fender.com)

#### GK-2A / GI-10

**Price** GK-2A: £136 (£115.74 ex

VAT); £99 (£84.25 ex VAT) for an

internal fitting. GI-10: £440 (£374.47

ex VAT). But check out a bundling deal.

**Contact** Roland 01792 515020

[www.roland.co.uk](http://www.roland.co.uk)

#### Kodak DC 260 Pro

**Price** £900 (£767 ex VAT)

**Contact** Kodak 0800 281487

[www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)

#### Sony PCG505G

**Price** £2,300 (£1,959 ex VAT)

**Contact** Sony 0870 240 2408

[www.sony.com](http://www.sony.com)

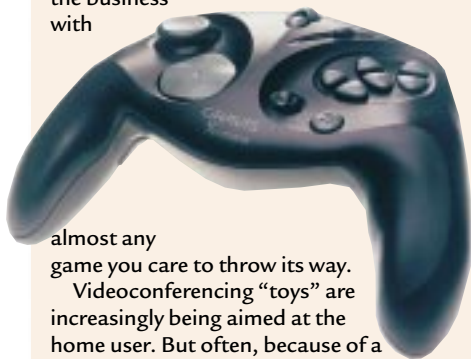




## Dear Santa...

Paul Trueman

**T**was the night before Christmas when all round the house, not a thing stirred... apart from the sound of me blasting the living daylights out of everything with my Gravis Xterminator! The first present on my wish list transformed my game playing when I reviewed it, and offers everything the joystick-weary gamer could wish for. Digitally programmable, an ergonomic dream, plus enough buttons with which to kick intergalactic butt, this pad does the business with



almost any game you care to throw its way.

Videoconferencing "toys" are increasingly being aimed at the home user. But often, because of a poor picture and poor frame rate, it isn't a good idea to get one.

However, a couple of Kodak DVC323s would do very nicely, thank you very much.

This great, affordable camera is the business if, in the words of Billy Baldwin in the film *Sliver*, "you like to watch." It's a dream to set up, it uses the snazzy new USB port, and the picture quality is surprisingly impressive, given its price.



**My final choice** is the most fanciful. A Sega DreamCast. Yes, yes, they're just out in Japan (November) and, fingers crossed, they'll be out in the UK next September. All the suckers might be buying PlayStations at knockdown prices, and good luck to 'em, but the Sony console is yesterday's technology and the price has only been reduced because Sony is milking the last of its cash cow. The DreamCast will be

three times more powerful than even the latest arcade machines, and Sega has shown that it has learned from the lessons of the disastrous Saturn. The trip over to Tokyo to buy it, of course, will be the icing on my Christmas cake.

## PCW DETAILS

**Gravis Xterminator**

**Price** £39.95

**Contact** Gravis 0800 252359

[www.accoeurope.com](http://www.accoeurope.com)

**Kodak DVC323**

**Price** £159.99 (£136.16 ex VAT)

**Contact** Kodak 0800 281487

[www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)

**Sega Dreamcast**

**Price** Out now in Japan at ¥29,800 (£146). Due out in the UK Sept '99

**Contact** Sega [www.sega-europe.com](http://www.sega-europe.com)

Ajith Ram

**I**'d like a little Marvel for Christmas. This all-in-one entertainment solution is built on Matrox's 128-bit chipset. It's an excellent 2D/3D graphics card which turns into a video capture card. Users can plug their VCRs and camcoders directly into Marvel's breakout box to capture full-screen video in MJPEG format, and edit it using the bundled Avid Cinema software. There is a built-in TV tuner and motion compensation for DVD playback, too.

Also on my list is the SoundBlaster Live! sound card. Built around the EMU 101K chipset, the SB Live! is a

tremendous improvement over other sound cards. Due to its powerful processor, it



can support up to 512 MIDI voices simultaneously. It also handles 32 DirectSound 3D streams in hardware and has its own API, called Environmental Audio Extensions, which helps games developers add realistic sound effects. The card comes with a good collection of music-editing software and a copy of the popular game, Unreal.

**My stocking is nearly full**, but there's room enough for the Wicked 3D Voodoo2 graphics card. While other Voodoo2 cards are limited to a resolution of 800x600, the Wicked 3D board supports resolutions up to 1024x672.

If two Wicked 3D boards are put together in SLI mode, the resolution rises to 1280x1024. It supports WickedVision, too, so when used with stereoscopic glasses, WickedVision transforms most Direct3D,

OpenGL games into true holographic ones. The Wicked 3D board is the fastest Voodoo2 card in Direct3D applications.

## PCW DETAILS

**Marvel G200**

**Price** £199 (£169 ex VAT)

**Contact** Matrox 01753 665533

[www.matrox.com](http://www.matrox.com)

**SoundBlaster Live!**

**Price** £149 (£126 ex VAT)

**Contact** Creative Labs

01245 265265 [www.sblive.com](http://www.sblive.com)

**Wicked 3D Voodoo2**

**Price** £139 (£118 ex VAT)

**Contact** Henderson I.D; 01256

333975 [www.wicked3d.com](http://www.wicked3d.com)

