Windows CE in a sub-notebook is probably all you need, on the road.

CE, it makes sense

A PC for £499 (ex VAT)? After the heady and often expensive celebrations of the season, we thought we'd see what kind of system you could get at this rock-bottom price. The ten entry-level PCs we tested in our labs may be no match for a state-of-the-art system costing nearer £2,000, but if you want to run standard office applications, send email and get on the net, they're more than adequate. In fact, you'll be surprised at how good they actually were. Turn to our group test on page 162 to find out more.

Decent PCs at reasonable prices are good news for everyone, but the product I'm most excited about is Hewlett-Packard's Jornada. From the outside it may look like one of the new breed of super-slim sub-notebooks, yet rather than squeeze a PC inside, HP has instead opted to run the latest version of Windows CE, the operating system normally found on handheld, pocket-sized portables.

When you think about it, CE makes total sense on any portable computer. Running from an efficient ROM, it starts almost instantly and requires neither a power-hungry hard disk nor expensive components to manage its day-to-day operations. High performance and long battery life from a portable with a low price tag? Sounds almost too good to be true. You see, until now you've only been able to buy this apparently ideal configuration in pocket-sized handhelds — nice, but hardly business workhorses. As many manufacturers attempt to produce ever smaller fully-functional portable PCs, HP has taken the CE advantage and popped it into a sub-notebook form factor, complete with a decent-sized colour screen and quite usable keyboard. You may argue that CE has a limited range of applications, but there aren't many people who use more than the basic office and email packages on the move.

> **When you think about it, CE MAKES TOTAL SENSE on any portable computer. It starts almost instantly and the batteries last for ages**

So what should you buy if you're in the market for a colour portable at around the £1,000 mark? Are you tempted by the fruits of CE, or would you be ultimately happier with what is basically a portable version of what's on your desk? It's a tricky one, so along with a full review of the Jornada in this issue, it also stars in a brand new *PCW* section: Head to Head, where we compare two products which do essentially the same job but in quite different ways. This month it's the Jornada *vs* the Acer TravelMate (a slim Windows notebook), rating the pros and cons of using CE Professional or Windows 98 on a portable. Please contact us if you have any candidates you'd like to see go head to head in future issues.

Also in this issue are group tests of laser printers and colour inkjets, a round-up of remarkably cheap and easy-to-set-up kits for building small networks, and an in-depth guide to choosing an ISP, as well as the latest news and reports from the industry's biggest show, Comdex Las Vegas. If your New Year's resolution was to start your own business or get clued up on the world of IT and PCs, here's where to start — and all the best for 1999.

Gordon Laing, Editor