

THE INDEPENDENT 17 · 23 JULY 2004

# THE INFORMATION

The essential guide to going out & staying in

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**The 50 best  
Computers**

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# THE 50 BEST COMPUTERS TO BUY

No one should have to take on the jargon-packed task of choosing a computer, and do battle with the salesman singlehanded. Technology expert **Caramel Quin** picks the machines that are not only good enough but also good-looking enough to merit a place in your home, pocket or hand-luggage.

- 10 BEST STYLE STATEMENTS
- 10 BEST LAPTOPS
- 10 BEST POWER-PACKERS
- 10 BEST POCKET-SIZE
- 10 BEST DOMESTIC

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For a collection of the ultimate guides to the better things in life, visit the 50 Best online at: www.independent.co.uk/50\_Best/

**NB:** Details were checked at the time of going to press, but prices and availability are liable to change.

E-mail: 50best@independent.co.uk

**NEXT WEEK: THE 50 BEST PHONES SPOTS AROUND BRITAIN**



**1 HOOJUM P4**  
The case is made from 3.5kg of solid aluminium, hand-polished and mirror plated in one of 13 colours. Extras include matching keyboard and mouse. You can even order a gold-plated version, probably the blingest computer in the world. Add that the machine is reasonably powerful, is whisper-quiet, and that its British maker has an environmental policy and we're officially impressed. **Basic spec:** Processor Pentium 4, 3.06GHz; memory 512MB. **Where from:** Hoojum (01753 622222; www.hoojum.com). **How much:** from £1,424.



**2 SONY PCG-TR5MP**  
Free yourself from laptop-lugging backache. This mini laptop is smaller than a sheet of A4 paper but, unlike rivals, it has every mod con built in, even a camera and a DVD recorder. Big enough to be usable, and small enough to make working on the move a doddle. It's as if an ordinary laptop got shrunk in the wash. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel Pentium M 1.1GHz; memory 512MB; hard drive 40GB. **Where from:** Sony (0870 240 2408; www.sony.co.uk). **How much:** £1,799.



**3 APPLE MAC G5**  
PC owners often sneer at Macs, but if they paid attention they'd notice that Apple is leading the way in terms of power. Geeks and speed freaks will rub their trousers at the prospect of the G5's dual 64-bit processors. Which basically means it has two very fast brains, while your average PC has one slower brain. **Basic spec:** Processor Dual 1.8GHz PowerPC G5; memory 256MB; hard drive 80GB. **Where from:** Apple (0800 039 1010; www.apple.com/uk). **How much:** from £1,449.



**4 O2 XDA II**  
A veritable Swiss army knife of a pocket gadget. This runs Pocket PC software, so it's excellent for working on PC files on the move. Plus it's a phone, offers mobile internet, and has a built-in digital camera. The only thing it doesn't have is a keyboard. If you're on Orange, the M1000 is essentially the same machine. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel XScale 400MHz; memory 128MB. **Where from:** O2 (0800 224477; www.ny-xdacom). **How much:** £349 with O2 contract.



**5 MESH MATRIX M2800+ XM**  
Good for both home office and family use, this has a generous hard drive, excellent graphics card and a space-saving flat screen. Plus it comes with an all-in-one printer, scanner and copier. A three-year warranty and "home start" option (for an extra £50 they set it up and show you how to use it) are the icing on the cake. **Basic spec:** Processor AMD Athlon XP 2800+; memory 512MB; hard drive 200GB. **Where from:** Mesh (0870 046 4747; www.meshcomputers.com). **How much:** £939.



**6 MIRRORMEDIA MM26T**  
This new innovation is the ultimate stealth PC because it's built into the back of a mirror. Turn it on and the computer display suddenly appears in place of your reflection. And it doubles as a TV. It's quirky and definitely a luxury, but it's ideal for a home where anything more modern than a mirror would seem out of place. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel Pentium III Mobile 500MHz; memory 256MB; hard drive 60GB. **Where from:** MirrorMedia (01279 466222; www.mirrormedia.com). **How much:** £4,464.



**7 PANASONIC TOUGHBOOK**  
The toughest of the business, this powerful laptop resists water, dust, shock and vibration. It's even tested to survive a 100kg drop on to concrete. So if you're an outdoor type, a road warrior or simply a butter-finger, this is the one laptop that will outlive its three-year warranty. In fact, it will probably outlive all of us. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel Pentium M 1.1GHz; memory 512MB; hard drive 40GB. **Where from:** Panasonic (0870 010 0464; www.panasonic.co.uk/toughbook). **How much:** £3,408.



**8 HOLLY KA34S-W**  
This is a near-silent supercomputer. Usually, as PCs do more brainwork, they get hotter. So manufacturers add lots of little fans to cool them down. But this is water-cooled, tubes of coolant are pumped past the hot bits instead. Which means you can work on graphics, video editing or shooting aliens without the annoying hum that computers usually have. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel Pentium 4 3.4GHz; memory 1GB; hard drive 160GB. **Where from:** Holly (0870 011 6399; www.hollycomputers.co.uk). **How much:** from £2,499.



**9 PALMONE TUNGSTEN T3**  
First it was called Palm Pilot, then Palm and now palmOne - we can't keep up! But who cares about the identity crisis? This sleek handheld, complete with slide-down bit to reveal a big colour screen, lets you work on PC files on the move. You can even use the big screen sideways. And there's an in-car navigation option. **Basic spec:** Processor Intel Xscale 400MHz; memory 64MB. **Where from:** palmOne (0118-974 2700; www.palmone.com/uk). **How much:** £270.



**10 ICEBOX**  
A truly ingenious cut-down kitchen PC. Mount it on the underside of a wall-hung kitchen cupboard and then flip down the screen to surf, listen to music or watch TV or DVDs. It's not powerful enough for work, but both the remote control and keyboard are waterproof, so if you spill spag bol on them simply rinse it off under the tap. **Basic spec:** Processor AMD Geode SC3200 266MHz; memory 128MB; hard drive n/a. **Where from:** Beyond Europe (0845 300 4310; www.beyondeurope.com). **How much:** £1,999.



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