

Inbox.com Offers Free 5GB for Webmail, Photos, and Storage

LOOK HERE FOR A NO-COST, FEATURE-RICH ALTERNATIVE TO PAID SERVICES

Inbox.com is raising the bar on web-based email, with a no-strings-attached service so functional and intuitive, it's hard to believe it's free. Pair up a feature-rich webmail service and photos module with a 5GB Internet hard drive to store just about anything, and you'll find Inbox.com is a truly impressive service that improves functionality and efficiency.

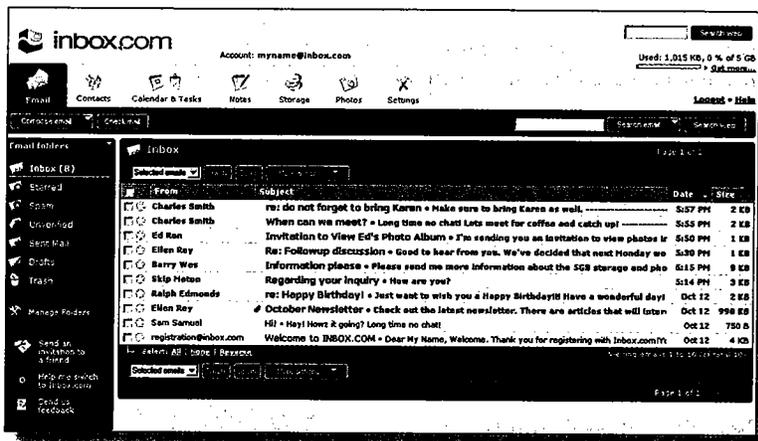
Inbox.com is full of clever features geared to enhance and streamline your webmail and online storage needs, all of which you can get for free by signing up at www.inbox.com. At no charge, you'll immediately be getting more mailbox storage capacity than paid services offer.

With a generous 5GB capacity and the ability to upload massive 50MB files at a time to file storage, while efficiently moving incoming attachments directly into online storage with a single click, Inbox.com is a pleasure to use. You can even send attachments as large as 20MB.

AN AMAZING DEAL-IT'S FREE!

Inbox.com is packed with valuable, free features designed to make quick work of tough tasks.

- ✓ **PHOTOS**—Easily store, sort, and share photos with friends and family with a photos module, which includes the ability to assign access rights and save valuable time by uploading multiple photos simultaneously.
- ✓ **INTERNET HARD DRIVE**—Extend a hard drive by mapping Inbox.com directly to a computer, plus use it for backups. And for extra capacity needs beyond the 5GB that come free, Inbox.com offers paid plans for backups and up to 30GB of storage.
- ✓ **CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE**—Busy people catch a break from a free Calendar and Task feature to help them work smarter by organizing time, enhancing productivity, and improving time and resource management.



- ✓ **SPAM AND VIRUS PROTECTION**—Gain real peace of mind with free spam and virus protection, with all messages automatically scanned for pests and predators and free Challenge/Response Spam Protection to keep your mailbox from being overrun with spam.
- ✓ **POP3 ACCESS**—Read messages offline through popular email clients such as Eudora®, Outlook®, and Thunderbird™ with POP3 access.
- ✓ **DESKTOP NOTIFIER**—Create virtual folders and quickly upload files to them with a free email desktop notifier allowing synchronization of desktop and online folders.

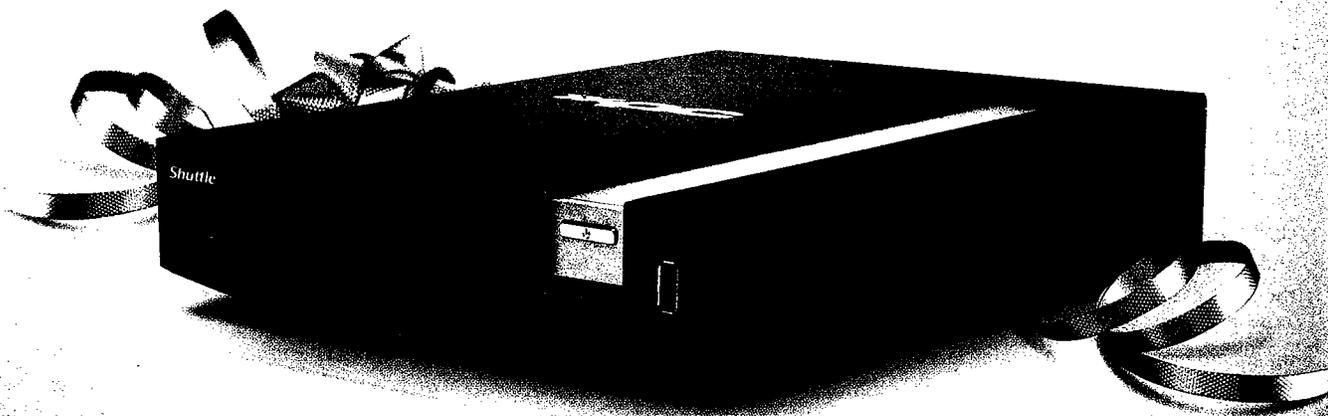
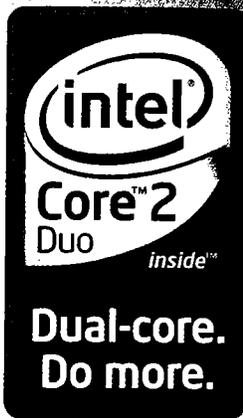
Now is the perfect time to create a simple, easy-to-remember email address such as myname@inbox.com while great selections are still available.

To learn more about the extraordinary free email and storage service from Inbox.com, visit www.inbox.com.

Inbox.com is a trademark of Inbox.com, Inc. Eudora is a registered trademark of QUALCOMM Incorporated. Outlook is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation. Thunderbird is a trademark of the Mozilla Foundation.



Shuttle[®]
Computers



The Gift That Keeps On Giving

Shuttle XPC X100

featuring the Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor

▪ 1 888 XPC 1818 ▪ www.shuttle.com ▪ find select XPC at > BestBuy

Intel Logo, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel Inside Logo, Intel SpeedStep, Intel Viv, Itanium, Itanium Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, Xeon and Xeon Inside are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.

Go to find.pcworld.com/55096

xpc
PC Made Modern

TOP 5 NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE DEVICES

Networked Hard Drives Get Media Friendly

TEST Center A NUMBER OF the 11 network-attached storage (NAS) drives that we tested for this month's chart retain business-friendly features such as multiple RAID options and easy-access bays for swapping out drives. Several new models, however, target home users, with built-in media servers and software dedicated to organizing music, photos, and movies.

Our top performer and Best Buy, Infrant Technologies' ReadyNAS NV, combines fast read and write speeds and a feature set including a print server and compatibility with UPnP media-streaming devices. This model supports RAID 0 (for striping your data across drives quickly), RAID 1 (for

mirroring your data on two drives so you don't lose it), RAID 5 (for striping your data across multiple drives while reserving some space for fault tolerance), and proprietary X-RAID technology (for expanding the RAID's capacity on the fly when you buy and install individual hard drives). Data redundancy does cut down on the hardware's usable storage, though: X-RAID lets you use only 660GB of the ReadyNAS NV's 1-terabyte capacity.

Maxtor's Shared Storage II ranked second both overall and in performance. It has a one-touch backup button and



MAXTOR'S SHARED STORAGE II combines fine performance with media-friendly features.

a slick software interface for creating and managing user accounts and folders. By default, the device sets up nine folders designated for backup,

music, documents, photos, and movies, among others.

HP's first NAS for consumers, the Media Vault mv2020, took third place. It offers an empty drive bay, has consumer-friendly print and media-server capabilities, and can automatically set up file, backup, and media folders.

Maxtor's speedy consumer NAS offering, Fusion, placed fourth. Its media-oriented software guides you in importing and sharing multimedia.

In fifth, the low-cost Ximeta NetDisk NDU10-500 was reasonably fast, but it and Plextor's PX-EH40L were the only drives we tested that lacked gigabit ethernet networking.

Among chart missers, Buffalo Technology's TeraStation Pro and TeraStation Home Server shipped with RAID 5 default settings, sacrificing speed to protect data. Likely for the same reason, Iomega's StorCenter Wireless Network Storage 1TB was slow, too; but it came with a print server, a media server, and Wi-Fi access, and let us automatically download pictures directly from a USB-equipped camera.

—Narasu Rebbapragada

ONLINE

FOR MORE INFORMATION about all 11 of the network-attached storage devices we reviewed—including details on how we tested them—go to find.pcworld.com/55290.

	NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE	PCW Rating	Performance	Features and specifications
1	Infrant Technologies ReadyNAS NV Best BUY \$1149 find.pcworld.com/52074	84 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance: Superior • Copy files: 292 seconds • File search: 301 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000GB • 7200 rpm • Gigabit ethernet • Cost per gigabyte: \$1.15
▶ Bottom line: Superfast multidrive 1TB NAS has lots of features, but its RAID configuration limits usable capacity to 660GB.				
2	Maxtor Shared Storage II \$800 NEW find.pcworld.com/55239	83 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance: Very Good • Copy files: 333 seconds • File search: 245 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000GB • 7200 rpm • Gigabit ethernet • Cost per gigabyte: \$0.80
▶ Bottom line: Superb performer with backup button, print server, and media server helps you organize media files.				
3	HP Media Vault mv2020 \$549 NEW find.pcworld.com/55243	82 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance: Good • Copy files: 366 seconds • File search: 291 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000GB • 7200 rpm • Gigabit ethernet • Cost per gigabyte: \$0.55
▶ Bottom line: HP bundles media server, printer server, and backup software in inexpensive, expandable package.				
4	Maxtor Fusion \$800 NEW find.pcworld.com/55231	74 Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance: Superior • Copy files: 283 seconds • File search: 237 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500GB • 7200 rpm • Gigabit ethernet • Cost per gigabyte: \$1.60
▶ Bottom line: Good beginner's option comes with slick-looking (but not always intuitive) software for organizing media.				
5	Ximeta NetDisk NDU10-500 \$500 NEW find.pcworld.com/55242	71 Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance: Good • Copy files: 299 seconds • File search: 122 seconds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500GB • 7200 rpm • USB 2.0, 10/100 ethernet • Cost per gigabyte: \$1.00
▶ Bottom line: Basic, inexpensive unit doubles as a USB drive and requires that an applet be installed on each PC.				

CHART NOTES: Prices and ratings are as of 10/6/06. Drive capacity may represent total space on multiple hard drives. Media server capabilities do not include media players. All drives were retested for this story.

PHOTOGRAPH: MARC SIMON

ATI Improves Its Power and Mainstream Cards

GRAPHICS BOARDS

TEST CENTER ATI'S LATEST updates to its graphics boards include a refresh of its high-end offering and the debut of an attractive midrange board that takes advantage of an older, once higher-end chip set.

I tested shipping versions of ATI's new boards, and found much to like about both.

TOP PERFORMANCE

THE MAINSTREAM card, the Radeon X1900 XT 256MB, uses the same X1900 graphics chip found in the higher-end X1900 XT released earlier this year. But it carries 256MB of memory—as opposed to the previous iteration's 512MB—and an appealing price (\$279).

This new graphics board makes a strong case for itself

as an affordable add-in that can handle complex games nearly as well as a power model at 1600 by 1200 resolution with antialiasing turned on.

The 256MB card performed quite well in our PC World Test Center's evaluation, running neck-and-neck with EVGA's e-GeForce 7900 GT KO Superclocked, the speediest unit on our *Top 5 Mainstream Graphics Boards* chart. The most perceptible difference emerged in our Battlefield 2 test, which we ran at 1600 by 1200 resolution with antialiasing turned on; there, the ATI board managed a frame rate of 73 frames per second, to the EVGA's 61 fps. The e-GeForce 7900 GT KO Superclocked listed for \$349 at press time, making the ATI board a better value.

TECH TREND

Cord-Free Skype Calls

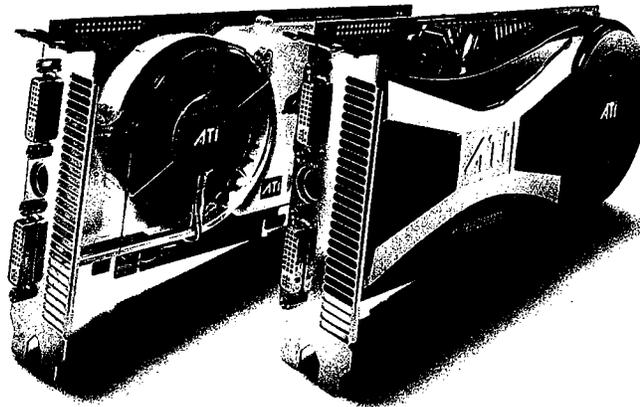
YOU DON'T NEED to be attached to your PC to use Skype's free Web-based phone service. Some new Skype-compatible phones let you roam around your house—or even farther

afraid—while talking up a storm.

The Polycm Communicator (\$130) USB speakerphone supports better sound quality than most PC headsets do. U.S. Robotics' USR9630 Cordless Skype Dual Phone (\$120) has a base station that links to your PC's USB port for accessing Skype and to your phone jack for landline calls. The handset's LCD lists your online and offline Skype contacts.

NetGear's Wi-Fi Phone for Skype (\$250) doesn't need your PC at all. It can connect directly to Skype from 802.11b/g Wi-Fi hotspots. For more info, see find.pcworld.com/55582.

—Liane Cassavoy



ATI'S NEW RADEON X1900 XT (left) and Radeon X1950 XTX boards.

GPU PIXEL POWER

IN TERMS OF GPU hardware, the Radeon X1900 XT 256MB has just as many pixel and vertex pipelines as the costlier Radeon X1950 XTX 512MB.

The X1900 XT 256MB, however, runs at a slightly slower clock speed and packs less memory. Both of the new Radeons feature a cooling fan that is two PCI slots wide and runs reasonably quietly, even during 3D operation. In addition, both boards provide HDCP-ready dual-DVI ports, and both can process high-definition video (including Blu-ray Disc and HD DVD).

Besides having more memory than its mainstream cousin, the high-performance X1950 XTX board offers the potential to graduate to a dual-graphics setup via two X1950 XTX boards in a CrossFire configuration. ATI's most significant tweak to its newest high-end board is the addition of GDDR4 memory to boost the memory clock to 1GHz. With that bandwidth at its disposal, the X1950 XTX posted impressive performance numbers, though it wasn't the fastest performer we've seen (EVGA's \$580 e-GeForce 7950 GX2 outperformed the X1950

XTX on some test measures).

Either of these ATI Radeon boards can ably handle any challenging graphics tasks you might throw its way. If you are gaming on a 30-inch wide-screen monitor or want the flexibility of expanding to a dual-graphics CrossFire configuration, you'll appreciate the power that ATI's X1950 XTX delivers—and for significantly less than its competitors cost. If your graphics needs are more modest, consider the X1900 XT 256MB, which impressed me with its performance and overall value.

—Eric Dahl

Radeon X1900 XT 256MB

ATI

PCW Rating **79** Good

Terrific budget model edged out a costlier, overclocked eVGA unit to rank as the fastest mainstream board we've tested. List: \$279 find.pcworld.com/55334

Radeon X1950 XTX 512MB

ATI

PCW Rating **83** Very Good

Top-of-the-line single-GPU performance; for even more power, add a second CrossFire board in a dual-card setup. List: \$449 find.pcworld.com/55335

ILLUSTRATION: ENRICO VARRASSO; PHOTOGRAPH: MARC SIMON

Intuit, Microsoft Accounting Add Web Services

ACCOUNTING

BOTH INTUIT AND Microsoft have updated their accounting packages for small businesses to include integration with popular Web services from online giants Google and eBay, respectively. The new features aim to boost your company's sales—assuming that it can benefit from such services.

I tested a shipping copy of Intuit's **QuickBooks Premier Edition 2007** (\$400) and a beta of Microsoft's **Office Accounting Professional 2007** (the final version will be available as a free trial by the time you read this; early next year it will cost \$149). The 2007 versions make completing tasks—particularly customizing accounting forms such as invoices—easier.

QuickBooks has long offered online financial services such as payroll; the new ver-

sion also supports marketing-related services from Google. You can list your business on Google Maps to make it convenient for local buyers to find, and you can advertise online with Google AdWords to attract new customers; a \$50 credit is included.

PLAYING CATCH-UP

OFFICE ACCOUNTING, the new name for what Microsoft called Office Small Business Accounting last year, offers fewer online services than the more mature QuickBooks. But even so, Microsoft plays a decent game of catch-up by integrating its online services into the program. In contrast, QuickBooks often relies on third-party add-ons that make the package more complex and necessitate an extra step to handle data integration.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

Upgrade to Core 2 Duo?

CAN YOU SIMPLY swap out a notebook's old Centrino processor for a new Core 2 Duo processor?

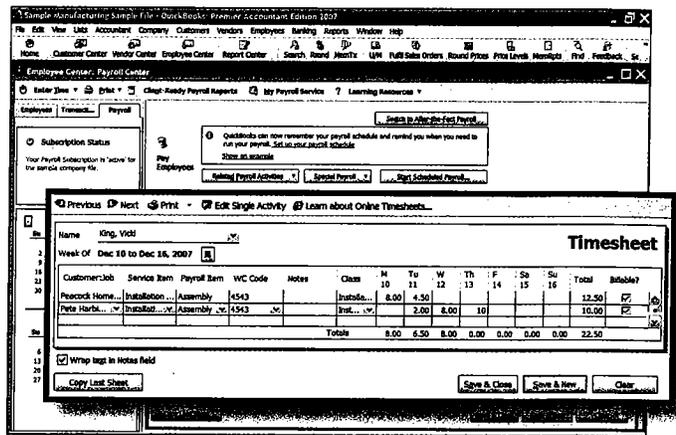
Mark via *PC World Forums* (find.pcworld.com/55315)



Senior Editor Eric Dahl responds: No. The Core 2 Duo (formerly code-named Merom) CPUs require a different chip set and socket from the ones that the Pentium M processors in Centrino notebooks must have.

Consequently, you would have to replace your motherboard before making the upgrade, effectively removing it as an option for notebook users. Desktop owners are in the same boat—chip sets for Core 2 Duo chips differ from those for Pentium D and P4 processors—but a motherboard, CPU, and memory swap is certainly possible.

Depending on the other components in your system, such an upgrade could cost less than \$500. Essentially it amounts to building a new PC. See "Step-By-Step: To Get Just the PC You Want, Build It Yourself" (find.pcworld.com/55308).



QUICKBOOKS' NEW PAYROLL dashboard makes data entry easier.

For instance, Office Accounting now lets eBay power sellers create auction listings for items they've entered into the software's inventory. (To do so, you must subscribe to Microsoft's Marketplace Services, which are free during the beta period; final pricing was unavailable at press time.) To achieve similar time savings with QuickBooks, sellers must use third-party auction management services, such as those offered by Andale.

EASY CUSTOMIZATION

OFFICE ACCOUNTING uses the familiar interface of Microsoft Word to let you customize forms by changing layouts and labels, or add and track the results of new data fields. QuickBooks now consolidates the application's most used

form-customization options on one screen, and a new preview capability lets you see what your form will look like before you print it.

Its new features—including an improved payroll "dashboard" that simplifies the task of paying all employees at the same time—make QuickBooks 2007 a worthwhile upgrade for current users. The Microsoft program has little to tempt existing QuickBooks users to switch, aside from its fairly rudimentary multiple-currency capability—useful for import/export firms.

If you rely on a manual accounting system and want to graduate from there, Microsoft's slick, easy-to-navigate Office Accounting is a reasonably priced way to do it.

—Richard Morochove

Office Accounting 2007

Microsoft

Beta product, not rated

One of this program's strengths continues to be its close ties to Microsoft's Office applications. Free trial download through 2006; \$149 when it ships in 2007 find.pcworld.com/55321

QuickBooks Premier Edition 2007

Intuit

PCW Rating **B2** Very Good

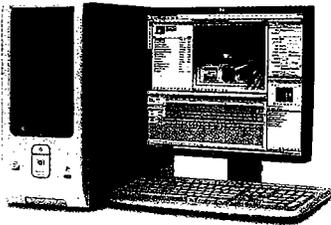
Integration of marketing-related online services adds value to this small-business package. List: \$400 (single user) find.pcworld.com/55320

TOP 10 DESKTOP PCs

HP's Powerful Media Center Tops the List

TEST Center A NEW, AFFORDABLY priced Media Center PC from HP, the Pavilion d4650y, earns Best Buy honors on the power side of our chart this month. The full-featured d4650y turned in a solid WorldBench 5 performance score of 142 and offers maximum versatility for storage, thanks to HP's Personal Media Drive—an external hard drive that slides into a bay on the front of the case.

The Systemax Sabre, an extremely powerful PC, lands in the third spot on the power list. It produced the third-fastest WorldBench 5 score that we've recorded to date.



THE HP PAVILION d4650y provides excellent performance for a reasonable price.

On the value side, two new systems make the cut. HP's Pavilion a1510n is a basic but well-rounded system, while Systemax's Vitality DH463 turned in superb performance and has a roomy interior that is open for upgrading.

—Kalpana Ettenson

ONLINE

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the desktop PCs we reviewed, including details on how we test them, go to find.pcworld.com/55262.

	POWER DESKTOP	PCW Rating	Performance	Features and specifications
1	HP Pavilion d4650y Best Buy \$2000 NEW find.pcworld.com/55256	84 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 142 WorldBench 5 rating: Good Overall design: Good Graphics: Good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.4-GHz Core 2 Duo E6600 500GB (RAID) drive capacity 19-inch HP 1955 LCD 512MB ATI Radeon X1600XT
▶ Bottom line: The Pavilion d4650y is a fast system that can handle just about any demanding task. It's easy to upgrade, too.				
2	CyberPower Gamer Infinity SLI Ultra \$3299 find.pcworld.com/54494	83 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 167 WorldBench 5 rating: Superior Overall design: Good Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.93-GHz Core 2 Extreme X6800 398GB (RAID) drive capacity 19-inch ViewSonic VX922 LCD 1024MB XFX 7950 GX2 Dual-GPU
▶ Bottom line: The powerful Gamer Infinity SLI Ultra delivers high-end dual-GPU graphics at a lower price than others.				
3	Systemax Sabre \$3700 NEW find.pcworld.com/55259	83 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 165 WorldBench 5 rating: Superior Overall design: Very Good Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.93-GHz Core 2 Extreme X6800 300GB (RAID) drive capacity 19-inch Hanns G LCD 512MB ATI Radeon X1900 XTX
▶ Bottom line: Gamers and power users who are enamored with speed should take a good look at the reasonably priced Sabre.				
4	Dell XPS 410 \$2350 find.pcworld.com/54504	83 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 138 WorldBench 5 rating: Good Overall design: Good Graphics: Very Good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.4-GHz Core 2 Duo E6600 640GB (RAID) drive capacity 20-inch Dell 2007WFP LCD 256MB nVidia GeForce 7900GS
▶ Bottom line: This well-built system packs a strong performance punch. Its expansion options are limited to add-in cards or a 3.5-inch drive.				
5	Dell XPS 700 \$3985 find.pcworld.com/54492	81 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 153 WorldBench 5 rating: Very Good Overall design: Very Good Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.67-GHz Core 2 Duo E6700 640GB (RAID) drive capacity 24-inch Dell 2407WFP LCD 1024MB nVidia GeForce 7950 GX2 Dual-GPU
▶ Bottom line: Well-heeled gamers who want to be able to expand their system will find room to grow in this stylish, powerful PC.				
VALUE DESKTOP				
1	Velocity Micro Vector GX Campus Edition Best Buy \$1099 find.pcworld.com/54498	88 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 117 WorldBench 5 rating: Superior Overall design: Good Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.13-GHz Core 2 Duo E6400 250GB drive capacity 17-inch ViewSonic VA702b LCD 512MB EVGA e-GeForce 7600 GS
▶ Bottom line: This well-constructed, moderately priced model proves that you don't have to pay much to get a PC with strong performance.				
2	HP Pavilion a1510n \$860 NEW find.pcworld.com/55257	86 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 97 WorldBench 5 rating: Very Good Overall design: Good Graphics: Poor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.4-GHz Athlon 64 3800+ 200GB drive capacity 17-inch HP vx17e LCD 256MB nVidia GeForce 6150 LE
▶ Bottom line: With its user-friendly design and thorough documentation, the Pavilion a1510n makes a good entry-level PC.				
3	CyberPower Gamer Ultra 7500SE \$999 find.pcworld.com/54566	86 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 98 WorldBench 5 rating: Very Good Overall design: Good Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-GHz Athlon 64 X2 3800+ 250GB drive capacity 19-inch Optique Q9 LCD 256MB EVGA e-GeForce 7600GS
▶ Bottom line: A gaming system for buyers on a budget, this model provides fairly good performance at a very attractive price.				
4	Systemax Vitality DH463 \$1199 NEW find.pcworld.com/55260	84 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 108 WorldBench 5 rating: Superior Overall design: Good Graphics: Good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.86-GHz Core 2 Duo E6300 250GB drive capacity 19-inch Hanns G LCD 256MB ATI Radeon X1600 Pro
▶ Bottom line: The Vitality DH463 is a strong performer among value systems and offers lots of room for future upgrades.				
5	Shuttle XPC G5 2100 \$1049 find.pcworld.com/54574	81 Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WorldBench 5 score: 104 WorldBench 5 rating: Very Good Overall design: Fair Graphics: Superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2-GHz Athlon 64 X2 4200+ 200GB drive capacity 17-inch Shuttle XP17 Lite LCD 256MB EVGA e-GeForce 7600 GT
▶ Bottom line: This toaster-size model packs a lot of functionality into its highly portable case, but it offers little room for expansion.				

CHART NOTES: Prices and ratings as of 10/6/06. Drive capacity may represent total space on multiple hard drives.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS MANNERS

Iomega's 70GB Rev Drive Outperforms DAT

S T O R A G E

TEST Center THE HANDIEST AND most affordable desktop backup device is currently an external hard drive. But to back up critical workstations and servers, you need high-capacity removable media that you can rotate and secure off-site. Iomega's next-generation Rev drive fills that need.

I tested a shipping USB 2.0

\$600 Rev 70GB Backup Drive (internal IDE and SATA versions are available as well) that successfully challenges the supremacy of old-fashioned tape drives and media (like DAT 72) still popular in the business backup market. The new Rev can handle 70GB of uncompressed data—twice as much content as its predecessor could—while retaining read/write compatibility with the older 35GB cartridges.

The Rev's cartridges use technology based on sturdy, reliable 2.5-inch hard drives, with the platter and motor in the cartridge and the head and electronics in the drive. One cartridge comes with the drive; a four-pack of cartridges



REMOVABLE BACKUPS GET a lift with Iomega's Rev 70GB drive.

costs \$250 more. The drive also includes EMC's backup software, Retrospect Express.

In our PC World Test Center tests, the Rev wrote 3.06GB of files and folders (a good indicator of backup performance) in 203 seconds. That's slower than the average of 152

seconds for external desktop USB 2.0 drives we've tested that don't use RAID to span multiple disks, but it's significantly faster than tape.

The Rev drive's strong performance boosts its appeal as a safe alternative to tape.

—Rex Farrance

Rev 70GB Backup Drive

Iomega

PCW Rating **B4** Very Good

Higher capacity and speedier performance make the new Rev a fast, viable alternative to tape for business backups.

Street: \$600

find.pcworld.com/55322

Sleek Sony All-in-One Desktop Makes Its Mark

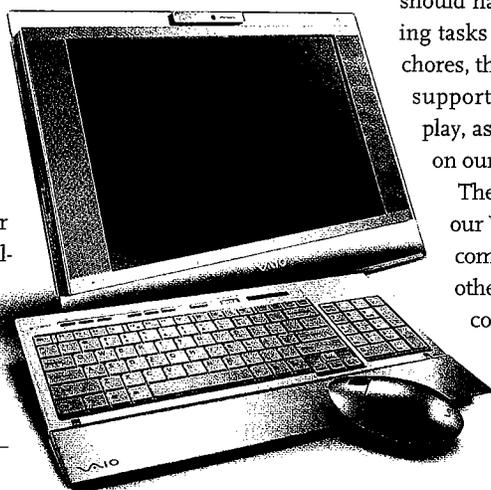
D E S K T O P

TEST Center FASHION MAVENS and other demanding aesthetes should find little fault with Sony's latest all-in-one PC: The \$2100 VAIO VGC-LS1 is gorgeous. I looked at a shipping model, and its design was superb—trumping even the Apple iMac—but our tests indicate that it's no powerhouse. (The unit arrived too late to be considered for our Top 5 Power Desktop PCs chart on page 72.)

Suspended in a clear frame, the VGC-LS1's brilliant, 19-inch wide-screen LCD perfectly hides the guts of the computer. Sony backs the high style with some substance, too: This XP Media Center-

based system includes 2GB of DDR2 memory, nice features (a 250GB hard drive; a slot-loading, multiformat DVD burner mounted behind the LCD; and a Sony MotionEye

SONY'S VAIO VGC-LS1 shows attention to design aesthetics.



Webcam on the LCD's frame), and S-Video, composite A/V, cable-in, and TV-in ports.

Unfortunately, the VGC-LS1 falls short on raw processing power. Though the 1.83-GHz Core Duo T2400 processor and the integrated 950GMA graphics chip set should handle most computing tasks and video playback chores, they lack the power to support demanding game play, as the system's scores on our tests indicate.

The PC earned a 97 on our WorldBench 5 tests, comparable to the marks other systems of similar configuration got, but about 20 percent behind that of our Best Buy value desktop, which

costs about half as much. Its gaming scores were low on all measures. The VAIO VGC-LS1 comes in only one configuration, and its closed design means that you can't upgrade later to a more powerful CPU or better graphics.

Given its lackluster performance, the VGC-LS1 is somewhat pricey: Sony certainly got the handsome design right, but you pay for it dearly.

—Anush Yeghazarian

VAIO VGC-LS1

Sony

PCW Rating **D0** Good

Handsome, expensive all-in-one PC meets today's computing needs, but lacks power and high-def features for the future.

Street: \$2100

find.pcworld.com/55322

changes the color in a high-contrast area, works very well. A new Skin Smoothing tool, though, is extremely slow. I tried it on two different PCs, and making an adjustment required 30 seconds to show results—per adjustment.

Elements has a nice new tool that corrects camera-lens distortion, eliminating image bulges and other problems. The application also adds an Adjust Sharpness tool. Adobe says this new tool works better than the old Unsharp Mask, and I believe it does in

many instances. But I'm still more comfortable using Unsharp Mask—which is one reason Adobe left it in. Nevertheless, I don't like having to worry about which sharpening tool is going to work best.

MAPPING IT OUT

BY FAR THE coolest tool included with either program is Elements' Mapping: You plot images on a Yahoo-powered map, and the GPS data from the map is then written to your images' metadata. You don't get all of the controls

you would if you were using Yahoo Maps in a browser—you don't have full zoom control, and instead of entering an address in the map, you have to do it by right-clicking on a picture—but this feature is yet another way that Elements helps organize your photos.

You can also share those maps online by uploading them to your own FTP site or to Adobe's new online Photoshop Showcase (find.pcworld.com/55535), a sort of photo blog. In addition, you can create Flash-based Web galleries.

The galleries themselves are pretty snazzy, but the online gallery site is unimpressive—it's ad-supported, though you get 100 ad-free viewings before the ads kick in.

Elements feels like a bargain: It gives me 90 percent of what I use in Photoshop, but at a much smaller price. Paint Shop may offer a bit more of Photoshop's power than Elements does, but it does a very poor job of hiding its complexity, and its organizational tools just don't compete.

—Alan Stafford

MOVIEMAKER

Adobe's Inexpensive Video Editor Becomes Even Easier

PEOPLE UPLOAD MORE than 65,000 videos to the YouTube video sharing site every day. But with the release of Adobe's new Premiere Elements 3 (\$100; find.pcworld.com/55314), YouTube may want to brace itself for an even bigger onslaught. This video editing application is so good and so easy to use, it may well encourage still more people to share their videos.

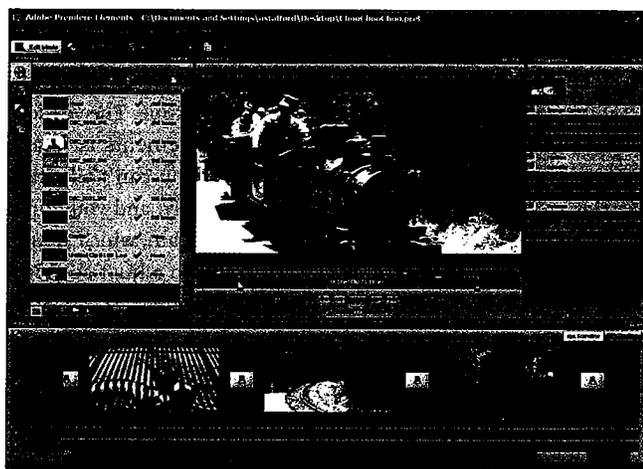
BUILDING WITH STORYBOARDS

THE MOST OBVIOUS update to the application is a new storyboard feature (Adobe calls it a "Sceneline") that supplements the application's standard timeline. Each can serve as the application's main working platform for arranging video and audio clips and transitions, applying effects, adjusting sound levels, and implementing other features, but storyboards are more common in video editing applications aimed at novices. The Sceneline is a nice addition to the application, and even experienced users are likely to find it handy.

Most of the other improvements are relatively minor, but still welcome. You can now import and edit high-definition video. A new stop-motion capture mode lets you capture still images from your camcorder at regular, adjustable intervals (think Claymation). You just plug in your camcorder and set two parameters, and the application will automatically insert the still images into the Sceneline. I found that the feature works best on video footage that doesn't change much; otherwise, the shifts in movement from frame to frame are too jarring.

TELLING YOUR STORY

CLICKING A NEW button near the top of the Premiere Elements screen lets you record voice narration if you have a microphone attached to your computer. When you're finished recording, the application automatically inserts the recording



ADOBE'S PREMIERE ELEMENTS 3 adds a new easy-to-use storyboard feature that runs across the bottom of your screen.

into a new "narration" track within the Sceneline or timeline.

Want to add a title screen to your composition? With previous versions, you had to create a title and drag it into the timeline. Elements 3 lets you click a button and begin typing; all the usual font styles and controls are easily accessible.

One feature that's missing is a link to online video-sharing sites. Adobe has a new sharing site that's accessible from its Photoshop Elements 5 app, but I'd rather see some integration with YouTube and other popular sites—a one-touch "upload to video site" button would be a nice addition.

If you use Premiere Elements 2 and you're comfortable with its timeline, you may not consider Elements 3 a significant upgrade. After all, its predecessor was excellent to begin with. But Premiere Elements 3 is just that much better.