

PRICE
£499
(£586 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER
PC Nextday
0870 609 0125

PC Nextday Zoostorm 3362-4404

A good choice if your budget is tight. Its only real weakness is the TFT



Buying a Vista-ready PC needn't break the bank: the Zoostorm 3362-4404 costs only £499 yet is powerful enough to run the Ultimate Edition of Vista and also the Aero graphics interface.

Despite being based around a 2.8GHz Intel Pentium D 820, it still managed 0.85 in our 2D application benchmarks. Video or audio encoding may take a while longer than with the Carrera, but the Zoostorm was never sluggish in general use.

The GeForce 7600 GS isn't a terrible performer either. It will happily play most of the latest games at 1,024 x 768 – we recorded over 40fps in Far Cry and 35fps in Call of Duty 2. At 1,280 x 1,024, you'll have to turn detail settings down low to break 30fps in Far Cry, though.

However, an Nvidia graphics card is an odd choice as the ECS motherboard

only supports CrossFire, so you'd have to remove it to add two ATI cards in the future. Unusually, CrossFire is courtesy of Intel's 945P Express rather than an ATI chipset. Two PCI slots are free and there's a three-port FireWire card. The front panel FireWire port isn't connected, though.

But with a dual-layer DVD writer and a 250GB hard disk, we can hardly complain about this or the lack of a second optical drive, especially when there's a useful card reader occupying the top-most 3.5in front-panel bay.

The audio subsystem isn't bad either – the six-channel onboard Realtek chip outputs to Zoostorm's own S2176 2.1 speakers. While they lack a remote control, they provide decent quality sound for music and games alike.

There are some signs of the tight budget, though: no RAID, no Gigabit Ethernet, no additional software and no cordless peripherals. The most obvious sign is the AOC TFT, which only has a VGA input. Its looks are as basic as its image quality – contrast isn't as good as others here, and backlighting isn't as even. Thankfully, its response time is quick enough not to introduce smearing.

One surprise, though, is the year of on-site warranty at this price. The Zoostorm isn't too noisy either – 34dBA when idle is reasonably quiet.

Ultimately, there are sacrifices at this price, but if you want a Vista-ready PC for the lowest possible price, the PC Nextday is a fine choice.

PERFORMANCE
★★★★★

QUIETNESS
★★★★★

FEATURES & DESIGN
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

OUT WITH THE OLD...

HOW TO UPDATE YOUR NEW PC WITH ALL THE SETTINGS AND FILES FROM YOUR OLD COMPUTER

If you've decided to buy one of the PCs on review here, you'll want a simple and easy way to transfer your files and settings from your old computer onto your new PC. Thankfully, LapLink's PCmover is here to help and, unlike Windows' built-in File and Settings Transfer wizard, it will also migrate all your programs. For £20, you can download it from www.laplink.com or you can buy a physical version that includes a USB 1.1. cable (Type A to Type A) for £26.

As you'd expect, you'll need to install PCmover on both computers and either connect the USB cable or use a network connection or parallel cable. Failing that, you can burn the data onto a stack of CDs or DVDs. The network option will be fastest and most convenient for the majority of people, and worked best in our testing.

The wizard first takes a snapshot of your new notebook to check the currently installed applications and settings. You then start the wizard on your old computer and can customise which settings are transferred. These include Microsoft Outlook settings



PCmover's wizard-based interface makes it simple to copy everything to your new PC, but you can't choose to leave any programs behind.

and contacts, Word settings and Internet Explorer settings. You can opt out of moving IE settings to try to avoid copying spyware, but there's no option to choose which programs to transfer – it's all or nothing.

It's also worth noting that PCmover has a few limitations. For example, anti-virus and anti-spyware programs (and any other application that installs system services) may have to be reinstalled from the original CD. No

hardware information is transferred either, so printers, scanners and TV tuners will have to be installed manually, and possibly any associated software.

You can transfer data from systems running Windows 95/98/NT/ME/2000 or XP. We tested PCmover by transferring everything from a Dell Inspiron 9400 notebook running Windows XP Home to one of the PCs on test here. PCmover reported that a whopping 22GB of data needed to be moved, including 29,836 files and 95,453 settings. Data is compressed by approximately 50% and it took 1hr 15mins to make the transfer over a 100Mb/sec network connection.

We found that everything had gone smoothly, except that McAfee Internet Security Suite 2006 reported missing files and requested a reinstall. Ultimately, if you're happy to reinstall your applications manually, you may as well use Windows' built-in tool, but otherwise PCmover should make light work of getting your new PC up and running just the way you like it.