Tape Backup Drives

The tape backup drives that met the requireme[...]
that conform to the QIC 150 standard and use t[...]
for storage of 150MB and 250MB of uncompr[...]
interface card and a SCSI version was availabl[...]
exception of the Legacy drive).

Product

Colorado QFA700
Colorado Memory Systems
800 S. Taft Ave.
Loveland, CO 80537
(800) 346-9881
(303) 669-6500
Price: $1,890

Panther Tape Backup
Tandberg Data
2649 Townsgate Rd., Suite 600
Westlake Village, CA 93161
(800) 258-8285
(805) 495-8384
Price: $1,795

Irwin 7251QE
Irwin Distribution
Division of Maynard Electronics
36 Skyline Dr.
Lake Mary, FL 32746
(800) 821-8782
(407) 263-3500
Price: $1,895

Wangtek E5150SPK
Wangtek
41 Moreland Rd.
Simi Valley, CA 93065
(800) 992-9916

Price: $2,199

Legacy 150 x2
Legacy Storage Systems
200 Butterfield Dr., Unit B
Ashland, MA 01721
(508) 881-6442
Price: $1,499

Identica IDT-250
Prima Storage Solutions
3350 Scott Blvd., Building 7
Santa Clara, CA 95054
(800) 288-8273
(408) 727-2600
Price: $1,649.

Tecmar QT-250
Tecmar
6225 Cochran Rd.
Solon, OH 44139
(800) 422-2587
(216) 349-0600
Price: $2,390

Sigen ST250
Sigen Equipment Corp.
479 Macara Ave., Suite 803
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 737-3904
Price: $1,795

Optima DisKovery 250
Optima Technology Corp.
17526 Von Karman
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 476-0515
Price: $1,795

Tallgrass FS500e
Tallgrass Technologies
11100 W. 82nd St.
Lenexa, KS 66214
(800) 825-4727
(913) 492-6002
Price: $1,795

MaynStream 250Q
Maynard Electronics
36 Skyline Dr.
Lake Mary, FL 32746
(800) 821-8782
(407) 263-3500
Price: $2,195

nts for the PC/Computing 200 are external models
apes that match 3M's DC6150 and DC6250 formats
essed data, respectively. If the drive required an
e, we tested and priced the SCSI version (with the

Evaluation

Stellar backup speeds and the largest potential capacity of any drive in
its class (700MB with Colorado's own extended DC 525 tape) mark this
outstanding QIC-02 drive. This doesn't excuse the Colorado QFA700's only
average restore speeds or the unreliable technical support we encountered,
but the QFA700 still impressed us with fast formatting, no-jumper installation,
and comprehensive software.

Like a sports car, the Panther drive is noisy, but its blazing performance
makes up for the discomfort. Its backup speeds run a close third to the
MaynStream and Colorado drives, and its restore speeds are peerless. Easy
installation is another plusanybody prepared to open a PC should have
no problem. Industry-standard Sytos Plus software provides the interface,
along with an estimated 2-to-1 compression ratio.

Irwin's 7251QE drive affords excellent backup and restore
speeds, two levels of data compression (for a total of 500MB, or even
more from an industry-standard extended DC6250 tape), and an easy
installation routine. Irwin's EZ Tape software comes in DOS and Windows
versions and offers handy archive librarian features. Except for a QIC-02
interface card that runs slightly hot, the hardware and software inspire
confidence.

With speeds among the highest of the drives we reviewed, Wangtek's
E5150 family of drives, available with either a QIC-02 or SCSI interface,
is clearly on target. They ship with industry-standard Sytos Plus soft-
ware, come with thorough (if not first-rate) documentation, and pose no
hardware installation problems. During our testing, the company provided

excellent support.

The Legacy 150 x2's slim, stylish appearance isn't mere camou-
flage: Though it's the cheapest drive we tested, it was still a front-runner in
performance. Backup speeds were respectable, restore speeds zippy,
and data integrity good. Other pluses include the industry-standard Sytos
Plus software and availability of either a QIC-02 or SCSI interface. The
drawbacks? The drive's documentation was skimpy, and hardware instal-
lation could have been easier.

The Identica IDT-250 sped through backups and respectably
performed restoreseven the parallel model we tested held its own
against the SCSI-interface devices in this roundup. The parallel model
(a SCSI version is also available) is a snap to installall you need worry
about is Sytos Plus software and driversbut the documentation still
assumed too much of the installers.

With an array of indicator lights that covers almost every drive
function from showing the track number being accessed to indicating
whether the drive is reading, writing, or rewindingthe SCSI Tecmar QT-
250 always keeps you informed. Though its speeds and price are nothing
special, the Tecmar drive's low-maintenance operation pays off in spades.
The QTOS software is thorough and easy-to-use, and provides excellent help
and the best error-diagnostic messages in the group.

Sigen's drive comes with one interface option, and it's the most
convenient of allit plugs into your parallel port. Like the Identica, the
other parallel drive in this category, the Sigen ST250 is reasonably priced
and reasonably fast. Although a hair slower than the Identica and more
expensive, it's free of the restore quirks that beset Prima's drive. The Sytos
software provides data compression that should squeeze 500MB of
information onto a 250MB tape.

The wide, thin Optima DisKovery 250 comes complete with SCSI
interface, Sytos Plus software, and nice touches such as detachable rubber
feet so you can set the drive either upright or flat. In addition, the Optima
has fast backup and restore speeds, a low price, and 2-to-1 software-
based data compression. A few quirks spoiled an otherwise good showing:
Hardware installation was troublesome, and the software couldn't restore

from a write-protected tape.

Topflight restore speeds and well-designed software characterize
Tallgrass's FS500 line of backup drives. The File Secure software included
with the QIC-02 drive provides better troubleshooting than Sytos as well
as the usual data-compression and verification features. Installing the drive
proved painlessno jumper adjustments requiredand operation was
reliable, despite a few false starts on file restoration.

The MaynStream 250Q's backup speeds are superbfaster than
the other drives in this roundup by a wide margin. And the company offers
toll-free tech support for more than 11 hours daily, though the thorough
documentation and intuitive MaynStream software for this QIC-02 drive
make the need for external support unlikely. (Optional 24-hour on-call
support is available for those who can afford itor who can't afford not to
have it.) On the downside, the drive lacks data compression, and restore
speeds were unimpressive.

Score

94.1

92.3

87

86.9

85.1

83.3

82

80.8

78.7

78.7

76.5