

Sony VAIO VGN-AR21S laptop

Sony does Blu-ray on the PC

by Stephen Patrick published on 20 November 2006

Sony may be best known for its ultraportable notebooks but it isn't afraid to take a few chances at the other end of the scale, as this 3.8kg desktop replacement can attest to. Sure, you wouldn't want to carry it around too often but it's got a decent battery life all the same. It's essentially an upgrade of the original AR11, but the new prefix of VGN-AR21S brings with it even more in the way of power and high-end performance. The body has changed, so you'll still find a stylish case, which is strong and solid and more than lives up to the Sony reputation for quality.



This version comes with enough power to put anything but the most high-end desktop PC to shame. At its core you'll find a 2GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T7200, which delivers dual-core power and as you'll find it backed with 2048MB of DDR2 memory, there is plenty of memory to keep things ticking along nicely. We've been using it for the last couple of weeks and can't honestly find any program it won't handle with ease - even trimming recorded TV programmes of the adverts, which is a time consuming chore on most notebooks, was handled with ease.

If you are going to be editing video on this machine, you'll be glad of the twin 100GB hard drives, so there is plenty of storage space to hold your video. However, the real selling point of this machine is the inclusion of a Blu-ray optical drive, which will allow you to record up to 50GB of data onto a single dual-layer disc.

While Sony may have delayed the PS3 due to problems with the Blu-ray drive, you won't find any problems here, as you'll be able to record discs as well as watch high-def movies, which look great on the 17-inch X-Black screen. The screen is pinpoint sharp, but if you want to connect the machine to an external, larger source, the built-in HDMI-out port is there for such

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occasions, as this will keep the high-def digital signal intact.

If it's not movies then another reason you may want to out-source to a larger screen is for games. Fitted with the latest Nvidia GeForce Go 7600 GT, there is plenty of excuse to do so. This card is great for games and will allow for most of them to run in the highest resolutions. Rounding out the home experience is the inclusion of a digital/analogue TV tuner, so you can watch one channel while recording another. Sound quality from the built-in speakers is good but not particularly amazing, so we'd suggest plugging it into surround sound separates.

VERDICT

If you must have a desktop replacement with all the latest bells and whistles in place, and have the money to support your demands, this is a great notebook. True, you're not interested in its portability, as that's rather limited, but everything else you want from a high-end notebook is here - enjoy!

At a glance

What is it?

Desktop alternative

Good

Blu-ray drive, powerhouse spec

Bad

Pricey

Verdict

Not only can you play high-def movies on this notebook; it'll also record to Blu-ray discs

Price £1999

Our score

8/10

Your score

9/10