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Sony Vaio VGN-UX1XN UMPC

Can Sony conquer the Ultra Mobile PC market?

by Stephen Patrick published on 16 April 2007

Sony has never been a company to shy away from innovation and its computer division is no exception. So it was only a matter of time before they released a machine that put the current crop of UMPC (Ultra Mobile PC) machines to shame.

For starters, it weighs in at an incredible 480g, which is half the weight of even Sony's lightest notebook and considering it comes installed with Windows Vista, it's a truly amazing piece of kit. The 4.5-inch touchscreen display takes some getting used to but with zoom controls you soon get the hang of getting around the cramped look and feel. Being touchscreen, there is a slight haze to the panel but it's usable in most situations.

It's not really a UMPC, as it doesn't come with Microsoft's TouchPack software included. Instead, you can enter text using the full QWERTY keyboard that is initially hidden away behind the screen. Slide it into position and you have everything you need to use the UX1XN as your sole PC. Well, not quite as we found the keyboard less than ideal to use. It may sound odd in such a small device but the keyboard is just a fraction too big to type using your thumbs and hold the device steady at the same time. If you don't want to use the touchscreen you can navigate using the pointing stick built into the right-hand side of the unit. This works in conjunction with mouse buttons on the left-hand side, so you can hold the unit like a game controller.

Power is impressive too, as you'll find an Intel Core Solo U1500 (1.33GHZ) processor, which is a single processor core that runs at an ultra-low voltage. This processor quickly becomes evident when you boot the machine up, as it takes quite a while to load Vista, even with 1024MB of memory to back it up. On the plus side, the device never grows warm so the chip is the right choice.



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When it comes to storage, Sony has foregone the standard mechanical hard drive, instead opting for a Solid State Disk (SSD). With 32GB of Flash memory on-board, it means there are no moving parts in the device and that battery life is also more efficient.

What really makes this device stand apart from other would-be pretenders is the array of extras that come built into the device. You'll find a 1.3-megapixel camera, which can be used as a still of movie camera - or simply as a webcam. Then there are the connectivity options, with Bluetooth, Wireless LAN, as well as the obligatory MemoryStick Pro slot. To lock all this data away, you'll find a biometric fingerprint scanner, which is easy to set-up and means you don't have to remember passwords.

VERDICT

You can't deny this is the most impressive piece of kit in a long time. The simple fact of having Windows Vista in the palm of your hand deserves an award.

It isn't without its flaws and for the asking price you'll need to be sure it does exactly what you need. We really liked the VAIO VGN-UX1XN, we're just not sure we'd want to use it everyday, though.

At a glance

What is it?

Handheld computer

Good

Small, Vista-installed

Bad

Awkward to use, low battery life

Verdict

This Vista-loaded mobile-PC fits neatly is powerful enough to replace your notebook, it just simple isn't as versatile as we'd hoped

Price £1999

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10