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HP Pavillion dv9398ea laptop

Media Centre notebook

by Stephen Patrick published on 25 June 2007

HP is currently the world's favourite notebook manufacturer, overtaking Dell and everyone else in sales.

It's business notebooks make up the majority of such sales but the Pavilion line, which is aimed at home buyers, has now been overhauled.

The HP Pavillion dv9398ea is billed as a media centre, so it ideal for use as a family machine for those looking to best the most from their PC.

This is an impressive looking machine built around a 17-inch Super-TFT display that sadly lacks punch, as the native resolution is 1440 x 900 pixel (WXGA+), which is fine for daily tasks but not so good for high-detailed image editing or gaming. More importantly, it means you won't be able to take full advantage of the integrated HD-DVD drive, which needs a resolution of 1920 x 1200 pixels (WUXGA) to play movies in true high-definition. There is a HDMI port for sending High-Def content to an external monitor, so this may not be too limiting.

Graphics use NVIDIA's GeForce Go 7600, which is coming to the end of its shelf-life but is still a great mid-level GPU for most mainstream games and we got above average frame rates when running S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Sound is also fairly impressive, due to the inclusion of Altec Lansing speakers. There are a range of touch-sensitive buttons to make it easy to control your movies and music.

Weighing in at 3.7kg, this is a heavy notebook but it isn't as heavy as we were expecting. We managed to get a couple of hours of battery life from the large battery pack but this machine isn't really intended for mobile use - that is unless you class moving it about the house as mobile.

The large screen means there is room for a



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decent keyboard as well as a numeric number pad. The build quality of the keys, like the laptop itself, is high and we found it had a comfortable typing action.

When it comes to power, this laptop isn't exactly lacking. It comes with an Intel 1.83GHz Core 2 Duo T5600 and 2GB of memory, which helps programs really fly. The 240GB of storage is made up of two 120GB drives and we've been informed this will soon be upgraded to 320GB at the same price, so it's worth checking before you buy. It has full connectivity, as you'd expect, including 802.11g Wi-Fi and Gigabit Ethernet, so if you network this machine up you'll find it can connect at the best possible speeds. Overall, we were impressed with the day-to-day handling of this machine.

VERDICT

In this age when where it's possible to get three HP laptops for the price of the dv9398ea, the question has to be "is it worth the asking price?"

It's a great notebook but ultimately, we feel that it falls short and there are any number of media machines that cost less and offer a little more cutting-edge technology, which is a shame, as we enjoyed using the Pavilion dv9398ea.

At a glance

What is it?

Media Centre notebook

Good

Powerful, great screen, comfortable to use

Bad

Not the most powerful machine for the price

Verdict

HP has designed a stunning looking desktop replacement that falls just short of being a genuinely stunning notebook

Price £1599

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10