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Samsung Q1 Ultra UMPC

Can Samsung crack the Ultra-Mobile PC market with its third attempt?

by Stephen Patrick published on 6 August 2007

When it comes to the UMPC (Ultra Mobile PC), Samsung has really got behind the idea of what handheld computing should be.

This is the third version in less than twelve months and is a move away from the original concept. UMPC was designed to be a keyboard-less device that you access using a touchscreen and onscreen virtual keyboard.

Sadly, the TouchPack software as its called, leaves a good deal to be desired, so it's no surprise that the Q1 Ultra comes with its own QWERTY keyboard.

Samsung has split it in two so unless you're a fluent touch-typist you'll find yourself playing typing-ping pong as you look from side to side searching out the right key to press.

As you have to hold the device as you type, the split keyboard does make sense but the keys themselves are rather small and as you type with your thumbs it can be slow going - it's fine for short emails but not so good for typing longer reviews, as we can attest to. A dial key, on the left-hand side, allows you to navigate. This is used in conjunction with the mouse buttons on the right-hand side.

There is still a 7-inch touchscreen at the heart of the device but Samsung has increased the brightness to 300 Nits, so it incredibly bright and clear. So much so that this is one of the few touchscreens you can watch a movie on and not be infuriated by the silver screen of the panel technology.

A row of buttons above the screen allow for quick access to the menu settings, so you can change the screen resolution, brightness and wireless settings at the click of a button.



...cont.

Samsung has chosen to load the Ultra with Windows Vista Home Premium but we found it took a long time to load properly, largely due to the use of an Intel A110 processor, which is a low-voltage chip intended for smartphones and web-pads instead of something as fully-featured as this. To this end, the 1024MB of memory isn't really sufficient to load and run the machine.

On the plus side, when it comes to using the Q1 as an alternative to a smartphone, at least you're furnished with full PC functionality and won't need to synchronise your files.

Samsung has included plenty of extras features. For instance, there are twin cameras built into the front and rear of the device, so you can take 1.3-megapixel snaps or use it for video conferencing. For connecting to other machines or to a network, there is 802.11g and Bluetooth pre-installed.

When it comes to using the Q1, it doesn't really lend itself to being plugged in, as the power cable gets in the way. The brighter screen is a vast improvement and while the keyboard can be fiddly, once you grow accustomed to it, it's usability but you'll never quite be as quick as with a normal keyboard.

VERDICT

The Samsung Q1 Ultra isn't a machine for the everyman, as you'll have to have a specific need in mind to get the most from it. We used it for a couple of weeks and never really got used to the limited battery or slow start up.

It's got a WOW factor and Samsung is certainly moving the UMPC in the right direction but the concept just hasn't found it's purpose yet.

At a glance

What is it?

Ultra Mobile PC

Good

Vista in your hands, bright screen

Bad

Awkward to use, slow to load

Verdict

It's a brave new design that improves usability but we're still left wondering who will actually use it

Price £800

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10