

Advent 4213 notebook

Does this connected netbook impress?

by Chris Hall published on 16 October 2008

Advent have surprised of late, offering the MSI Wind in their own livery and at a more attractive price point. So we were excited when they announced the Advent 4213, a netbook with integrated mobile broadband connectivity. This time the reskinned notebook is an ECS model. But does this model have what it takes to impress?

The Advent 4213 gives us the common run down of specs found in netbooks: a 10.2-inch display which whilst fair, isn't as crisp as found on other models. It is plenty bright enough, but it doesn't seem to be of equal brightness all across the display - it seems as though the edges don't benefit from the same brightening, which might suggest this is a budget LCD panel. However, the lid and hinges seem to be solid and are the angled swivel type, meaning the screen sits behind the base when opened so it fits better into tight spaces, such as on aircraft tray tables and the like.

The same can't quite be said of the main body of the netbook and there is a distinct flex and creak across the front, just in the spot you'd rest your palms whilst typing. But this is perhaps a minor concern alongside the keyboard, which can only be rated as poor. The keys themselves are flat with a lot of travel, meaning that cross-keying, or hitting neighbouring keys, is a common occurrence. The keyboard also doesn't take advantage of the full space available, leaving a wasted half inch on both sides of the body. The result is that all the keys are small, and essentially keys such as the shift and return that you might use often are difficult to find - it takes some getting used to certainly, and considering this has a foot print larger than the Advent 4211/MSI Wind, it's a poor show.

The other tech specs are fairly typical - you get the defacto Intel N270 Atom processor, running at



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1.6GHz, there is 1GB of RAM and an impressive 160GB hard drive to store your files. You also get the normal Wi-Fi connection and Ethernet, although there is no standard modem - instead you'll find a blank plate in that slot.

Other connections include the VGA port for hooking up to a bigger monitor and three USB as well as the mic and headphone sockets. There is also an SD card slot that supports SDHC, ideal for transferring photos from your camera.

A trackpad of reasonable size sits below the keyboard with a bar allowing left and right clicks which works fairly well - it also incorporates the various status icons which is a neat touch - although the click bar again feels like it has a little too much travel in it.

So what of that HSDPA connection? Lurking behind the battery you'll find a slot for a SIM card. Simply slot in the card, replace the battery and you are ready to roll with your mobile broadband connection. The onboard Connection Manager software (provided by Avanquest) is simple and easy to use, recognising our card 3 SIM card and hooking up with no problem. A system tray icon indicates connection strength with colour coding, so you can see at a quick glance why things aren't working. You can also look at the present data transfer rates and we found it to be rather stop and start, rather than a nice smooth stream.

There are various Fn (function) shortcuts on the 4213, including those to enable or disable the "HSPA" modem, Wi-Fi, and webcam. The PC is fairly good at remembering these settings, so if you disable Wi-Fi, it will remain disabled after a restart, but for some reason it won't do this with the webcam. It is worth turning off anything you don't need to extend the battery life whilst out and about.

There is also a shortcut for a "silent mode", which is indicated by a fan icon. Strangely, however, this neither stops the fan, or silences the

At a glance

What is it?

Netbook with HSDPA modem

Good

HSDPA modem, price

Bad

Build quality, gets hot, poor keyboard, reversed keys

Verdict

The Advent 4213 is let down by the poor keyboard that will ultimately be a deterrent and detract from the otherwise reasonable offering here

Price £349

Our score

6/10

Your score

7/10

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machine, so we are at a loss as to its function. One of the other strange features on the 4213, and again slightly suspicious, is that the Fn shortcuts for brightness and volume are all reversed, so you get volume up on the left, rather than the normal right-hand side. It is also an irritation that the Fn key is on the far left rather than the Ctrl key, which makes shortcut usage just a little more difficult. We've found this a common and irritating swap on a number of netbooks. After all, you don't often need to use the Fn key, but the Ctrl key is useful especially when not using a mouse, so best placed in the bottom left corner.

We just mentioned the fan, and you'll find that the fan on the 4213 can be fairly noisy. When you start up the PC you get a noise akin to a passenger jet starting its engines - not at that volume, but the same spinning up noise. The fan runs almost constantly and the ventilation holes to the left of the palm rest look a little small and you'll find that whole area gets very warm - not burny hot, but enough to raise an eyebrow.

The battery life is fairly respectable and we managed to get just over 3 hours from it. Using the HSDPA connection of course does shorten the battery life, but not drastically - we found, typically, that it would bring about 25 minutes off the life, but other factors of course apply.

VERDICT

Otherwise the performance is fairly similar to rival netbooks thanks to the similar run down of stats. Most regular office, email and internet programs run with no problems and you'll have no problems with most general tasks whilst out and about.

The price is competitive and this is among the first netbooks to be offered with the HSDPA option built-in, meaning you can just harvest the SIM card from an existing dongle (or perhaps buy SIM only) and off you go.

However, the Advent 4213 is let down by the poor

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3538/advent-4213-netbook-notebook-review>

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keyboard that will ultimately be a deterrent and detract from the otherwise reasonable offering here. Whilst Advent should be praised for rapidly making this solution available, it looks like many other options are around the corner and we'd rather wait.

Thank you to PC World for the loan of this product.