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Sony VAIO VGN-AW11M/H notebook

A viable VAIO desktop replacement?

by Stephen Patrick published on 10 November 2008

We've made no secret of our love for Sony's ultraportable VAIO notebooks, as they are some of the best machines money can buy. However, when it comes to larger machines, our love affair with Sony is a little more hit and miss.

On the style and build quality front, the Sony VAIO VGN-AW11M/H, it's latest desktop replacement offering, certainly lives up to expectations. This is a bulky machine that weighs in at 3.7kg but considering it sports a great 18.4-inch panel, you're hardly likely to want to take it on the move with you.

The screen has the standard Sony X-Black coating and images look amazing. We were hoping that it would natively support Full HD, the screen is a native 16:9 aspect ratio panel after all, but with a resolution of 1680 x 945 pixels means you'll be using the HDMI port to connect to a Full HD external device.

As you would expect at this price, Blu-ray is fitted as standard and while you can't take advantage of Full HD, we found image to be great. A rather entry-level Nvidia GeForce handles graphics, in the other hand, 9300M GS, which offers HD and DirectX 10 support so you'll be able to watch HD content but it's not the greatest card for high-end games.

The screen may dominate this machine but it has other interesting points. The keyboard takes full advantage of the large chassis to also house a numeric keypad. This does mean the keyboard is pushed to the left but you'll soon get accustomed to it.

The keyboard uses Sony's latest style, with the keys punching through the plastic of the chassis. This gives the keys a better spacing and also firmly attaches them to the machine. The overall effect is a comfortable keyboard to use. Above



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the keyboard sits a row of multimedia buttons and there is also a separate button to launch Sony's own Media Centre software.

This machine has been released at a range of price points with this model being the basic model. For the price you'll find an Intel Core 2 Duo P8400 processor, which runs at 2.26GHz and is quick enough for most daily tasks. The addition of 4GB of RAM means that Windows Vista Home Premium Edition loads quickly and we found the system ran smoothly when handling everyday tasks. The 320GB hard drive is large enough to satisfy most users needs.

Extras include 802.11n wireless LAN and Gigabit Ethernet, three USB ports as well as separate SD and MS pro card slots. While not overly endowed with ports, there are enough to tide you over.

VERDICT

The Sony VAIO VGN-AW11M/H is a satisfactory machine to use. The large screen and keyboard make it a pleasure to use but we'd suggest opting for a higher spec, if your budget allows, as you'll find this entry-level model doesn't quite live up to the expectations of a true desktop replacement laptop.

At a glance

What is it?

Desktop replacement notebook

Good

Big screen, good keyboard

Bad

Basic performance

Verdict

A good looking and well-built machine but it's not as powerful as we were hoping

Price £999

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10