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## Asus N80VC notebook

Does this business machine have consumer charm?

by Stephen Patrick published on 12 November 2008

We were promised when we reviewed the Asus N10 Netbook that there would be other laptops in the range, but we didn't realise just how similar they'd look.

The Asus N80VC features an identical glossy black bezel around its screen, and you'll also find similar champagne-coloured plastics to the N10's elsewhere on the chassis. This time they're patterned, however, and the shade is a little closer to metallic brown. An acquired taste, then, but the overall design is cohesive and simple.

The 14.1-inch screen features a much more usable resolution of 1280 x 800 pixels. It's not the sharpest we've seen, but it's fine for opening two documents simultaneously. The range is aimed at corporate users but, as with most recent laptops, you'll find a glossy Super-TFT finish, causing reflections when out and about. It never proved too problematic though, and the resulting colours are vivid and lifelike.

Despite the portable nature of this machine, those skiving off work are well catered for, and you'll find an entry-level Nvidia GeForce 9300M GS graphics chip in place. Granted, it makes hard work of Crysis, but it's more than capable of running the odd game. This machine also makes light work of music and video playback, along with browsing the web, thanks to Asus' Express Gate technology - a Linux interface that boots in just 8 seconds.

If you frequently find yourself losing your laptop under a tangle of peripherals and wires, then the N80 could well be worth a punt. You'll find five USB ports for a start, which is unusual in a 14-inch machine, and negates the need for a USB hub. eSATA is also provided, allowing more impressive data transfer speeds.



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Once you get to the office, you'll be able to connect monitors, projectors or even a TV using the VGA or HDMI-out ports. Networking features are equally comprehensive, and the use of Intel's Centrino 2 chipset means you'll find an 802.11n Wi-Fi adapter included as standard. Gigabit Ethernet offers faster, fixed download speeds.

One of the main areas we expected to see improvements over the N10 was the user interface, simply by virtue of the extra space on offer. However, this proved to be the N80's weakest point, with a keyboard that disappointed. It's definitely larger than the N10's, but the board flexed under the slightest pressure and the keys rattled more than any we've seen on recent laptops.

Everyday performance turned out to be more satisfactory, despite the relatively modest 2GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T5800 processor. It's backed by 3072MB of DDR2 memory, and we found applications loaded with little lag, the system only slowing down when running a number of intensive programs. At this price, the inclusion of a 300GB hard drive is a welcome one.

## VERDICT

The N80VC comes in at a price point that, just a couple of years ago, would have been considered the bargain-basement end of the laptop market: a no-frills approach where quality, features, components and even design play a distinct second-fiddle to costs.

This is no longer the case, and the Asus is a good example of how much you can actually get for your money. It features enough power to satisfy most users, is stylish and comfortable to work on, and offers great connectivity. It's just a shame that quality has been slightly compromised, and the keyboard severely lets this machine down.

It's still worth a look - but other laptops, such as Samsung's excellent Q310, offer better quality at a similar price.

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## At a glance

### What is it?

14.1-inch portable

### Good

Portable, stylish, well-equipped

### Bad

Poor quality keyboard

### Verdict

Business users on a budget could do a lot worse than the N80VC - it's powerful, portable and has bags of charm. Shame about that keyboard though

**Price** £658

**Our score**

**7/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**