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## Sony VAIO VGN-BZ11MN notebook

### Does this VAIO impress?

by Stephen Patrick published on 1 December 2008

We've seen plenty of top-quality ultraportables from Sony's VAIO range, and it's easy to forget about larger, more mainstream options such as the latest BZ range. However, if you're looking for something a little more affordable, the VAIO BZ -11MN could well be the machine for you.

It features a 15.4-inch display, so it's not the most portable option, but the 2.7kg weight remains just about light enough for the daily commute. We did find it a bit uncomfortable once our bag was also loaded up with the charger, peripherals and other bits and bobs, however.

Unlike most laptops, you'll find a standard TFT finish to the screen. It's a welcome change from the glossy coating now favoured on all consumer machines and loads of corporate systems. As expected, it's ideal when working on a train with reflections virtually non-existent. The surprise appears when it comes to home use, where it's every bit as good as Super-TFT panels. Excellent colour reproduction and wide viewing angles proves a shiny finish is unnecessary.

Battery life is also excellent for a machine of this size, the integrated Intel GMA 4500 chipset helping to offer over 6 hours of use on the move. As with the Lenovo X200 that we reviewed last week, it falls behind Nvidia-based rivals when it comes to 3D performance, and intense video editing or gaming in your spare time is out of the question. It is adequate for most other uses, however, and we had no trouble at all playing back videos or running regular office tasks.

You'll find styling cues from recent VAIO's on the BZ, including the cylindrical hinge and green LED lighting. While some in our office thought it looked classy, this particular reviewer thought it owed more to neon tubes found under bumpers on a boy-racer's car, and the bright green is particularly intrusive when you're trying to watch a



...cont.

film in the dark.

There's no doubt it's a good-looking machine though, in a conservative way. The materials are high in quality with magnesium alloy used as an integral part of the chassis. The keyboard is a departure for Sony, with keys arranged in a traditional block - rather than poking through individual holes in the chassis. Comfort is second -to-none, the keys moving accurately and quietly. There's enough travel to make prolonged typing a relaxing experience, and it's backed up by a huge touchpad.

Comprehensive networking features are in place, with an 802.11n Wi-Fi card and Gigabit Ethernet, but it's a shame there's no option for built-in 3G/HSDPA. There is a fingerprint scanner to help keep your files locked up, and you'll be able to add peripherals via a trio of USB ports. Projectors can be hooked up by VGA, for presentations, but there's no support for digital connections.

The Sony shows its mainstream roots when it comes to the specification, and the 2.26GHz Intel processor and 2048MB of RAM are no better than average. It is quick enough for most purposes, only slowing down when running five or six applications simultaneously. At this price, the 160GB hard drive is rather miserly, with rival machines from Samsung and Asus offering 250GB and more.

## VERDICT

With an average specification, it's easy to dismiss the BZ11MN, and go hunting for more powerful rivals. Do so at your own peril, however, as it's actually an excellent choice for the business user seeking a larger machine.

The battery life is one of the best we've seen on a laptop of this size, and the quality is beyond reproach. It's a shame you don't get a little more for your money, but if your storage needs are low, it's definitely worth a look.

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## At a glance

### What is it?

15.4-inch laptop aimed at the corporate user

### Good

Affordable, all-day battery life, premium materials, comfortable interface

### Bad

Limited 3D performance and average specification

### Verdict

A comfortable and well-made business machine offering style, quality and an impressive battery life

**Price** £649

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**