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## Sony VAIO VGN-FW41 notebook

### Top drawer multimedia machine?

by Stephen Patrick published on 30 June 2009

Along with a great range of ultraportables, Sony's VAIO range has also led the way when it comes to multimedia machines, being the first to bring Blu-ray to the laptop market. The VAIO FW41E/H is a mid-spec machine, offering impressive media capabilities while also featuring a semi-portable design.

The 16-inch screen is a joy, with vivid and accurate colour reproduction, and a 16:9 aspect ratio that's ideally suited to watching movies. You'll need to opt for the more expensive FW41M/H (£1094) if you want to watch your films in 1920 x 1080 Full HD though, as this model's resolution of 1600 x 900 pixels isn't quite sharp enough. That said, it still provides crisp images, and there's plenty of space to work with multiple windows. You'll also be able to hook up a high-definition TV using the HDMI port.

Usability is aided by a bank of media keys below the display, letting you skip scenes or adjust volume settings without having to resize the display. The VAIO FW41E/H keyboard is also highly practical, with the same isolated design found on other Sony VAIOs, letting you type at speed without mistakes. It features quite a shallow keystroke, but all of the keys are well attached and it's a responsive and comfortable keyboard to type on.

Build quality is more mixed, with a sturdy metal lid that looks great and offers loads of protection for the screen, but plastics that could be of a higher quality. The silver finish looks good, but the palm rest bends under pressure.

An ideal family machine, the VAIO FW41E/H offers enough 3D performance to suit all but the most ardent gamers. The powerful ATi Mobility Radeon HD 4650 graphics card enables the latest games to run without issue, and even the most demanding office tasks are dispatched with ease.



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Office performance is better than average, if a little behind the latest top-of-the-range systems. The Intel Core 2 Duo T6400 processor is no slouch, backed by 4096MB of memory, and we found most applications ran with ease, only slowing slightly when running a group of programs simultaneously. The Sony's 3 and a half hour battery life is reasonable, and the weight of 3.3kg means it is light enough to take it on the road with you should the need arise.

The 500GB hard drive is great for storing movies on, providing more than enough space for entire music and video collections. The Blu-ray drive is read-only, so you won't be able to back up files to blank Blu-ray discs, although it can burn to blank DVDs and CDs.

A trio of USB ports make it easy to connect peripherals, although a fourth wouldn't have gone amiss on a machine of this size. eSATA is also notable for its absence. 802.11n Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet and Bluetooth offer comprehensive connectivity, although there's no sign of 3G/HSDPA.

## VERDICT

With plenty of style, comfort and a great screen, the Sony VAIO FW41E/H has a lot to recommend it. Performance also impresses, and with a high-end graphics card and the ability to play the latest games, it's a machine the whole family can enjoy. The quality could be better, with some of the plastics bending under pressure, but overall the small gripes are outweighed by the reasonable price tag and the numerous plus points.

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Notebook

### Good

Bright and colourful screen, comfortable keyboard, distinctive style

### Bad

Quality could be better, office performance is a little underwhelming

### Verdict

An impressive multimedia laptop that offers performance, comfort and style, but it could offer a slightly more sturdy design

**Price** £867

**Our score**

**7/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**