

Asus MyPal A730

by Stephen Patrick published on 9 November 2004

The competition is heating up in the mobile device market, as more multimedia punch is being packed into ever-smaller packages. To keep up with the times, PDA manufacturers are touting their latest models as all-in-one organisers and multimedia tools. Asus has come to the table with the MyPal A730 Pocket PC, equipped with a 1.3-megapixel camera and a high-resolution screen with 3D graphics.

Integrated cameras are becoming increasingly common in handhelds, and the MyPal A730's 1.3-megapixel resolution produces images, which can be made into 4 x 6 prints. With the thoughtful addition of a flash, it rivals entry-level dedicated digital cameras. A tiny mirror on the back of the casing, next to the lens, is handy for self-portraits. A camera button is conveniently located on the side of the unit for quick access. Oddly, the default settings had it triggering the voice recorder. Fortunately, the buttons are readily programmable and we had no trouble reassigning it.

Following the camera, the most outstanding feature of the MyPal A730 is its gorgeous display. A large 3.7-inch screen takes advantage of the flexibility of the Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition operating system. Users can switch between portrait and landscape modes to make the most of the photo viewer and to work on spreadsheets. The 65K colour display is 480 x 640 pixels rather than the standard 240 x 340 pixels. Text is crisp and easy to read, while the 3D icons look as though they're about to pop out of the screen.

The MyPal A730 is a unique purplish grey hue on the front, with a silver back cover. It sits comfortably in your hand with rounded edges on the bottom. The stylus is awkwardly tucked away on the bottom, where it can't be accessed while the handheld is in its docking cradle. To resolve this issue, Asus has provided a cradle with a



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stylus holder. At 170g, the A730 is a reasonable size for slipping into a pocket.

For connectivity, the MyPal A730 is equipped with Bluetooth and infrared. Unlike its predecessor, the A716, it doesn't have integrated Wi-Fi. However, it does have an SD and a CompactFlash slot, so users can add a memory card as well as a Wi-Fi expansion card. Buyers who need dual wireless should also look at the HP iPAQ rx3715 (£369 inc. VAT), which has a 1.2-megapixel camera, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi for around the same price.

The MyPal A730 is powered by the latest Intel XScale processor, the 520MHz PXA270. This chip has enough muscle to play MP3s and video clips, and it supports PIM functions with ease. Users have access to 48MB of the 64MB RAM internal memory, which is the minimum we would expect for the price. In addition, the 64MB flash ROM allows you to upgrade the OS. Memory cards provide extra storage for photos and video.

The main drawback with the MyPal A730's multimedia functionality is the battery life. It lasted only 3 hours and 50 minutes when we looped MP3s at full volume and brightness with wireless turned off, although Asus gives an estimate of nine hours. You can expect more endurance when simply running office applications. The battery is removable so it might be wise to carry a spare for long journeys.

VERDICT

Asus has created an elegant organiser capable of doubling as a portable media device. Shutterbugs looking for a gorgeous screen and a high-resolution camera will enjoy the MyPal A730, despite a limited battery life and a lack of built-in Wi-Fi.

At a glance

What is it?

Multimedia PDA with a 1.3-megapixel camera

Good

A gorgeous high-resolution screen and dual expansion slots

Bad

A poor battery life and no integrated Wi-Fi

Verdict

Users looking for a stylish handheld with vibrant graphics and a high-resolution camera will enjoy the MyPal A730

Price £352

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10