



GIGABYTE U2442N

Can you play games at high settings on a thin and light Ultrabook?

+ ULTRA-KILL
Sleek styling; lightweight; compact chassis; GPU better than usual integrated Intel graphics

- ULTRAVOX
GPU still not good enough for gaming at high settings; poor display

Gigabyte's U2442N Ultrabook looks positively emaciated in comparison to the gaming monsters also on test. Weighing just 1.7kg and clad in gorgeous brushed aluminium, this is a piece of kit we'd much rather carry around than the comparably plain and chunky competition. Its 14in 1,600 x 900 display offers a good balance between size and high resolution, while its compact keyboard and trackpad are surrounded by aluminium-look plastic. The question is – can you play games on a laptop such as this yet?

Despite the space constraints, the U2442N's dual-core Core i5-3210M is no slouch, with its two Hyper-Threaded cores running at 2.5GHz (and Turbo Boosting to 2.9GHz). The CPU is paired with a GeForce GT 640M GPU with 384 stream processors, as with the GT 650M. The GT 640M runs at a lower frequency of 620MHz, though, boosting to 709MHz when its 32W TDP allows. It also boasts 2GB of 900MHz (3.6GHz) GDDR5 memory. Meanwhile, the 8GB of 1,333MHz DDR3 RAM is slower than the 1,600MHz used by other laptops on test, but is still fast enough.

Despite its thin profile, the U2442N still manages to offer a pair of both USB3 and USB 2 ports and a card reader. Its storage setup is a treat too, with a 128GB mSATA Lite-On SSD, powered by a Marvell 9174 controller, making the Windows 8 desktop feel snappy and responsive. There's also a 5,400rpm 750GB Western Digital Scorpio Blue for bulk storage.

The 14in screen is deeply unimpressive, however, and it was far from being able to display the full sRGB gamut. The colour temperature of 6,600K is neutral, but the contrast ratio of just 210:1 is terrible, making dark scenes seem murky and indistinct. Gamma

levels are all too low as well, and to top it off the viewing angles are dire – move your head more than a few degrees from dead centre, and it looks as though someone's applied a negative filter to the screen.

Meanwhile, the overall score of 1,472 in our Media Benchmarks is respectable for a dual-core system, but you notice the performance hit in games when you compare it to the competition. The GT 640M proved insufficient to handle our test games at their demanding maximum settings.

A minimum frame rate in BF3 of 16fps at its native 1,600 x 900 resolution improved to 21fps when we dropped the resolution to 1,366 x 768, but this is less than a third of the performance offered by laptops equipped with the more capable HD 7970M.

DESPITE THE SPACE CONSTRAINTS, THE U2442N'S DUAL-CORE CORE I5-3210M IS NO SLOUCH, WITH ITS TWO HYPER-THREADED CORES RUNNING AT 2.5GHZ

CONCLUSION

We haven't given a score breakdown for the U2442N, as it's clearly in a different league from the other laptops on test, and it would be unfair to judge it by the same criteria. However, while the U2442N is certainly more stylish and luggage-friendly than traditional gaming laptops, and its GPU should be able to handle less demanding games at lower settings, it isn't a gaming powerhouse, and its screen is disappointing too. If you want decent portable gaming power, you still need to tolerate a chunkier, less attractive chassis. **H B**



HOW MUCH?

Price £920 inc VAT

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www.laptopsdirect.co.uk

Manufacturer

www.gigabyte.com