



The P2742 is available with a spicy orange cover, but we received a boring matte-black one.



The Fangbook features TRON-esque LEDs around the speakers, keyboard, and trackpad.

Byte vs. Bark

Two large, affordable gaming notebooks go fang-to-fang

Gaming notebooks can be quite pricey, but Gigabyte's P2742 and CyberPower's Fangbook X7-200 remind us that we don't need to break the bank to get PC gaming on the go. Not only are both of these 17.3-inch notebooks affordable at around \$1,500, they also both feature the same Core i7 Ivy Bridge processor. Which one is worth your hard-earned money? Read on to find out. —JIMMY THANG

GIGABYTE P2742

While it's hard to find a 17.3-inch gaming notebook that's truly portable, the P2742's 16.2x10.9x1.9-inch chassis is relatively svelte compared to others in its size class, including CyberPower's Fangbook. With a carry weight of eight pounds, 6.1 ounces (more than two pounds lighter than our "smaller" 15.6-inch MSI GT60 zero-point), the P2742 just barely passes as a notebook you could travel with.

Although its simple, unadorned appear-

ance might not scream gaming notebook—where are the tell-tale flashy LEDs?—its top cover features angular beveled edges that add some flare. Under the hood, the Gigabyte features a 2.4GHz Core i7-3630QM Ivy Bridge processor with a Turbo ceiling of 3.4GHz, 8GB of DDR3 RAM, and a GeForce GTX 660M with 2GB of GDDR5 memory. It also packs a 128GB SSD and a hefty 1TB HDD.

While the P2742 boasts a newer CPU than our zero-point's 2.3GHz Core i7-3610QM processor, it wasn't able to beat

it in any of our CPU-intensive tests. At its best, the Gigabyte CPU was neck-and-neck with our zero-point in our x264 benchmark. GPU-side, Gigabyte's offering didn't perform any better, trailing the ZP by 13 percent in 3DMark 11 and 23 percent in our STALKER benchmark. In our experiential gameplay test, we were able to squeeze by with max settings on Dota 2 (a Source Engine game) with average frame rates in the mid-30s at 1080p. Running the more graphically intensive Far Cry 3, we had to use the default low settings to attain playable frame

BENCHMARKS

	ZERO-POINT	
Stitch.Efx 2.0 (sec)	1,092	1,100 [-0.7%]
ProShow Producer 5 (sec)	1,786	1,853 [-3.6%]
x264 HD 5.0 (fps)	12	12
STALKER: CoP (fps)	32.8	25.3 [-22.9%]
3DMark 11 Perf	2,979	2,569 [-13.8%]
Battery Life (min)	187	190

Our zero-point notebook is an MSI GT60 with a 2.3GHz Intel Core i7-3610QM, 12GB DDR3/1600, two 500GB Seagate 7,200rpm hard drives, a GeForce GTX 670M, and Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit. STALKER: CoP tested at 1920x1080 with Ultra settings, Tessellation, and contact hardening.

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU	2.4GHz Intel Core i7-3630QM
RAM	8GB DDR3/1600
Chipset	Intel HM77
GPU	Nvidia GeForce GTX 660M 2GB GDDR5
Display	17.3-inch, 1920x1080 LED display (matte)
Storage	128GB SSD, 1TB HDD
Optical Drive	Blu-ray combo drive
Connectivity	Ethernet, VGA, HDMI, eSATA, all-in-one card reader, 2x USB 3.0, 1x USB 2.0, audio in, audio out, headphone, mic, 2MP webcam, Bluetooth, 802.11n
Lap / Carry	7 lbs, 0.6 oz / 8 lbs, 6.1 oz

rates at 1080p, which is a far cry from how great the game can look. The P2742 reminds us that the GeForce GTX 660M is no match for the GeForce GTX 670M, even if it has upgraded from Fermi to the more efficient Kepler architecture.

Above the fold is a matte 1920x1080 resolution display, which doesn't offer the widest viewing angles we've seen from a TN panel, but is perfectly serviceable. The P2742's trackpad has a coarse, almost sandpaper-like texture, which helps set it apart from the smooth surface of the palm rest. The trackpad supports Windows 8 gestures like swiping from the side and corners to bring up menus, but we found this irritating, as it often interfered with basic gestures. Luckily, disabling this feature fixed these issues, but there were still rare instances where the touchpad was unresponsive to our swipes. We had no complaints about the P2742's keyboard, which worked well whether gaming or typing.

One big issue we encountered was an error code that prevented us from installing Steam, requiring us to reformat the notebook to get it working. Gigabyte says ours was an isolated incident and that they have tested other units without such issues.

That problem aside, Gigabyte's P2742 can play the majority of games today, but it isn't as future-proof as we would like and is unable to play more graphically intensive games beyond medium-to-low settings. For \$150 more, we recommend getting the much more powerful Fangbook. Still, considering its affordable price tag, spacious storage, and relative portability, there's still use for the P2742 yet.

VERDICT
7
Gigabyte P2742
\$1,400, www.gigabyte.com

CYBERPOWER FANGBOOK X7-200

While Gigabyte's P2742 is somewhat portable, the same can't be said of CyberPower's Fangbook. It uses MSI's popular bulky chassis design—the same design used by our zero-point, except in a larger 16.8x11.3x2.1-inch form factor with a 17.3-inch TN display, à la the iBuyPower CZ-17 (reviewed in January). When we asked CyberPower why this particular chassis was becoming so popular, the company pointed to its spacious design, which offers good airflow, and the fact that consumers like its aesthetic.

Even though CyberPower uses a chassis we've seen time and time again, the Fangbook does make a few tweaks. First and foremost, the cover implements a futuristic armor design, which is reminiscent of the *Crysis Nanosuit*. In addition, the laptop features blue LEDs peppered about the case and a red-LED-backlit keyboard. This gives the notebook a very TRON-esque vibe that asserts its gaming status loud and clear.

While the Fangbook doesn't have the most impressive specs ever, you're getting a lot for \$1,550, including a 2.4GHz Core i7-3630QM CPU, 16GB of DDR3 RAM, and a GeForce GTX 675MX videocard. This is the first time we've reviewed a gaming laptop with a 675MX, which has 4GB of GDDR5 RAM and performance between a 680M and 670MX (MX cards are slightly faster than their M counterparts). While you don't get as much storage space as Gigabyte's P2742, you're still getting a 60GB Intel 520 Series SSD and a 750GB mechanical hard drive.

Thanks to these specs, the Fangbook was able to outrun our zero-point in every test. The gains weren't crazy in our CPU-intensive benchmarks (Stitch.efx, ProShow, x264)—all within 5 percent of each other—which makes sense given that the Fangbook's CPU is only 100MHz faster than the zero-point's. The performance differences were more apparent when we ran our GPU-intensive tests. The Fangbook was able to best the GT60 by 13 percent in

STALKER and double-digit percentages in 3DMark 11. Clearly, the Fangbook was able to put the 670MX's extra CUDA cores, faster clocks, and additional RAM to good use. In our experiential gameplay tests, the Fangbook was able to run *Dota 2* maxed out at 1080p with silky-smooth frame rates in the mid-50s. In *Far Cry 3*, the Fangbook was able to run at the default medium settings with frame rates in the mid-40s. We also ran the game on high, where the laptop yielded an average 30fps, though the inconsistent dips make this ill-advised.

The Fangbook's keyboard features anti-ghosting keys, which means the computer will recognize numerous button presses simultaneously. While the keyboard works well for gaming, it's not great for word processing; keypresses seemed to require more pressure than they should. We felt the same about the two buttons below the trackpad. One feature we did like is the subwoofer at the bottom for a 2.1 audio setup, which adds a little extra oomph to the auditory experience—something generally lacking in notebooks.

If you can get past the fact that the Fangbook is a heavy desktop replacement, you'll find a powerful gaming rig for an absolute steal of a price. We liked our MSI GT60 zero-point when we first reviewed it in December 2012, but the Fangbook is considerably more powerful, comes with an SSD, and offers a much larger screen for only 50 bucks more. We say it's well worth the price of admission.

VERDICT
9
CyberPower Fangbook X7-200
\$1,550, www.cyberpowerpc.com

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ProShow Producer 5 (sec)	1,786	1,705	
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3DMark 11 Perf	2,979	3,719	
Battery Life (min)	187	192	

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