

£1,030 GAMING ULTRABOOK

GIGABYTE U2442F

Is this really the best time to release a gaming Ultrabook? Gigabyte thinks so

VITAL STATISTICS

Price £1,030
Manufacturer Gigabyte
Web www.gigabyte.com
CPU Intel Core i7 3517U
GPU Nvidia GeForce GT 650M 2GB
Memory 8GB DDR3
Storage 128GB mSATA SSD
Screen 14-inch LED Backlight
Native resolution 1,600 x 900
Weight 1.59kg

Haswell is coming. Quick, look busy. In case you've missed it, Haswell is the code name for the next Core architecture from Intel. The word on the street is that Intel is looking to at least double the graphics performance over the current CPUs. This could mean gaming laptops that don't cost a small fortune or need over the top cooling.

Haswell will hit later this year, but what are mobile gamers to do in the meantime? Well, how about picking up a gaming Ultrabook from Gigabyte? That's what the Taiwanese company is banking on, with its U2442F seemingly ticking all the boxes you could want in a modern laptop: a discrete graphics core, an Intel Core i7 processor and an SSD.

These key components have been eased into a thin and light chassis bearing an Ultrabook badge. The screen is a decent example of TN tech and boasts a native resolution 1,600 x 900.

This would be a big ask for any entry level GPU, and indeed, the integrated HD4000 struggles to power it in-game, but the Nvidia GeForce GT 650M is much happier pushing polygons at such resolutions. You're probably eager to find out what the performance is like, and there is some good news here. With everything set as high as it will go, and testing at the native resolution, you're looking at decent frame rates in *Bioshock Infinite*, and low-ish figures in *Tomb Raider* and *Sleeping Dogs*. Ease off on the settings, particularly the anti-aliasing, and you'll hit 30fps without any issues.

Ultrabook credentials

While this machine isn't an absolute bomb when it comes to gaming, it can be cajoled into running the latest games with only a little tinkering. Said games will look good too, if not quite as good as they would on a pure gaming machine. However, unlike a pure gaming laptop, this isn't a weighty beast – this is an Ultrabook. It boasts great battery life, too – we saw three hours and 44 minutes playing back HD videos, which is impressive. Unfortunately, it's not a very sexy looking Ultrabook: there's a lack of finesse around the keyboard, a hollowness

to the plastic surround of the touchpad and a general air that this isn't a machine that'll set you back £1,000.

There's another problem with this machine, and that's on the storage front. We applaud the inclusion of an SSD over traditional spinning drives, but at just 128GB, this machine doesn't have a lot of capacity for that the reason you've bought it: games. With some titles rolling in at up to 30GB, you're going to be hitting the limits of the drive quickly – especially as Windows 8 is hardly what you'd consider thin. It's a speedy drive though, and there is the option to add a traditional hard drive to the machine – such as an SSD of the mSATA variety. So, there are options, despite adding to that big price tag.

The real problem for this machine is price. There are far more powerful gaming laptops available for less cash – and more desirable Ultrabooks, too. Then there's the spectre of Haswell, getting ready to drag prices down even further. It's not a bad machine, but lacks the polish to justify the asking price. **Alan Dexter**

PCFormat Verdict

Features ★★★★★
Performance ★★★★★
Value ★★★★★

Quality components are undermined by an uninspiring chassis, a lack of storage and an unjustified price tag.

★★★★★



