

GIGABYTE U2442F-CF1



£1,000 inc VAT • From www.scan.co.uk

VERDICT

Its screen could be better, but this is a great Ultrabook, especially for gamers

GIGABYTE HAS TENDED to focus on selling motherboards and PC components in the UK, but it also produces Ultrabook laptops. With its slim 19mm chassis and brushed silver finish, the U2442F-CF1 strikes a perfect balance between stylish design and great performance, proving that good-quality gaming laptops don't have to be held hostage in ugly, grey plastic boxes to pack a decent punch. Of course, its small size means it has to sacrifice some of the larger, more powerful components out there, but this laptop still crams in a lot of great hardware.

The U2442F has a dual-core 2GHz Intel Core i7-3537U processor that can Turbo Boost to 3.1GHz when temperatures allow, and 8GB of RAM. It scored a respectable 54 in our multimedia benchmarks, which places it just ahead of the previous wave of high-end Ultrabooks. Intel specifies that Ultrabooks must use energy-efficient processors rather than normal mobile chips, so the U2442F is still a long way from achieving the performance levels of true behemoths, such as the Schenker XMG P502 (see *Reviews, Shopper 298*), which scored 89 overall.

The U2442F's main highlight is its dedicated 2GB Nvidia GeForce GT 650M graphics chipset. This sets it apart from most other Ultrabooks, which tend to use the CPU's built-in graphics processor instead of a dedicated graphics card. The U2442F powered through our Dirt Showdown benchmarking

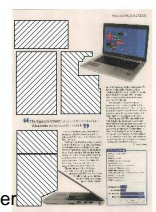
test at High quality and a resolution of 1,920x720 with a very smooth, highly playable average frame rate of 57.8fps. This is just shy of the maximum 60fps its screen can output every second, and we even managed 23fps at Ultra quality at the same resolution. In contrast, the Schenker XMG P502 provided an average frame rate of 113.6fps in our Dirt Showdown laptop test. Even so, the U2442F's score is one of the fastest scores we've seen for an Ultrabook.

You may have to reduce the quality settings in more graphically challenging games, however, as the U2442F managed just 18fps in our Crysis 2 benchmark at Ultra quality at its native resolution of 1,600x900. We don't often run the Crysis 2 benchmark test on laptops, as most struggle

with it, but we were pleased to see an average frame rate of 42fps when we lowered the quality to High. With frame rates like this, it's safe to say the U2442F will handle any modern games at moderate-to-good detail levels.

Even for those who are not interested in gaming, the U2442F is a great laptop for everyday use, if a little expensive. Its 128GB SSD may not suit those with large media collections or many applications, but it can boot Windows 8 in an instant. A version with a 128GB SSD and 750GB hard disk is £100 more (the U2442F-CF2). Its decent range of ports makes up for the low storage capacity somewhat, as the U2442F has two USB3 and two USB ports, VGA and HDMI ports, an SD card reader, a Gigabit Ethernet port and separate headphone and mic jacks.

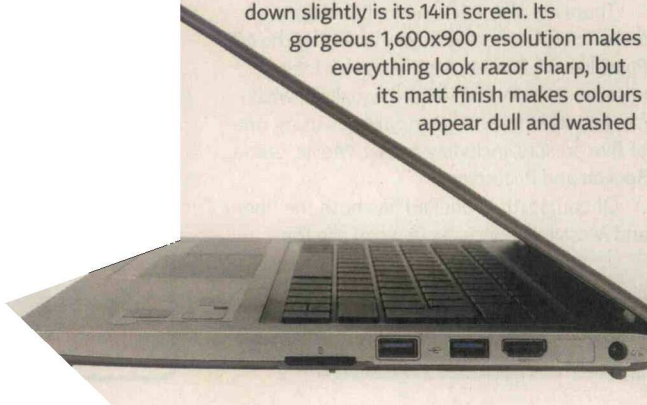
The laptop has more staying power than many of its pricier rivals. It lasted six



hours in our light-use battery test with the screen set to half brightness, so you'll be able to use it for most of a working day away from the mains.

Typing on the U2442F was a joy. Its backlit Chiclet-style keys aren't as bouncy as those of other laptops we've tested, but they're well spaced and provided enough tactile feedback to let us type happily all day. We also like its slightly textured touchpad, which provides a good amount of friction while still offering pinpoint precision. Its all-in-one button bar has a responsive click, and multi-touch gestures are accurate and responsive.

The only thing that lets the laptop down slightly is its 14in screen. Its gorgeous 1,600x900 resolution makes everything look razor sharp, but its matt finish makes colours appear dull and washed



SPECIFICATIONS

CPU 2GHz Intel Core i7-3537U
RAM 8GB
STORAGE 128GB SSD
GRAPHICS Nvidia GeForce GT 650M
OPTICAL DRIVE None
DISPLAY 14in widescreen LCD (1,600x900)
OPERATING SYSTEM Windows 8
DIMENSIONS 19x339x233mm, 1.6kg
POWER CONSUMPTION 1W standby, 16W idle, 62W active
WARRANTY Two-year RTB
PART CODE 2230BNHMW
DETAILS www.gigabyte.com

Windows overall	54
Multitasking	48
Dirt Showdown	57.8fps
Battery life	5h 58m

0% -50 Reference +50 +100
 See page 76 for performance details

out, with blacks and whites looking grey. We had no trouble with reflections, but its viewing angles were poor - we didn't have to move far to see a serious shift in contrast. When viewed head-on, its contrast levels were excellent, though.

The integrated speakers are fairly mediocre. They're certainly not the worst laptop speakers we've heard, but the minimal bass makes a pair of headphones or dedicated speakers essential if you want the best audio experience from your games and media.

The Gigabyte U2442F is one of the best-value Ultrabooks we've seen for a while. It doesn't have a fancy touchscreen or turn into a tablet, but its dedicated graphics processor gives it a huge edge over its competitors. It may not be as powerful as a true gaming laptop, but it's certainly much more portable and comfortable to use. If you value style and you don't mind a slight compromise on power, the Gigabyte U2442F-CF1 is for you.

Katharine Byrne

