



Gigabyte P35X v3

'Big but slim' is the theme of Gigabyte's latest gaming laptop.

The quest for the thin and light (well, light-ish) gaming laptop has been one that PC makers have been pursuing for years now, with varying results. In general, with each new generation our portable-PC tech has become both more power-efficient and cooler – alongside getting faster, of course. Unfortunately, we're not quite at the point where you can have an ultrabook body with top-drawer gaming prowess. Every performance laptop is always a trade off to some degree – a balancing act between price, performance and build quality.

This new 15.6-inch gaming machine from Gigabyte is a good example. It follows the company's general trend towards making sleek, slim machines that still pack the latest and greatest kit under the hood. At just 2.1cm thick, the P35X v3 still manages to wedge in a quad-core Core i7-4710HQ

processor, 16GB of memory, GeForce GTX 980M graphics chip and a 256GB RAID drive for the OS (using two 128GB SSDs) and a 1TB hard drive for storage. And all for a relatively affordable \$3,100 on the street.

As you'd expect, those components turn up good benchmark results – this one flies along whether you're gaming, encoding media or just casually surfing the web. And it delivers surprisingly good battery life too – managing between 3-4 hours in our intensive PCMark 8 Home and Work battery tests.

It's reasonably well-appointed in terms of usability too – the keyboard's near full size and has good travel on the keys, while the matte-finish trackpad is large and responsive. The screen on our test unit was a 2,880 x 1,620-pixel (aka 3K) number, but locally you'll find it's 1080p – it's therefore hard for us to pass final judgement, but on the 3K version the viewing

angles were good and colours deep (although not neutral, a little warm). The screen bezel was a little thicker than we'd have liked, however, especially on the top and bottom.

In terms of external build quality, the P35X v3's lid and the keyboard deck are aluminium alloy, although the bezel around the screen and the unit's whole underside are plastic. Weighing in at 2.5kg (plus 640g for the charger) it's not super portable, but can be lugged if necessary.

If the P35Xv3 has a main shortcoming, it's in the noise and heat it generates while gaming. Like the P34W v3 we reviewed back in APC March, page 29, this bigger model does get loud when gaming, with quiet rear-facing exhaust fans used to vent the hot air generated by the CPU and GPU when under load. As those fans are smaller in size than those in the BlackBook (see page 20) for example, they need to spin faster to move the same amount of air – and they

generate a higher-pitch whooshing sound as a result. That slimmer design also means that overall cooling isn't as efficient as in a fatter laptop either. That's apparent in the CPU and GPU temperatures, which reach a toasty 92°C and 87°C (respectively) – a lot higher than the 74°C and 72°C of the BlackBook.

The P35X v3 is, overall, quite good value for the specs on offer, and its thin design is quite physically pleasing. But while it might be physically discrete for a gaming laptop, acoustically it leaves little doubt.

■ Dan Gardiner

Verdict

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

Great specs at a reasonable price, but heat and noise are perhaps the true cost.

★★★★★