



Millennium Music **FALCON LX**

Pros recommend a dedicated laptop for music-making, but they can be hard to find. Hollin Jones tracks down the Falcon LX.

KEY FEATURES

- 15.4-inch WXGA+ widescreen laptop
- Intel Core 2 Duo T9600 2.8GHz processor
- 4GB (2 x 2GB) DDR2 800 RAM
- 320GB Seagate 7,200RPM, 16MB SATA hard drive
- Windows Vista Home Premium or Windows 7 Home Premium
- Wireless N Draft LAN module

FALCON LX

Manufacturer **Millennium Music**

Price **£1,150**

Contact **Millennium 0845 555 9090**

Web **www.music-pc.com**

The last few years have seen a rise in the popularity of portable music systems, as laptops have evolved to offer the kind of performance that

was the preserve of desktop systems. What's surprising, then, is how few dedicated audio PC manufacturers will build and sell you one. It goes without saying that an off-the-shelf Windows laptop is not going to cut it for pro audio work, so, in many cases, people use souped-up laptops designed for gaming, which are more widely available than audio models.

The problem with this is that you tend to get a system that's tweaked for graphics-intensive work, sometimes sporting a much higher-end, high-spec graphics card than a musician needs, but not necessarily possessing the grunt in the RAM and CPU departments that make for smooth running when it comes to producing music.

Operating theatre

Millennium Music is one of the few PC specialists that will build you a laptop tailored for music, and its Falcon LX system – as you might expect – can be configured to suit your needs. Our review model came at our request with Windows XP – still, remarkably, the safest bet for maximum compatibility in terms of plug-ins, DAWs and drivers. It's also available with Windows Vista

MILLENNIUM MUSIC IS ONE OF THE FEW PC SPECIALISTS THAT WILL BUILD YOU A LAPTOP TAILORED FOR MUSIC.

(which is best avoided) or Windows 7 Home Premium for just under £100 extra. Millennium will build a dual-boot system for £36 plus the cost of the Windows licenses, so you can have, for example, XP and Windows 7 partitions either for reasons of compatibility, testing or to keep one 'quarantined' from the internet. As usual, you should check, if opting for Windows 7, about the compatibility of your chosen software and drivers, although things seem to be moving more quickly now in

this respect than they ever did with Vista. The processors are 64-bit capable and the PC can hold up to 4GB of RAM if you opt for two 2GB sticks, which Windows 7 will be able to take full advantage of (in contrast to the 3GB limit of XP).

The laptop's casing is perhaps less than eye-catching, in some ways resembling a business machine rather than a music model. This doesn't affect its performance, of course, although a stylish case always wins a few 'cool points'. The 15-inch screen is crisp and clear, incorporating a webcam at the top and running at a widescreen resolution of 1,400x900. There's a DVD-RW drive and a wireless card can be added for a modest £26. There's even a modem port, although beyond sending faxes we're not sure if anyone really uses these any more.

Three USB 2.0 ports ensure that you should be fine with USB peripherals, but there's no FireWire by default, which may be an issue for some. The ExpressCard slot can be configured with a FireWire card if you wish and there's also a multi-format memory card reader built-in, plus, of course, Ethernet and a monitor output. You will also find an HDMI port and eSATA interface on the side – great for watching movies and connecting fast hard drives respectively, although in the case of a music-oriented laptop we wonder whether replacing either of these with a FireWire port might make more sense. Finally, there are integrated mic and headphone mini-jacks.

Nuts and bolts

It's always recommended that you beef up your RAM, so we'd advise going for the full 4GB, especially if you're going to

be using Windows 7. The standard 320GB hard drive is fast and spacious but you can opt for a 500GB model during configuration. Both run at 7,200RPM, which puts a greater strain on your battery than the standard 5,400RPM drive but greatly improves performance, so it's a worthwhile trade-off. A solid-state drive can be fitted if desired, although at present these are relatively expensive and have lower capacities than traditional drives. Our model was fitted with the faster dual-