

core 2.8GHz CPU, but 2.1 and 2.53 versions are also available at a lower price if your needs are more modest.

In use, the laptop performed admirably with whatever we threw at it, without ever seeming to raise its fan noise to any serious level (most of the time, in fact, it was almost silent). We ran Sonar 8.5 extensively on the PC for quite a while, stress-testing it with numerous tasks and projects and it took everything in its stride. We were able to run large projects with some fairly hefty

THIS IS A SOLID LAPTOP THAT WILL DEFINITELY TAKE CARE OF YOUR MOBILE MUSIC-MAKING NEEDS.

instrument and effects plug-ins at low latencies without experiencing crackling or dropouts. Freezing tracks was also speedy, and although our original PSU exhibited some noise issues when we connected a USB audio interface, Millennium replaced it and the new model was fine. Other tasks, such as iTunes encoding and video rendering – although not strictly part of the music process – were also snappy.

MEASURING UP

From www.gear4music.co.uk you can find a 15-inch Red Sub Audio laptop for £735, although its specs are lower than those of the Falcon LX. You get a dual 2.1GHz CPU, 1GB RAM and Windows XP. Alternatively, the same company will supply a 17-inch model with a dual 2.8GHz processor, 4GB RAM and a 320GB drive for £1,200. Apple's MacBook Pros start with 13-inch screens – a dual 2.53GHz model with 4GB RAM (and a capacity of 8GB) will cost you £1,174. With the appropriate license you can run Windows alongside Mac OS X or boot into it completely using Boot Camp.

Ready for takeoff?

The Falcon LX could arguably look a bit more exciting, although perhaps not in the rather garish way that some gaming laptops do. What really matters,

however, is performance, and this laptop has plenty of grunt for running pro audio projects. The addition of eSATA and HDMI as standard at the expense of FireWire seems a little odd and detracts slightly from the 'pro audio' image, suggesting more of a general-purpose laptop. That said, you can add FireWire if you like and the format never quite achieved the ubiquity in the Windows world that it did with the Mac. And with

Windows 7 set to become the standard in the near future, this is a solid laptop that will definitely take care of your mobile music-making needs. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Plenty of power for your DAW
- Good selection of I/O
- Low noise
- Speedy CPU

WALK ON BY

- FireWire as standard would be nice
- The casing is a bit workmanlike in appearance

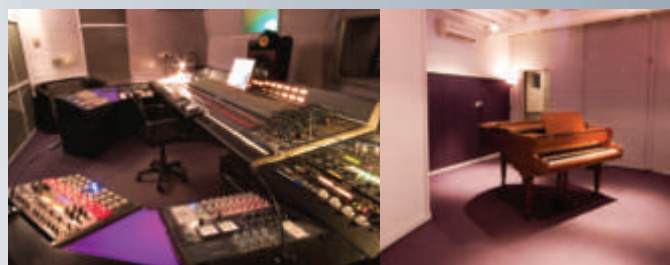
VERDICT

A solid Windows laptop for mobile music-making. Opt for the faster CPUs and maximum RAM to future-proof yourself.



METHOD SPOT

Although Windows Vista spectacularly failed to set the computing world alight – resulting in the extension of support for XP way beyond what Microsoft had wanted – Windows 7 looks set to finally put an end to the old system. With a smaller footprint than Vista and much of the bloat removed, the pro audio world seems likely to embrace it and gradually phase out XP as standard on new PCs. There are many advantages to this, notably the fact that most of its versions are 64-bit native, so they can address more than 3GB RAM – a long-standing issue with XP. For musicians this is crucial because it means you are able to load bigger samples libraries into memory, resulting in improved performance. Multi-core support is also strong, meaning a smoother ride overall as computer hardware continues to develop.



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