



GammaTech Durabook D15RS



URL: <http://www.laptopmag.com/review/laptops/gammatech-durabook-d15rs.aspx>

by John R. Delaney on Friday, January 18, 2008

An affordable mainstream notebook built to survive bumps, drops, and spills.

The Durabook D15RS may come up a bit short in terms of features, but its solid performance and semi-rugged design will appeal to users who require a notebook that can handle its share of abuse. As is the case with most semi-rugged, this system is not meant to be used in the harshest of environments, nor is it designed to survive an underwater adventure, but it passed our torture tests with flying colors.

Sturdy, Yet Comfortable Design

As is the case with most semi-rugged notebooks, the 6.4-pound D15RS is housed in a sturdy magnesium alloy chassis, complete with rubberized corner guards on the top and bottom of the unit. Beneath the silver lid sits a bright 15.4-inch widescreen display with a 1280 x 800-pixel resolution. The shock-mounted display is glossy and reflective, but it produced brilliant colors and has a nice wide viewing angle. It's not daylight readable, but it's still bright enough to view in the great outdoors without completely washing out.

The all-black keyboard deck contains a comfortable, well-spaced keyboard and a wide-aspect two-button touchpad that's on the small side. The only other buttons are a power switch and a Wi-Fi switch, which is surprising given the amount of room on the deck. A set of multimedia keys would have been a nice addition, or at the very least, a few quick-launch keys. The keyboard, touchpad, and buttons are all protected by a spill-resistant membrane that can handle about 3.3 ounces of liquid. Other rugged features include a shock-mounted hard drive and motherboard and an optical-drive locking mechanism that prevents the tray from opening upon impact from a drop.

D15RS Features

Along the front bezel are a 4-in-1 card reader and six system status LEDs; you'll also find a cutout for an optional SIM Card slot. Mounted on the right side of the unit is one USB port, along with serial and FireWire ports, a dual-layer DVD burner, and modem and Ethernet jacks. There are two additional USB ports, a VGA port, an ExpressCard slot, and headphone and microphone jacks on the left. The speakers embedded in the screen's lower bezel are standard issue, meaning they'll suffice for everyday use but lack the power and bass necessary to satisfy even the most casual audiophile.

Roughing up the Durabook

The Durabook complies with the MIL-STD-810F spec for drops and vibration, but unlike the Panasonic Toughbook 52 and Dell Latitude ATG D630, it is not equipped with protective port covers, which means it's just as susceptible to damage from dust and moisture as any ordinary notebook. To measure the Durabook's toughness, we subjected it to a few of our own torture tests. The unit survived three consecutive drops onto a carpeted office floor from a height of 3 feet without shutting down or sustaining any noticeable damage to the exterior shell or display. We also dropped a total of three ounces of water over three spots on the keyboard (upper left, upper right, and touchpad) with no adverse effects.

Pretty Good Performance and Endurance

Powered by a 2.2-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T7500 processor and 2GB of DDR2 system memory, the Durabook turned in a respectable score of 4028 on our PCMark05 test and gave us 3 hours and 11 minutes of battery life before requiring a charge. A 3DMark03 score of 1905 is about what we expected from the Intel GMA X3100 video card; it can handle the everyday graphics workload but lacks the muscle to run intensive 3D games effectively. Wireless performance was also decent; data throughput measured 17.4 Mbps at a distance of 15 feet from our access point and 15.6 Mbps at a distance of 50 feet.

Our review system included a 160GB hard drive, which was preloaded with Windows XP Professional and Cyberlink's PowerDVD Suite, but you can have it configured with Vista Business Edition or Vista Home Basic Edition. The system is covered by a standard two-year warranty with a 3- to 5-day service turnaround, which falls short of the three-year plans that you get with most rugged notebooks these days. However, you can upgrade to the three-year plan for only \$75 more.

Durabook D15RS Verdict

Despite the absence of protective port covers and the lack of multimedia keys, the Durabook D15RS is a good choice if you need a reasonably priced semi-rugged notebook that can take a beating. It may not be as durable as the Toughbook or GoBook, but it is a solid performer and much more affordable than most notebooks in its class.

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Technical Specifications

GammaTech Durabook D15RS

<http://www.gammatechusa.com>

CPU	2.2-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T7500
RAM Included	2GB
RAM Upgradable To	4GB
Hard Drive Size	160GB
Hard Drive Speed	5,400rpm
Hard Drive Type	SATA Hard Drive
Optical Drive Type	DVD±R DL
Optical Drive Speed	8X
Display Size (inches)	15.4
Native Resolution	1280x800
Graphics Card	Intel GMA X3100
Video Memory	384MB
Wi-Fi	802.11a/b/g
Bluetooth	
Mobile Broadband	
Operating System	MS Windows XP Pro
Ports (excluding USB)	Ethernet;Firewire;Headphone;Microphone;Modem;VGA;serial
USB Ports	3
Card Slot(s)	4-1 card reader;ExpressCard
Warranty/Support	2-year parts and labor/ toll-free technical support M-F 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. PST.
Size	14.6 x 10.9 x 1.6 inches
Weight	6.4 pounds

Test Results

PCMark05	4,028
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3DMark03	1,905
Battery Life Wi-Fi On	3:05
Battery Life Wi-Fi Off	3:11
Wireless Performance 15 feet	17.4 Mbps
Wireless Performance 50 feet	15.6 Mbps

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