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Review: Venom BlackBook Zero 14

by Bennett Ring | Monday 20 February 2017 | [Comment Now](#)



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Rating

Overall: ★★★★★

"There's not a great deal of flair about this product – it's simply well-built, well-balanced and well-priced."

Supplier

Venom www.venomcomputers.com.au

Price

\$1699 AUD
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Specs

Intel Core i5-7Y54 (twin-core, HyperThreaded, 3.2GHz Turbo Speed); 8GB LPDDR3 memory; 250GB SSD; replaceable battery; USB Type-C; 14.1-inch FHD IPS panel.

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Designed for utility, not pretty features.

Home-grown laptop maker Venom prides itself on making laptops that don't focus on flashy features such as being thinnest or lightest. Rather its aim is to deliver reliable productivity focused machines that are designed for the long haul, with competitive performance and extremely tight pricing. Sure, it doesn't make them the most exciting products around, but they do deliver on their goals – giving you a machine that will do exactly what it promises to do.

The BlackBook Zero 14 is a 14.1-inch laptop, packing a 1920 x 1080 IPS display. The matte finish means it's easy to use in bright lighting condition, though the colours aren't as punchy or impressive as similarly priced ultrabooks. Contrast performance is excellent though, blazing through the many tests on lagom.nl without any issues, unlike competing screens that focus on rich colours rather than detail. The resolution is fine for a screen of this size, but it's not touch-enabled, which might be an issue for those who enjoy dragging their screens without having to rely upon the touchpad.



Speaking of which, while it's accurate enough, the rough feel of the touchpad isn't as impressive as the glass-like touchpads we've seen on other recent ultrabooks. Thankfully the keyboard more than makes up for this, as each key has much more travel than competitors, leading to a feeling that you're typing on an actual keyboard rather than a flimsy touchpad. The chassis utilises a "Sand Blasted Alloy composite, metal unibody construction", which feels extremely sturdy, not to mention scratch-resistant. This could be why it's a tad heavier than we're accustomed to, weighing 1.4kg.

A couple of great little extras are included in the box. First there are two power packs – one for the office, the other for home, so you can fit the laptop into the tiny fabric covers so many of us favour, which usually have no

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room for a power pack. Not that you'll need the power pack for a regular day's use. We were extremely impressed by the battery life score this recorded in PCMark 8 Home's battery test, clocking in at a huge 326 minutes. This means you can easily expect a solid ten hours of real world usage out of this laptop, which is excellent at this price point and size. The other nice inclusion in the box is the USB Operating System recovery disk, which will do a full OS reinstall in about ten minutes if things go pear-shaped. These two little details are nice inclusions that show that the user experience has really been thought about.

Venom has decided to allow the battery to be replaceable, as well as the storage to be easily upgradeable, which has led to the chassis being a little deeper than some of the ultra-thins on the market, at 14mm. It's still small enough to easily slip into your briefcase or handbag though, and these decisions mean you don't need to toss the laptop when the battery dies.



Intel's Core i5-7Y54 had a mere TDP of just 7W, yet ramps its twin HyperThreaded cores up to 3.2GHz in short bursts when necessary; most of the time it'll hover around the base frequency of 1.2GHz. When paired with 8GB of LPDDR3 memory and the 250GB SSD, performance is snappy, and it scored a very respectable 30380 in the PCMark 8 Home test. The inclusion of an SSD reader, not to mention the ease of upgrading the SSD yourself, means increasing storage space should be a cheap and simple affair.

There's not a great deal of flair about this product – it's simply well-built, well-balanced and well-priced. If you're looking for something that just does the job at a very nice price point, with overall excellent battery life, look no further.

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