

GETAC B300

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Like many seriously rugged notebooks, the B300 is an expensive piece of kit. We particularly like the 'sunlight readable' screen option and touch-screen capability, although its 4:3 aspect ratio makes this 13.3in. notebook seem a little dated.

Design

This is a sizeable and very solidly built system. You'd expect a normal 13.3in. notebook to be relatively lightweight, but the GETAC B300 comes in at 3.5kg. Much of that weight is due to the robust chassis and component cushioning.

The casing of the B300 is made from a tough magnesium alloy that provides solid protection for the notebook when it's closed. A handle is built into the casing, which this tucks neatly away when not in use. The toughened shell means that the B300 measures a portly 6cm thick. It is 30.35cm wide and 26.3cm deep.



The 13.3in. GETAC B300 weighs a hefty 3.5kg, thanks to its extremely robust military-grade build quality.

A very robust clasp holds the lid and keyboard sections together, helping to prevent dust and other materials getting inside the casing during transit and potentially damaging the screen. There's a fingerprint sensor built into the wrist-rest area, protected by a sliding cover.

The display has a (now somewhat dated) native resolution of 1,024 by 768 pixels, which makes it difficult to display two document windows side by side. The B300 can be configured with a touch screen, and our review sample came with that option: it's a passive screen that responds to finger presses, and adds £132 to the basic price tag.

GETAC's latest sunlight-readable technology can boost the screen brightness from its standard 200 nits up to 1,200 nits. This option, which was fitted in our review sample, adds a cool £370 to the price, but is extremely effective outdoors. You can turn the 1,200 nits down to a more office-friendly 200 nits by tapping a button that sits in a bank above the keyboard. A light sensor also regulates screen brightness according to ambient light, in order to conserve battery power.

Another option, again fitted to our review sample, is a £297 'night vision' mode. This allows you to view the screen while wearing night vision goggles — GETAC says it's the only company to currently offer this distinctly military-oriented technology.

The keyboard can be fitted with a backlight for an extra £94, and our fully-specified review model came with this option too. The keyboard felt a little spongy, but the keys are large and clearly marked. A half-height row of function keys sits atop the number row, with a touchpad and two rubbery mouse buttons beneath the main body of the keyboard.

Features

The GETAC B300 has an Intel Core 2 Duo L7500 processor running at 1.6GHz. This CPU has 4MB of Level 2 cache and an 800MHz frontside bus. Our review sample came with 2GB of RAM, upgradeable to 4GB. Windows XP Professional, which is an available downgrade from Windows Vista Business, was the installed OS.

Wi-Fi (802.11a/b/g) and Bluetooth (2.0+EDR) are both standard features, while GPS — a £94 option — was also included on our review unit.

The B300 complies with a range of standards, including MIL-STD-810F and IP54. GETAC provides a full listing of the [standards and testing criteria](#) for the B300; and has a page describing its [ruggedised features](#) (including some video of testing in progress).

The 120GB SATA hard drive is shock-mounted and all ports and connectors are protected by hinged covers of various types. There are several small groups of the latter, which should help to eliminate unnecessary port exposure as you attach and remove peripherals in the field.



The left-hand side of the GETAC B300 (front to back): optical drive and battery.

The optical drive is a super-multi DVD rewriter that sits on the left-hand side behind a hinged door. Behind this is another very solidly hinged door protecting the removable 7,650mAh Li-ion battery.



The right-hand side of the GETAC B300 (front to back): hard drive; USB ports and PC Card slots; FireWire and audio ports plus SD card reader; modem and Ethernet ports.

A similar door protects the removable 120GB hard drive on the right-hand side of the B300. Behind this, another door protects two well-spaced USB ports and a pair of Type II

PC Card slots. Towards the back, a third door protects a FireWire (IEEE 1394) port, headphone and microphone jacks, an SD card reader and a manual switch for the Bluetooth and Wi-Fi modules. Finally, a fourth cover protects the modem (RJ-11) and Ethernet (RJ-45) connectors.



The back of the GETAC B300 (left to right): power input; USB port; port replicator connector, VGA-out, 2 x serial ports

At the back, a cover protects the power input while another protects the notebook's third USB connector. A final, long cover protects two serial connectors, a VGA connector and a connector for a port replicator.

Performance

Battery life is rated at up to 12 hours from the provided 9-cell battery. Some features — particularly the high-brightness sunlight readable technology — can deplete the battery more quickly. To approach 12 hours you need to put the notebook into power saving mode, which turns the screen down to a very low (but workable, at least indoors) brightness level.

We ran the demanding [Battery Eater](#) benchmark with the power saving mode off but with the ambient light sensor turned on: we got 3 hours and 32 minutes of battery life under these conditions. This is reasonable, but not outstanding.

Conclusion

Like many seriously rugged notebooks, the B300 is an expensive piece of kit. It has a range of features that make it suitable for inhospitable conditions, not all of which are to do with chassis protection. We particularly like the 'sunlight readable' 1,200 nits screen option and the touch screen capability, for example, although the 4:3 aspect ratio XGA display makes this notebook seem a little dated.