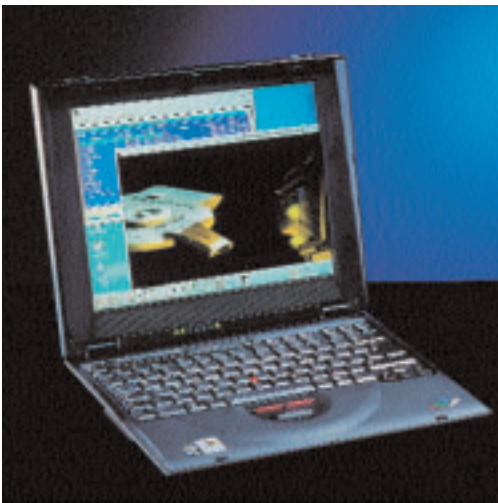


IBM THINKPAD I1200



We actually asked IBM for one model each from the A-, X- and the i-series but Big Blue delivered a ThinkPad i1200 to our labs. According to their own advertisements this is "optimised for Internet". Fair enough!

Installation

As the device has no disk drive, there was no need to repartition the hard disk as with the other test devices.

SuSE-Linux was booted from CD courtesy of the permanently integrated 24x CD-ROM drive. YaST2 then started, surprisingly, in text mode. Reverting to Windows, we first made an inventory of the drivers installed at which point we learned the graphics chip was a Silicon Motion LynxEM+.

The installation of Linux was attempted again with the surprising result that the graphics subsystem could be used with the XF86_SVGA server. At the end of the second Yast2 run, the Crystal WDM Audio Codec also ran.

The small 800x600 pixel 12.1 inch TFT display failed to blow our socks off, either under Linux or under Windows. Elsewhere in the test only the Sony has an equally-modest diagonal – on the other hand, though, it does weigh a whole kilo less with a resolution of 1024x768.

The Intel Celeron 500 MHz is also the slowest in the our test. As if to confirm this, in the course of the our tests, PovRay rendered the image on the IBM's in a very leisurely fashion.

No connection ...

IBM gave this ThinkPad a parallel port for the printer and two USB connections which can be operated with Linux. Otherwise they've been fairly skimpy with regard to the ports – there is neither a serial nor an Irda. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the internal modem is unusable because the modem chip turned out to be an Intel 7196 which is unsupported within Linux. The scope of the device for the Internet is therefore highly questionable. But hold on – there are four special keys for *Mail*, *Shopping*, *Search* and *Home*. But these are inoperable within Linux.

However, if you're lucky enough to have a LAN or ADSL internet connection then you're also out of luck – as a device at the bottom of the range, the i1200 has no Ethernet socket.

Ergonomics

Unlike the mediocre graphics, there is also some positive news about the human interface devices – the keyboard is stable, has a pleasant lift and perceptible pressure points. Because of the cursor block being offset at top right and the functional mouse replacement, it is possible to work on the ThinkPad almost like on a standard PC.

Conclusion

For such a low price one can't expect miracles. But up-to-date components which function under Linux is not asking too much. The IBM also disappointed us with an outmoded processor and a small display.

We also suspect that even IBM aren't keen on this notebook. An call to the order hotline to get the price had the sales clerk ask us to confirm three times if the performance of this device was really adequate for him.

The fact that in the test there were also system crashes and graphics errors when switching between text console and X was annoying, and was the cherry on the cake of an unsatisfactory overall impression. We would really have preferred a device from the A- or X-series which we suspect would have done better. ■

IBM ThinkPad i1200, Model 1161

- (-) no IRDA
- (-) crashes under X
- (-) obsolete hardware
- (-) overall, too high a price

Last thoughts

This test was a far more positive affair than we expected. In the case of XFree86, which was our main worry, just the fact that there is an X-server which works counts as a success. However, all the devices ran at maximum resolution and colour depth with most even fully supporting the TV output. Another pleasing discovery was the 3D-accelerated X-servers for the Tecra 8100 and Satellite Pro 4300 from Toshiba. Let's hope development of these will continue.

But the greatest surprise is that although most notebooks are equipped with the Lucent WinModem chipset which, after the linux/include/linux/tty.h patch, worked without any problems. Lastly we must plead with all notebook owners who are running Linux – the "Linux on Laptops" project relies on the support of Linux laptop users. A brief listing of the hardware of individual devices, perhaps with an indication of what you personally have got working, will make a welcome contribution and further the cause.