



**Real People Reviews** by Daniel M. East

**Product:** Powerbook/15"/1.5Ghz/512Mb RAM/128Mb Graphics/80Gb 5400RPM drive

**Manufacturer/Vendor/Developer:** Apple Computer

**MSRP: 15" BASE:** \$1,999.00; as tested: \$2,749.00

**Review date:** October 11, 2004

**PULL QUOTE:** "a lot of power on the go..."

The business standard for portable computing from Apple doesn't disappoint with outstanding performance, looks, accessibility and all of the finesse that makes this generation of the product the best of all worlds for power on the go. Of course, I can only assume that the moment I open the box, a new model will be announced; however, that goes with the territory and very pleased with all aspects of this model tested.

One of the nicest surprises about the new Powerbook is just how simple it is to upgrade from an older Mac via the Apple Setup Assistant found under hardware pre-loaded with OS 10.3.5. Just after the first startup chime, the splash screen asked if I was upgrading from a previous Mac, and I was. Within thirty minutes, all of my files, images, iTunes library, iPhoto library and all of the iLife apps' files were now both loaded onto my new Powerbook, but so was my e-mail, applications and just about everything else. With very few exceptions where the MAC address was product specific to the software, everything worked. Correction: everything worked a lot better.



There is a lot to love about the new Powerbook. The first thing is the display. The images are crisp, clean and bright with less need to twist and turn the LCD for best viewing position. The rendering times are many times faster (model tested was upgraded to 128Mb Graphics) than any other Powerbook I've tested. The lumi-sensitive back lit keyboard is just a pleasure to type on and it is quiet while precise. Audio is improved, but not spectacular from the internal speakers. This is still an issue with most laptops, but I'm hoping that the next generation borrows some of the reflective configuration found in the iBooks and iMac G5.

My only real gripe about this product is the ease at which the aluminum finish can be scratched. A far cry from the titanium models in this, but it would be great to have something that isn't so easily scuffed or scratched without the added expense of a third party skin. I did, in this case, add the iSkin keyboard protector.

TIP: I found great results in this configuration by ordering it with a SINGLE slot of 512Mb RAM vs. 2x256Mb so that I could add a single 1Gb stick from Other World Computing/MacSales. What a huge difference in performance, even over the 1Gb in my last model tested, with the new faster PC2700/DDR 333Mhz RAM for just under \$250. A great investment if you use anything multimedia or graphical at all.

There is always a lot of discussion about the Powerbook vs. iBook decision and it comes down to a very simple thing for me. The Powerbook is faster, has more video options and the backlit keyboard. In addition, the iBook doesn't offer FireWire 800 connectivity so, for my particular needs, the Powerbook makes much better sense. No, it is not as fast as a dual G5 PowerMac, but it offers a lot of power on the go. If you are ready for a new Mac and need to split the difference between a desktop and a portable, this is a very happy medium.

**OVERALL RATING: 9 out of 10 stars EXCELLENT**

**For more information, visit: <http://www.apple.com/powerbook/>**

*Daniel East is a freelance writer for several Mac-specific publications; a co-host of "PC Talk Radio/Levin Communications and a presenter/speaker/consultant. East is also the founder and president of The Mid-Atlantic Apple & Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs).*

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