

Zepto Znote 3215W

If you find the 800x480 screen resolution of the Eee PC a little restrictive, **Graham Morrison** has found a full-size alternative for a little more cash.

In brief...

» A chunky, no-nonsense laptop that's well specified and works with Linux. See also: the Asus Eee PC for a smaller alternative, or a Linux-compatible laptop from Emperor Linux.

Our System

CPU: Intel Celeron M540 1.83 GHz
Memory: 1GB
Hard drive: 80GB
Screen: 15.4-inch 1,280x800
Graphics: Intel Integrated (GMA X3100)
Wireless: Intel 4965AGN
Price: From £269 including VAT

This is a cheap laptop. That's the reason for its existence. The review unit we're looking at here costs only £50 more than the Eee PC that Mike is still so enamoured with. And while this machine could never be considered an ultra-portable model (it weighs a considerable 2.8kg and is 35.5cm wide), there's nothing light about its specification. Even with the cheapest configuration, a modern Intel CPU accompanies 1GB of RAM, an 80GB hard drive and a bright glossy screen with a 1,280x800 resolution.

But none of this is important if it doesn't run Linux. Zepto seems to be in two minds about offering Linux to its customers. It was happy to send us a machine with Ubuntu installed, but is as yet undecided about offering this as a general solution. At least Zepto doesn't sell machines crippled with any Microsoft tax – its machines ship by default without an OS. Douglas Adams would be proud.

Smooth installation

Most Linux users are going to install their own choice of distribution anyway, and this is exactly what we did. Twenty minutes after inserting the Ubuntu 7.10 CD into the dual-layer rewritable DVD drive, we had a working installation. Wireless networking was running, the trackpad was configured (with scrolling), graphics driver and screen resolution choices were spot-on, and even the special keys worked. We pressed the the browser button, and up popped *Firefox*; we pressed the button marked with an envelope, and *Evolution* appeared. Even the



» Looks-wise, the Zepto is a long way from the MacBook Air – but then so is its price.

blue functions worked, enabling you to alter the screen brightness and sound volume from the keyboard. This is all thanks to Gnome's SCIM input control, but it also says a lot about the standard components used by the laptop. The only problem we had was with the 3D *Compiz* desktop: the embedded Intel graphics hardware is 3D accelerated, but *Compiz* complains of a blacklisted ID for the Intel GMA X3100. The solution was to add `SKIP_CHECKS=yes compiz to /etc/xdg/compiz/compiz-manager`, but this is a sign that there are some problems with the current Intel driver. After this fix we had no further problems with the graphics and *Compiz* worked faultlessly.

Tough book

Blue LEDs are used throughout, and while the black case is a little chunky, it feels tough enough for frequent flying or daily college trips. We don't like the indentations in the case where extra hardware would be if you had bought a higher-spec model, such as in the top panel for the webcam and the indented square in the palm rest for the finger scanner, but we understand that compromises need to be made somewhere. The keyboard also takes a little getting used to because the Home,

Page Up, Page Down and End keys are all to the right of the Carriage Return, and the cursor keys are also a little narrow.

We got an average battery life of about 2 hours 40 mins with general browsing through wireless, and the connectivity options are excellent, with Ethernet, FireWire, USB and more. All things considered, the Zepto is surprisingly functional, with all the important features working straight out of the box. When you consider the price, along with the 12-month pick-up-and-return warranty, it's an excellent purchase. **LXF**



» The Znote's has connector for FireWire, modem, Ethernet and VGA, as well as a multimedia card slot and four USB ports.

LINUX FORMAT Verdict

Zepto Znote 3215W

Developer: Zepto
Web: www.zepto.com
www.techradar.com/254263
Price: From £269 inc. VAT

Features	8/10
Performance	8/10
Ease of use	7/10
Value for money	9/10

» Clunky in places, but everything works – this is without doubt a bargain buy.

Rating 8/10