



FROM \$1,199 | HP.COM/AU

HP Spectre x2-A005TU

Not quite spectacular, but offers some fantastic specs for the price.

The general theme to HP's Spectre line is 'sleek, thin and stylish'. This new model is very much a 2-in-1 cast in the Surface Pro mould, at 8mm thick and 840g with kickstand and a chassis carved out of a single piece of aluminium, plus a 12-inch IPS 1,920 x 1,280-pixel display (at the same productivity-friendly 3:2 aspect ratio as the Surface Pro).

But it is a smidgen more affordable, offering up a creditable Core m5/128GB SSD model for just \$1,199 — the entry-level Surface Pro 4 will cost you \$150 more for less memory (4GB vs 8GB), a slower Core m3 processor and it doesn't include the keyboard cover.

And the x2 actually does a respectable job of being a 'Surface lite' — yes, it's a little fiddlier to switch between modes (you need to slide a switch to extend the kickstand), but its fattish, AAA-powered stylus, which can be safely slotted onto the keyboard cover when

not in use, works great for handwriting and drawing.

There are some key differences between this and the Pro 4: there's no standard USB ports, just two smaller USB 3.1 Type-Cs. You get a dongle that'll convert Type-C to the legacy USB, but that's one more thing you have to carry.

And the quality in some areas is lower than the Surface line. The keyboard doesn't feel as high-quality as the Surface Pro's — it's a bit rattly and plasticky — and there was a yellowish/purple tinge to the display of our test unit, something that was particularly noticeable with skin tones in video.

Still, considering the price, those shortcomings are easy to overlook.

Verdict

If you're after a very functional 2-in-1 without the Microsoft premium, this one's a bargain.



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Venom BlackBook 13 Zero

This zero is a genuine hero.

Melbourne-based Venom Computers' is known for its premium laptops that use high-quality parts and a variety of little tweaks to deliver an exceptionally reliable and enjoyable computing experience. So when Venom said that the 13 Zero was "the best computer we've ever made", we sat up and took notice.

The build quality here is fantastic: a sturdy MacBook-like unibody aluminium-composite chassis, stable and backlit chiclet keyboard and large matte-finish. Venom has multiple configs of the 13 Zero available, with this \$1,599 unit being the mid-range model, one step up from the \$1,399 basic unit.

It's incredibly well-specced for that price. We honestly say it's the best-value Windows ultrabook we've ever tested, with a Core i5-6200U mid-range processor, 8GB of RAM, heaps of storage thanks to a 256GB SSD and 500GB hard drive, and a balanced

13.3-inch 1080p IPS display that's driven by integrated Intel HD 520 graphics. There's two full-sized USB ports, a smaller USB Type-C, a full-sized HDMI out, and microSD port. The charger's compact, too. In short, it has everything you need to get stuff done on the go.

It's been genuinely tweaked and tuned for the pro/enthusiast. There's no bloatware. The only software extras are Firefox and Chrome and a full year's subscription to Norton Internet Security.

It's a passable 3:16 hours in the tough PCMark 8 Home test, but other similarly specced competitors can manage 5–6 hours. That shortcoming aside, this is an ultrabook we could happily use all day, every day.

Verdict

The best-value ultrabook we've ever tested. It has everything you need for getting sh*t done.

