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Gaming laptop review: MLN Venom BlackBook 15

[Dan Gardiner](#)

25 July 2013, 4:35 PM

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A good-value gaming option.




Price: \$1799 | **Website:** www.mln.com.au

If you had the chance, how would you go about designing a gaming laptop? If the answer is 'inexpensive, powerful and with low-key looks' then you're thinking along roughly the same lines as Australian retailer MLN, which is exactly what it's aiming for with its Venom BlackBook range.

This 15.6-inch model is the baby of the family, though it's physically still quite a beefy machine that isn't particularly light or slim. At 3.1kg this is better suited to deskbound duties, perhaps being shuttled between home and work, rather than being carted around everywhere. What it has going for it in the looks department is a fairly discreet style — at least compared to most gaming laptops adorned with flames, dragons and enough neon lighting to put a strip joint to shame. It also still packs in all the components you'll need to enjoy the latest games with a pleasing amount of visual bells and whistles.

At the heart of that is the graphics chip and here that's a reasonably powerful Nvidia GeForce GTX 670M — three down from the top of Nvidia's laptop graphics chips. Pair that with an Intel Core i7-3630QM CPU, 8GB of Corsair memory, a 1TB hard drive and a matte-finish 1080p screen, and you've got a good basic gaming recipe.

We duly tested the BlackBook's prowess by firing up two of the latest games, BioShock Infinite and Tomb

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Raider, alongside last year's DiRT Showdown. It didn't disappoint. At the screen's native 1080p resolution, all three maintained above 50fps on Medium detail settings, and we even pushed them to High details with real-world testing and found them more than playable. However, all three struggled to really go beyond that.

The BlackBook 15 does have a few drawbacks. As with most gaming laptops, this one's not quiet when it gets going, with a loud exhaust system that spins up almost immediately upon firing up a game. If you intend to use this one with speakers, you may find this annoying. Our review sample also had a darkish cast to the screen, which while making blacks pitch-dark and adding an earthiness to most tones, did slightly throw off certain colours. This was particularly noticeable with DiRT's vibrant greens, which looked more like pale yellows.

Likewise, in terms of internal components we would have liked to have seen an SSD. Without one, the BlackBook 15 lags behind when it comes to boot speed and launching games and apps; however, at this low price it's understandable that it's been omitted. And to its credit, MLN does offer several options for adding an SSD — at an extra cost, of course.

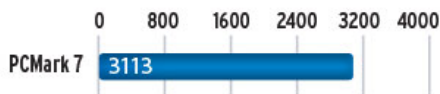
Despite that shortcoming, the BlackBook 15 adds up to a fairly compelling option and one that outdoes most of the big-name brands on value. If you're after an unassuming gaming laptop on a budget, you could do a lot worse.

Pros : Packs all the gaming necessities, doesn't look awful.

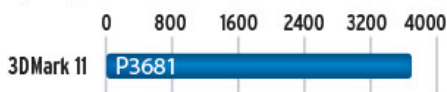
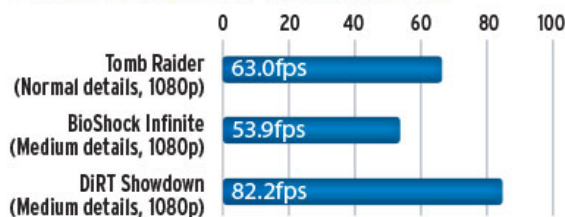
Cons : No SSD, loud fans when gaming.

Rating : 8 out of 10. Highly recommended.

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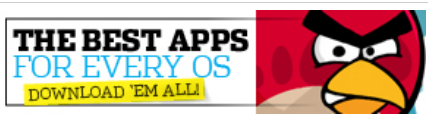
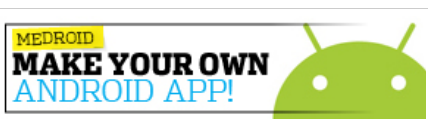


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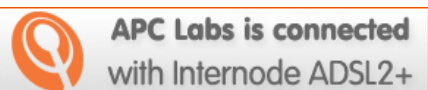
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**John in Brisbane (Cornerstone member):**

Nice review! I like the whole low-key concept and I know these are cheap compared to most gaming rigs but I still balk at the price. I've just bought a Samsung with similar specs but a 1600x900 panel and only a 650m. It is clearly inferior in graphics but I only paid \$920 - half the price! For that money I can play pretty much anything, so long as I turn down the settings for GPU-intensive stuff.

25 July 2013, 8:35 PM (2 months ago)

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**FostWare (New user):**

With Asus 17.2" G75VW's doing the rounds at similar prices, and the G75VX with SSD and 675MX (Kepler) for a few hundred more, I don't see the attraction. The cooling system is decent too.

25 July 2013, 11:26 PM (2 months ago)

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**ChrisBes (New user):**

I'm with FostWare, especially when there are other options with the newer Clevo Chassis the P150SM for sale in Australia for 200 dollars less? Oh and better yet you get a 4th Gen CPU? I saw this model running out a few weeks ago for 1200...

31 July 2013, 8:56 PM (1 month ago)

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