

Sony Announces New Centrino Duo Laptops

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Sony's new media-centric VAIOs are built on Intel's new "Santa Rosa" platform and come with nice perks like Blu-ray drives and Cable Card Tuner technology.

Today, in a joint effort with Intel, Sony announced a new crop of laptops that will feature the new Centrino Duo platform (code-named "Santa Rosa"), a media center with CableCard technology, and a Blu-ray-equipped laptop for \$1,999 (direct). All of these laptops will have the latest Intel Core 2 Duo processors with 800MHz support, up to 2GB standard memory, and 802.11n support. And that's just scratching the surface.

Sony is hitting avid video editors with the VAIO VGN-FZ100, a mainstream laptop that houses a Blu-ray drive, for \$1,999. This is significantly cheaper than some of the other Blu-ray laptop offerings, including the Dell XPS M1710 (Blu-ray) and the Acer Travelmate 8210-6038. The FZ100 is the second lightest 15.4-inch laptop next to the Apple Macbook Pro, weighing a scant 5.8 pounds.

It has an HDMI port, S-Video, and an option for discrete graphics from nVidia. You'll have to settle for the WXGA (1280-by-800) screen resolution, but it's not bad considering it's an XBRITE screen. There will be color variations as well, and you can configure-to-order the FZ100 with either the white or black chassis.

The Sony VAIO VGN AR-500 Series is known for its media prowess, especially when it comes to screen real estate and the high-definition

experience. Today, Sony is offering an option for ATI's Cable Card Tuner technology with its 17-inch behemoth. The company is getting rid of the integrated TV tuner and has decided to complement the Blu-ray-equipped media center with a high-def base station. With Cable Card, customers can subscribe and watch cable on their PCs, but the technology is still in its infancy.

In addition to the Blu-ray burner, you also have an HDMI port. All of Sony's Blu-ray equipped laptops will move to the HDMI 1.3 standard, supporting Dolby TrueHD streams and larger bandwidths. As with the previous AR versions, you can get up to 400GB of storage space with the use of dual 200GB hard drives, and a selection of Intel Core 2 Duo processors with 800Mhz support.

On the business side, the Sony VAIO BX Series will also get the Centrino Duo upgrades. Sony, however, will not launch any laptops with Centrino Pro until there's a larger demand from clients.

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