

# Review

**RocketBrick4 (\$1,495)- LAPTOP Magazine, December 2002**

**CPU:** 1.7-GHz Intel Mobile Pentium 4

**Ram/Expandable to:** 256MB/1GB SDRAM

**Drive:** 20GB 4,200-rpm ATA/100 hard drive, 8x8x84x24x DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive, 1.44MB floppy drive, three-spindle design

**Video:** 14.1-inch XGA active-matrix display; ATI RADEON MOBILITY M6 4x AGP video with 16MB of DDR SDRAM

**Audio:** Intel integrated 845 audio, integrated stereo speakers and microphone

**Input:** 85-key Windows keyboard, touchpad and pointing stick

**Software:** Windows XP Home Edition, InterVideo WinDVD, Roxio Easy CD Creator5, Sun StarOffice 5.2 PhotoExpress My Scrapbook, Encyclopedia Britannica 2003, Intuit Quicken 2002, Rand McNally TripMaker Essentials, Alladin Stuffit Expander

**PC Card Slots:** Two Type II or one Type III

**Communications:** 56-Kbps internal fax modem, 10/100BaseT internal Ethernet adapter, 802.11b internal wireless networking adapter

**Ports:** Two USB 1.1, parallel, S-Video-out, VGA, mic, headphone

**Size/Weight:** 12.9 x 10.9 x 1.6 inches/7.9 pounds with battery installed

**Battery/ Battery Life:** 3,100-mAh Li-Ion battery/3 hours 38 minutes achieved with power management disabled

**Other:** Kensington lock slot, carrying case

**Service & Support:** One-year parts and labor warranty, Ten-year toll-free tech support 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. M-F (EST)

**Options:** Upgrade to 2.4-GHz CPU (\$300), upgrade to 512MB of RAM (\$100), upgrade to 30GB hard drive (\$50), add 802.11b internal wireless networking adapter (\$79)

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While you can purchase the RocketBrick4 with a 2.4GHz Pentium 4, in order to keep the system's price down, the configuration we received is equipped with a 1.7GHz version of the P4.

That 1.7GHz Pentium 4 can even plow through some 3D games, thanks to the powerful graphics accelerator installed in the system, ATI's RADEON MOBILITY M6, which comes complete with its own dedicated 16MB of DDR SDRAM.

Its 14-inch screen is large enough for its XGA resolution that it's comfortable to view for hours on end. The only other compromise in the system is the lack of high-speed external interfaces. While the RocketBrick4 offers the standard pair of 12-Mbps USB 1.1 ports as well as a parallel port for an older printer or scanner, it doesn't offer an USB 2.0 or FireWire ports. There are a pair of stacked Type II PC Card slots, however, so they should be able to pick up the slack.

A 56-Kbps modem and 10/100-Mbps Ethernet adapter are integrated into the RocketBrick4, which leaves both of those PC Card slots open.

The good news, however, is that Brick offers this as an affordable \$79 option on the RocketBrick4. Even better, this isn't a PC Card adapter that will fill up one of your two slots and leave an antenna nub sticking out the side of the laptop, but an internal module that plugs into the system's open PCI slot.

This Mini PCI card links to the antenna embedded into the system's chassis, which not only provides a completely seamless solution, but also offers better range than the tiny antenna embedded in a PC Card. There's even a hardware switch on the right side of the system that lets you toggle the wireless adapter on and off to save power. In case you can't read between the lines, we highly recommend that you choose this option if you purchase a RocketBrick4. What we really like about the audio system is its hardware controls, which allow you to play, pause, stop, fast-forward, or rewind a track.

Thanks to a convenient sliding lever on the left side of the laptop above the headphone and microphone jacks, you can even adjust the volume without having to resort to going through the software volume control in Windows or use a

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clumsy function-key combination. With this lever, you can instantly make minor changes to the sound level or mute the volume when the sound is way too high.

Another unlikely multimedia find in such a system is a combination DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive. We were glad to see an 8x CD burner in this \$1,499 laptop, especially since it already features an internal 1.44MB floppy drive. The ability to play DVD movies is a nice bonus.

The RocketBrick4 doesn't stop with the added extra there, though. It also offers a generous array of software, including Sun StarOffice 5.2, Encyclopedia Britannica 2003, McAfee VirusScan, Intuit Quicken 2002, and Rand McNally TripMaker Essentials.