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Compaq Tablet PC TC1000 Preview

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Date :: Thursday, 7th of November, 2002

URL :: <http://www.hardwarezone.com.sg/articles/view.php?cid=14&id=533>



Compaq Tablet PC TC1000 Preview

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Category : Notebooks/Laptops

<http://www.hardwarezone.com/articles/cat.php?id=14>

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Approved on : Thursday, 7th November, 2002

Introduction

Last month, we gave a brief run through of the Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition as well as the TravelMate C100 - Acer's Tablet PC. We also mentioned in the article that Microsoft have managed to gather support for its Tablet PC concept, including the likes of Toshiba, Compaq and ViewSonic.

Well, a couple of weeks back we were fortunate to have HP Compaq giving us the opportunity to take a first look at their newest addition to their mobile family - the Tablet PC TC1000. Now we have seen quite a few Tablet PCs already, during a Microsoft-held Tablet PC workshop held for members of the press. We toyed around with it and the Tablet PC TC1000 is arguably one of the sleekest looking Tablet PC we have come across to date.



Yes, the TC1000 can swivel too.

Like the Acer C100 Tablet PC that we've seen, the Compaq Tablet PC allows users to input information into the Tablet PC using both an electronic pen and a keyboard. In fact, it incorporates many of the standard Tablet PC fare, such as the long battery life and wireless capabilities. What sets the TC1000 apart from the other Tablet PCs that we have seen though, is that it really isn't a sole Convertible nor Slate model but a hybrid of both. We'll show you more of that in the next couple of pages.

Technical Specifications

Processor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmeta Crusoe TM5800 1GHz□
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 256MB PC133 SDR • Upgradable to□768MB of total memory
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40GB□SMART hard drive, 30, 40GB 4,200rpm, 60GB 5,400rpm
Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVIDIA GeForce2 Go 100 graphics controller with 16-MB SDRAM • 10.4-inch XGA TFT wide angle viewing film, hard tempered glass covering
Audio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compaq Premier Sound, two integrated speakers, support for stereo headsets, support for mono headsets
Ports on System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serial infrared communications port (IrDA-1.1 compliant) • Audio jacks: headphones, external mic-in, 1 line-in/audio-in • 15-pin monitor connector • 2x USB (Universal Serial Bus) 2.0 ports • V.90 modem telephone jack • Type-II/III PCMCIA slot • Ethernet port

Size and weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27.4 x 21.6 x 2.0 cm (D x W x H) • 1.8kg (with keyboard)
Operating System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows XP Tablet PC Edition
Optional Docking Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compaq Tablet PC Docking Station
Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US\$2,000 - US\$3,000 (estimated)

The Compaq Tablet PC TC1000

If you'd read our take on the previous Tablet PC article, you would have known that Convertible Tablet PCs look no different from today's standard notebooks with attached keyboards. When users want to use it in slate mode, they simply rotate the screen and lay it flat for easy note taking. Pure Slates on the other hand, offer an ultra-slim and lightweight design, with the ability to easily dock the PC at a desktop to gain access to a full keyboard and mouse. Pure Slates are ideal for those who spend much of their day away from their desks, or for those who do not want the additional weight of a keyboard.



For the guys in our offices, all were awed by the beauty of the TC1000. They did not mind that the TC1000 was slightly heavier and bulkier (with the keyboard attached) than the Acer C100.



The Compaq Tablet PC will sit anywhere even when used in convertible mode - whether on your desk or lap.

HP Compaq decided to go one step further with the TC1000 by making it both a Convertible and a Slate. Simply said, the TC1000 works just like a Convertible but you're also able to detach the Tablet PC away from the keyboard and turn it into a pure Slate. Unfortunately, like the Acer C100, the TC1000 we covered here was still very much a pre-manufacture version, and the Windows XP Tablet PC Edition operating system installed was nowhere near the final build. So any form of benchmarks aren't possible until HP Compaq make a retail unit available to us.



The keyboard is secured to the TC1000 through a clip mechanism on the keyboard itself and can be removed easily.



The keyboard from the Compaq Tablet PC when detached from the system.

The TC1000 weighs 1.36Kg without the keyboard and comes with a 10.4-inch XGA TFT wide angle viewing film. The TC1000 isn't light as compared to other Tablet PCs, but that is attributed to the display screen being covered with a hard tempered glass to prevent damage, as it is always exposed unless a separate jacket is purchased. We gave it a trial run and the display output was really good - colors were vibrant and texts were sharp. But since it is made of glass, we found that the screen was easily stained by finger-prints and other smudges, since our palms are always in contact with the screen (be it holding the TC1000 or using the Active Pen on it). So a jacket is definitely a top priority if you want your Evo to be as smudge-free as possible.



The Compaq Tablet PC comes with a pretty thick but comfortable magnetic pen that sports a pressure sensitive tip.

Speaking of the Active Pen, the Compaq Tablet PC's stylus pen is very much unlike the default one seen in the Acer C100 - which resembles more of a PDA stylus. The Evo's version features a much thicker diameter for a better grip and comes with a tactile tip (just press the pen lightly against the screen and you'll get a click).



The USB 2.0, Modem, Ethernet and Monitor-Out ports are featured on the top (when in slate mode). When not in used, they're covered by a rubbery flap as seen here.



The back of the docking bay comes with its own connectivities as well.

As with all Tablet PC, the TC1000 is completely legacy free and comes with an internal mini-PCI 802.11b card with fully integrated antenna. Bluetooth isn't built-in as HP Compaq feels that

different regions have different acceptance towards that wireless technology. Europe for example, have a higher penetration of Bluetooth devices than say, Asia (or South East Asia). Another reason is to keep the cost of the Tablet PC low, and for users who feels the need to have that connectivity, they can always [purchase](#) a Bluetooth attachment separately.

On the inside, the TC1000 comes with 256MB (768MB maximum), a 9.5-mm 30GB SMART hard drive, 56Kbps modem and an integrated 802.11b and Ethernet. At the heart of the TC1000 lies a Transmeta Crusoe TM5800 1GHz processor. HP Compaq viewed the Transmeta as the best cost-to-performance processor for their TC1000 but more importantly, especially for Tablet PCs, is the extremely low power requirements of the processor. Thus a premium was put on battery life here as far as the TC1000 is concerned. For graphics, NVIDIA was roped in to supply its GeForce2 Go 100 graphics chipset for the TC1000. Specially designed for Tablet PCs, the GeForce2 Go 100 is basically a streamlined version of the GeForce2 chipset, with added functionalities such as TabView (that enables portrait mode) and PowerMizer (to reduce power consumption).

First Look

Like the Acer C100, the T1000 isn't quite the finished product yet as well. The operating system is still a Windows XP Tablet PC Edition beta build, so any form of benchmarking is out of the question. Other than that, what we can do here is to give you a tour of the TC1000. Once we get our hands on a retail unit, you can bet we'll give you a couple of benchmark results to sleep with.



The headphone, microphone and line-in jacks. Between these jacks are the speaker vents. Surprisingly, the audio output was good - but you can't expect a speakers of these size to be boomy though. We also found that it can be muffed up pretty easily if you're holding it close to your body in vertical mode.



At the back of the TC1000, you have pretty sci-fi looking slabs covering the various components and critical parts of the Tablet PC.



The keyboard is secured to the TC1000 through a clip mechanism on the keyboard itself and can be removed easily.



Aside from the power button, ESC and Tab as well as the one "Ctrl+Alt+Del" buttons, the TC1000 comes with a clickable scroller on the side.



The empty expansion bay of the TC1000 docking station. HP Compaq mentioned that the Tablet PC will be compatible with Evo notebook bays as well (e.g., CD-RW, CD-ROM, etc)



Like every other Tablet PC, the TC1000 allows you to rest your palm on the screen even when writing. This is because it uses a magnetic screen rather than a touch-sensitive one.



A side profile of the Tablet PC when docked.



The form factor here is crucial. For those who can barely open up their notebooks at the correct angle while onboard a plane, because the person in front of you tilted his or her seat, well, you'll love a notebook or a Tablet PC that is designed this way.

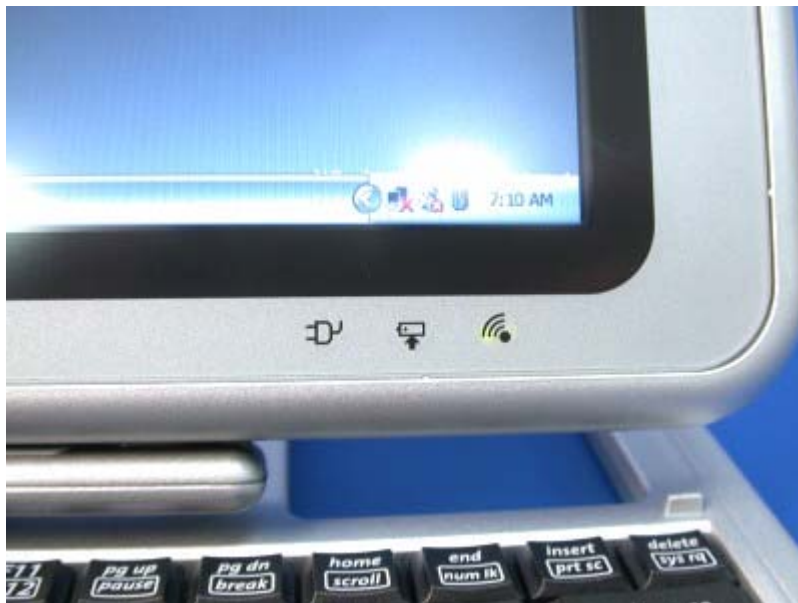


There are many ways you can position your TC1000 with the docking bay. The docking bay will also automatically charge the Tablet PC (the TC1000 can also be charged without the docking bay using the same power adapter).

Pictures Galore (Cont'd)



With the ladies we passed the TC1000 to in our office, all agreed that the Evo is a tad huge as compared to the Acer C100 and heavier too. Although all also agreed that they wouldn't mind being seen in public with a Tablet PC like the TC1000.



The three LED at the bottom right side of the TC1000.



The port that connects the main unit of the TC1000 to the keyboard attachment.



Your CAPS and NUM LOCK LEDs.



To compensate for the lack of space for a touchpad, the TC1000 uses a point stick instead.



Over here we can see the black-colored latch that secures the keyboard to the unit when not in used. Not pictured is another similar latch over the other end.



The lack of a wrist-rest may be uncomfortable to many of those who need to use the keyboard.



To detach the TC1000 unit from the docking bay, simply lift up the handle above.



The Quick-Tab icons here have three functions. The bottom tab brings up the Input Panel; the middle one brings up the Windows Journal; and the top tab allows you to rotate the screen between portrait and landscape.



Here, we can see one of the USB 2.0 port as well as the latch to remove any storage drives over the other side.



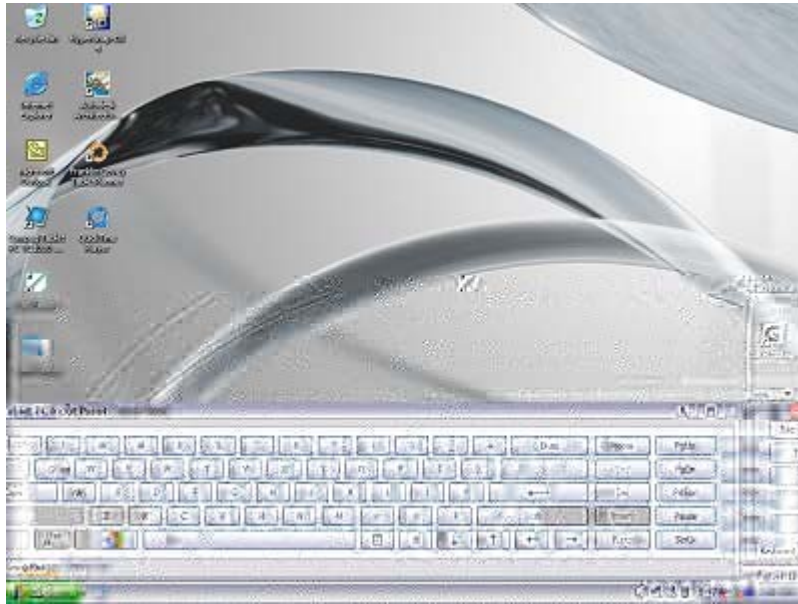
The TC1000 supports a single Type II PCMCIA card, and a CompactFlash slot.



Plastic cards like these are used to hide the PCMCIA and CompactFlash bays when not in used.

Software Applications

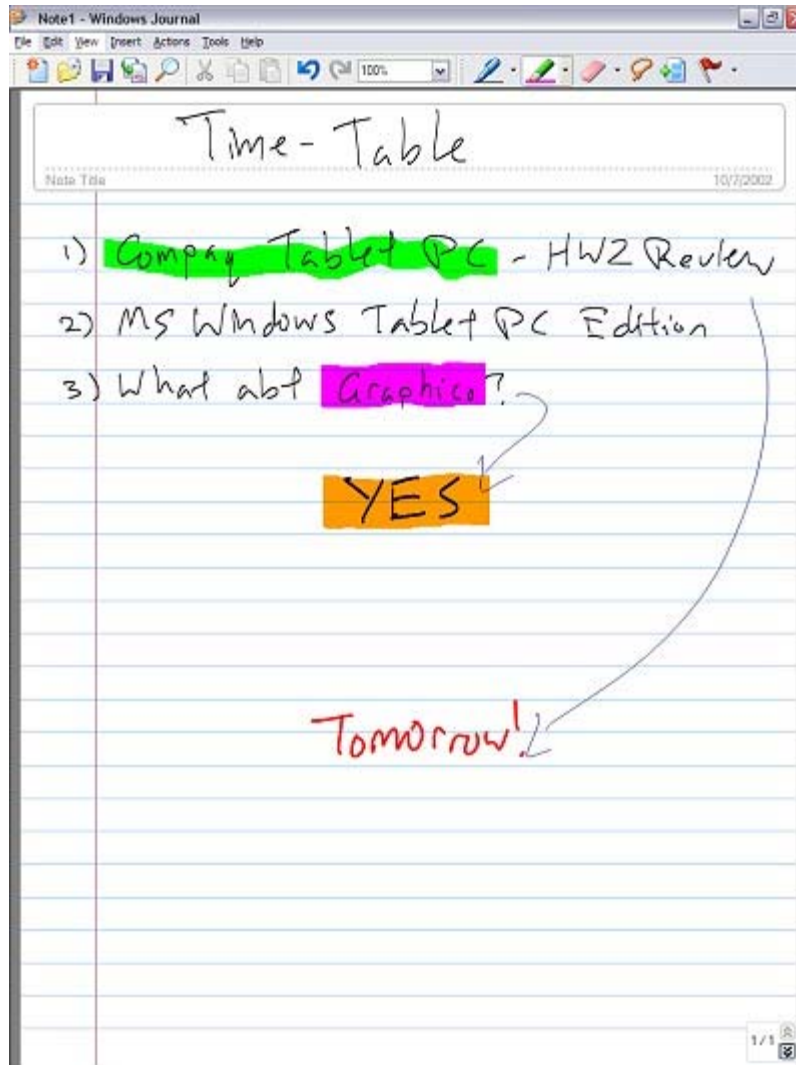
The Compaq Tablet PC TC1000 comes with the standard Windows XP Tablet PC Edition applications. Of worthy mention is Grafigo by Corel. You probably would have seen most of them if you'd read our previous Tablet PC article. But let's take a look at them again anyway.



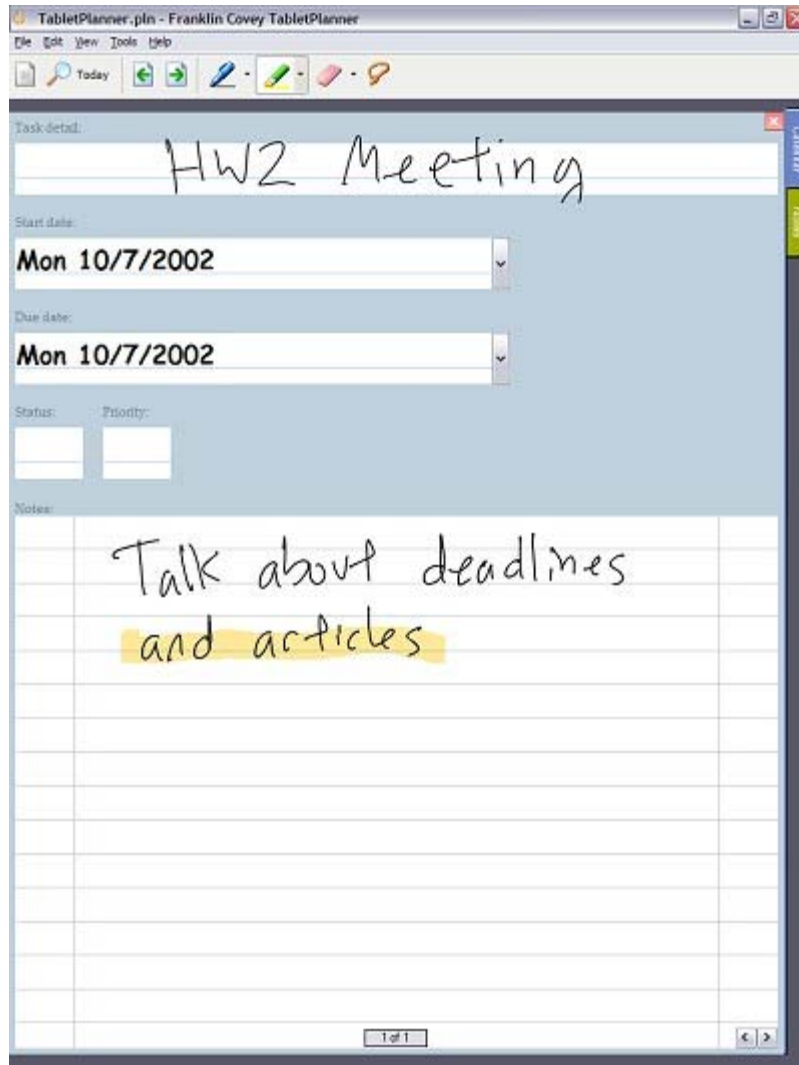
A normal desktop image of the TC1000 in landscape mode.
Note the Input Panel display.



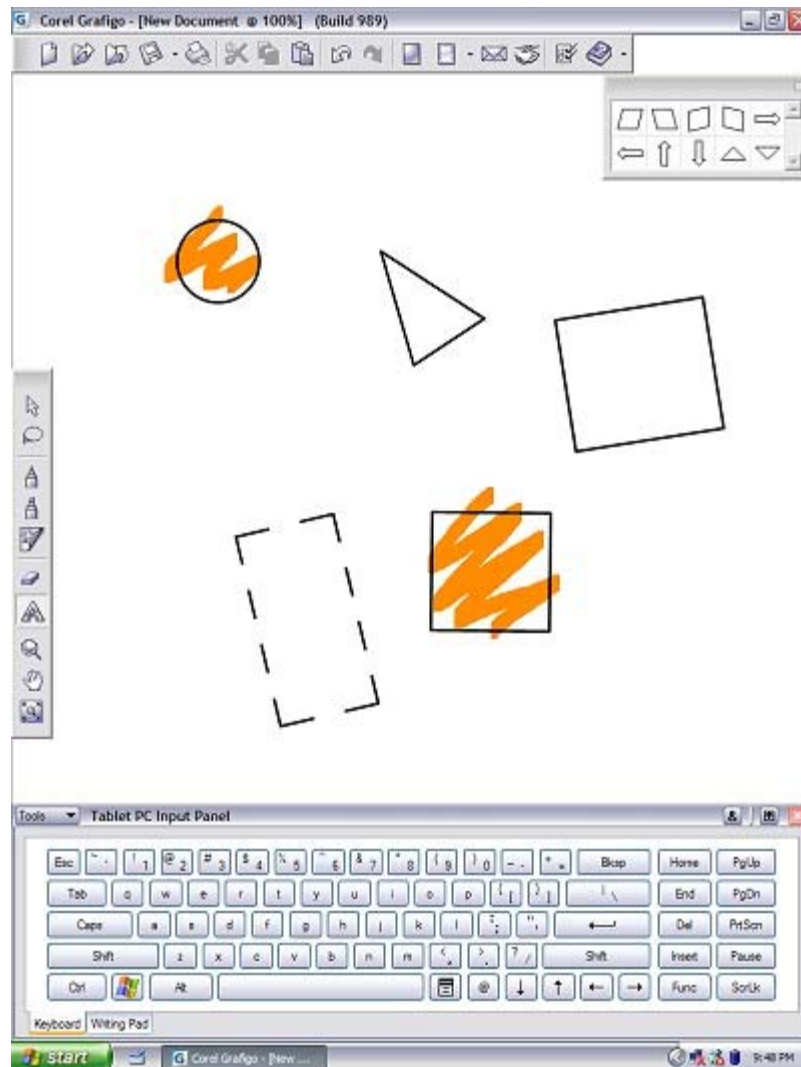
Over here, we snap a screenshot of the TC1000 in portrait mode. Frankly, all Tablet PCs' desktops look the same.



A Tablet PC isn't a Tablet PC without the Windows Journal.



not forgetting the Tablet Planner as well.



Corel's Grafigo is quite a cool application actually. It recognized whatever shapes you draw, and accurately converts those sketches into its true shapes.

Grafigo (name being derived from "Graphics on the Go") is specifically designed to respond to the needs of the mobile professional. The application can create accurate graphics from sketches through the use of basic shape recognition, symbols, templates and tools. In simple term, you can for example, draw a circle using Grafigo and the program will automatically convert it into a real circle for you. Great for business workers who need to capture sketches, drawings and notes while "On the go".

Our Take

The Compaq Tablet PC TC1000 is definitely one of the sleekest Tablet PC we have seen to date. During a press conference, HP Compaq have put up an estimate street price of the TC1000 to around US\$2,000 - US\$3,000. That leaves the Tablet PC pretty much out of range to the mainstream consumers. And that is probably what HP Compaq wants, as they have clearly targeted the TC1000 at specialized targets in the vertical markets. Namely people in industries like

Engineering/Manufacturing, Medical/Health care, Insurance, Government, Legal and Higher Education.

The overall engineering aspect and design of the TC1000 is first-class. From the hard tempered glass (in consideration of Engineering people) right down to what could arguably be the best example of a good Tablet PC active pen. Well, we guessed those are some of the reasons why the TC1000 is one of the higher-priced Tablet PC to date - we already knew that Acer and Fujitsu will price their Tablet PCs under S\$4,000 (Singapore currency).



Hmm...doesn't this look very much like a certain desktop PC?
I'll leave it to your imagination.

All in all, there's little to dislike about the TC1000 saved for a couple of things to note, especially for potential buyers. For one, a Transmeta processor will no doubt consume lesser energy than other Tablet PC with an Intel Pentium III-M processor. But that meant performance being sacrificed in place of a longer battery lifespan (HP Compaq claimed that the TC1000 can last over five hours under normal operations). Since the current generation of Tablet PCs isn't expected to run many CPU-intensive applications anyway, we figured that a Transmeta processor will do just fine in the TC1000. The last bit of advice for users keen in the TC1000: do yourself a favor and get a good casing or a protective sheet for the display screen. The screen, being glass material, gets awfully dirty easily.

Anyway, when we get a complete retail unit of the TC1000, we'll post up some benchmark results and see how this Tablet PC fares. Then we'll update and give a judgement on the Compaq Tablet PC TC1000.

Discussion of article at <http://forums.hardwarezone.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=330558>

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