

Apple's new MacBook Air is speedy with iPhone-inspired chip, but here's what's missing

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Imagine a laptop computer with all the modern benefits of an iPhone—a machine that could last for hours and hours, ran quietly and do several

things at once, without bottling up.

That pretty much sums up Apple's latest MacBook Pro, one of three new computers Apple released in 2020 with the new "M1" chip, which is based on the same processing power Apple uses in iPhones and iPads.

Apple's hype is pretty intense on its website. "With a giant leap in performance per watt, every Mac with M1 is transformed into a completely different class of product."

I don't know that I'd go that far. Here's how I'd describe my experience with the 13-inch MacBook Pro:

Battery life that just never ends. Quiet and speedy performance. It can run several high-intensity programs at once, and you don't see that pesky hourglass appear in the middle of your tasks. It turns on instantly, as fast as you can open the lid.

That's the good news of the new MacBook Pro, which ditched the old chips by industry veteran Intel for its own "Apple Silicon."

The bad is that Apple is very skimpy on ports, just two for the Pro. One of them goes for power, so if you want to plug in an external hard drive, flash drive, monitor and have another port open for your Lightning connector to recharge an iPhone, you'll have to get used to a dongle.

I've got the Belkin USB-C Multimedia Hub, a \$100 dongle that has 2 USB-A ports, an SD card reader, ethernet and 1 HDMI slot. Cheaper dongles can be found on Amazon in the \$25 range, with fewer slots. (And yes, Apple still has a headphone jack on its computers.)

Another issue: Apple knows we're living in a Zoom world now, with endless video conferences, so why stick us with the same crappy 720p

resolution built-in webcam when there are third-party companies selling 4K webcams. I even know of a company that makes more cameras than just about any firm in the world, and if it wanted to, it could insert that iPhone camera it makes into the computer and make a whole lot of people really happy.

That said, let's open the hood and take a look:

Speed. I opened Final Cut Pro X, the video editing program, and worked on a 22-minute, graphics-heavy production that would normally take at least 30 minutes to complete, to finish in Final Cut and transfer to a movie file.

With the M1 Mac, exporting it took three minutes.

Battery. For battery test, you know when companies say they have an all-day battery and then we use the phones all day, but they die by late afternoon? My current MacBook Pro lasts about three hours before getting to that point. With the review MacBook unit, I just stopped counting after 10 hours.

Pricing: Apple starts the MacBook Pro line at \$1,299 for a 13-inch model. But reader beware: The unit I tested clocked in at \$1,899, with 16 GB of RAM (up from the standard 8 GB) and 1 terabyte of solid-state, no moving parts storage. The standard is 256 GB, which you could run through in no time, considering the size of applications, and ever increasing high-resolution photos and videos.

Other M1 Macs: The lighter MacBook Air, which Apple didn't send for review, starts at \$999 with a 7-core GPU and 256 GB of storage, versus a more powerful 8-core GPU and 512 GB of storage for \$1,249. (However, if you load up the machine with even more storage and RAM, you're looking at \$2,049 before tax.)

The other new M1 Mac for 2020 is the Mac Mini, the tiny portable desktop computer that connects to monitors. They start at \$699 with 256 GB of storage or \$899 with 512 GB, but if you want to load them up, they clock in at \$1,699 before tax.

Apple says it plans to shift all of its existing computers over the next two years to the M1 chip. Bloomberg reports that could be earlier, as soon as the spring, with a new lineup of iMac desktop computers and the 16-inch edition of the MacBook Pro.

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