



Ten O'Clock Tech

Centrino Toughens Up

Arik Hesseldahl, 05.27.03, 10:00 AM ET

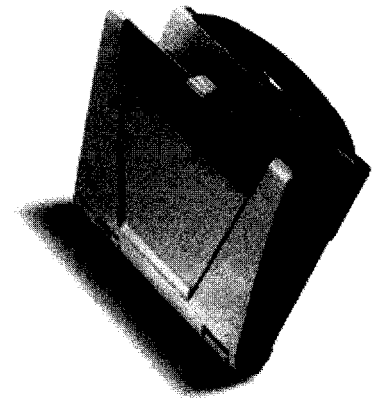
Now that chipmaker **Intel** has taken to blanketing the airwaves about its Centrino notebook platform, it was only a matter of time before the makers of ruggedized notebook PCs got into the act.

Panasonic, a unit of Japan's **Matsushita** (nyse: [MC](#) - news - people), has built a name around its Toughbook brand of notebooks that can survive a drop, spill and other abuse--both incidental and intentional. Its latest model adds Intel's (nasdaq: [INTC](#) - news - people) Centrino, which combines a Pentium M with Wi-Fi wireless networking capabilities.

Not only that, but the Toughbook 73 also has Bluetooth wireless capability, which can come in handy if you use your notebook in combination with other mobile devices such as a PDA or mobile phone. It can also connect to wireless phone networks on either GPRS or CDMA networks, depending on what you need most.

Inside the notebook is a Pentium M processor running at 1.4 gigahertz, which has been optimized to consume less power and preserve batter life. The company says to expect 5.5 hours of use on a single charge, while a second battery kicks that up to nine hours. The machine also has a proprietary cooling system that combines both a heat pipe and remote heat exchange to help keep the machine cool.

On the outside is a magnesium alloy case which, when combined with a shock-mounted and isolated 40-gigabyte hard drive, should protect it from sudden shocks that come from, say, falling onto a concrete floor at a job site or getting a cup of coffee spilled on it. The USB ports and PC card connectors have been reinforced. And at 4.9 pounds it's lighter than its predecessor by 24%, the company says.



Panasonic's Toughbook

Panasonic didn't specify a starting price, but Toughbooks tend to carry a premium over conventional notebooks. Still, the company says to expect a price under \$3,000, which would be a slight improvement over the Toughbook 72--which started at \$3,150. Purchasing information is available on its Web site.