HP updates pro creative laptop lines with MacBook Pro rivals and a mobile workstation that isn’t

The company has updated its Envy and ZBook Studio laptops – including flagship 15-inch models – and added a new model called the ZBook Create that purports to be a mobile workstation, though lacks an essential feature to be considered one.

HP has launched new versions of its laptops for designers, artists, animators and video producers. There are seven new models in all – split into three lines: Envy laptops, a new ZBook Studio mobile workstation and the ZBook Create, which sits somewhere in between.

The new Envy 15 is HP’s rival to the 16-inch MacBook Pro. It has a similarly minimalist aluminium chassis – though of course with a greater diversity of ports along the side – but HP claims it has other advantages over Apple’s pro laptop too. HP says the Envy 15 is 13% faster at video editing in Adobe Premiere Pro than the MBP 16, and 33% faster in Adobe Rush (the PR materials HP supplied us with about the Envy 15 makes it clear HP is aiming this at non-professional creatives as much as pros).

The rest of the specs are impressive: 10th-gen Intel Core i7 and i9 processors with up to 8 cores, and up to 2TB of storage. The aforementioned ports include two Thunderbolt 3, two USB 3 ports and a SD card reader. The graphics are Nvidia GeForce RTX 2060, which aren't the most powerful are – but likely the best you'll get in a laptop the thickness of the Envy 15.

There are two 4K, 15.6-inch screen options: an OLED touchscreen with a DCI-P3 colour gamut, or an HDR-400 display without touch but with greater brightness and an anti-glare coating. The first is certified to VESA's DisplayHDR True Black standard, the second to VESA's DisplayHDR 400 standard. HP claims both displays are incredibly colour accurate, with a Delta-E rating of less than two – so more accurate than the

average human eye can tell.

There’s also a redesigned keyboard.

Alongside the Envy 15, HP also announced 13- and 17-inch models – plus x360 versions of the 13- and 15-inch models where the screen can be rotated back around the keyboard to use as a tablet.

The ZBook Studio and ZBook Create (*below*) are variations on a every-so-slightly thinner 15-inch chassis with a dark colour scheme. Despite the slimmer shell, HP has managed to put much more powerful graphics chips inside them.

HP describes them as mobile workstations – and they both have the ZBook brand alongside the company's desktop and mobile workstations. However, while the ZBook Studio is a mobile workstation, the new Create model takes out what makes it so.

The ZBook Studio has an Nvidia Quadro graphics chip – which, along with AMD's Radeon Pro – define what we understand a mobile workstation to be. The ZBook Create has an Nvidia GeForce chip. While the distinction between laptop and mobile workstation isn't a clear as it used to be – it used to be that you'd require a Quadro chip to run most professional-level 3D apps, but now it's mainly CAD and other real-world engineering apps that require this. But 'mobile workstation' means something specific to many potential purchasers, and the ZBook Create isn't it.

Naming quibbles aside, the ZBook Create and Studio look to be powerful, stylish laptops. The graphics options go up the most powerful chips around – Nvidia's GeForce RTX 2080 Super in the Create and the Quadro RTX 5000 in the Studio.

The chips power a 15.6-inch 4K DreamColor screen with Pantone validation for colour accuracy. The rest of the unit's specs match the Envy 15's.

In the US, HP is selling the ZBook Studio and Create models with the option of swapped Ctrl and Alt keys for users coming from Mac laptops – but this isn’t available in Europe.

The Envy 17 is available now, with the 13-inch and both x360 models shipping May. The Envy 15 will arrive in June, followed by the ZBooks in August.

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