

MSI is trying hard to be a premium laptop brand

MSI – a brand traditionally known for gaming hardware – has announced a bunch of laptops at Computex 2023, and there’s an interesting lack of gamery among them. Instead, the company appears to be focusing hard on the premium lifestyle space with its mid-2023 offerings.

Notable among these releases is the new Commercial 14 series, a line of business laptops intended to compete with high-end enterprise PCs – the likes of the ThinkPad. I conclude this from the fact that MSI’s press release highlights its “tailor-made solutions to enterprises through a series of optional security measures, NFC (near-field communication) and built-in Smart Card Reader.” If that’s not a word-for-word ThinkPad pitch, I don’t know what is.

MSI has attempted business lines in the past, namely in its Summit Series, which we haven’t heard much about for a hot minute. These were solid, functional devices, but they didn’t have the build quality (or laundry list of enterprise security features) to compete with the established top players in that space, and they certainly weren’t priced to do that. The Commercial, which rolls out in the second half of this year, looks like it could be a few rungs up that ladder.

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The other release that’s catching my eye is the Prestige 16 Studio Evo, also slated for release in the second half of this year. This is another product laser-focused on the high-end

enterprise space. I've traditionally thought of the Prestige line largely as productivity devices that also have the chops for some gaming here and there. But this version, as the Studio moniker indicates, is for creative professionals, featuring Thunderbolt 4, a 99Whr battery, and Nvidia's Studio platform (and RTX discrete GPUs, of course). I'm always on the lookout for powerful devices in the 16-inch space that don't weigh ten thousand pounds, since big-screened-but-still-portable workstations are a need I hear about from video editors all the time. This Prestige Studio could be a nice get for those folks (if it's good).

Another big professional product, the Creator Z17 HX Studio, was actually announced earlier this year. It's geared towards workers across the creative space, from video professionals to digital artists, and it's compatible with an absolutely bonkers stylus that doubles as a mechanical pencil. MSI has that prominently on display at Computex as well, further pushing the idea that it's not just a gaming brand, everyone, we promise.

The Creator starts at \$2,999 (yeah, it's not cheap), but MSI hasn't revealed pricing for the Prestige or the Commercial yet. Those numbers will give us a better idea of where MSI thinks these products fit in the current market and how high-end it thinks they really are.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/30/23741477/msi-creator-z-17-prestige-16-studio-evo-commercial-14>