

FACT FILE

Chaplet 386 SL25 Notebook

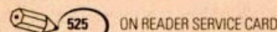
Chaplet Systems USA Inc. 252 North Wolfe Rd., Sunnyvale, CA 94086; 408-732-7950

List price (test configuration): \$2,295.

Tested configuration: 4MB RAM, 120MB Conner CP2124 hard disk, DOS 5.0, Microsoft Windows 3.1, 1.44MB floppy disk drive, nylon carrying case.

Options: 2MB RAM upgrade, \$195; 4MB RAM upgrade, \$345; math coprocessor, \$195; 2,400-bps data/9,600-bps send/receive fax modem, \$139.

In short: The Chaplet 386 SL25 Notebook is a small and light unit but its battery is comparatively short-lived.



uses a CCFT (cold-cathode fluorescent tube), and supports 64 shades of gray. The Chaplet can also run an external VGA or Super VGA monitor with 256 colors, but not simultaneously. The 86-key keyboard's 10 half-height function keys (2 of which double as F11 and F12) and 8 cursor and page-movement keys had a good feel.

Chaplet Systems USA's service and support is paltry compared with that of its competitors. It offers a one-year parts-and-labor warranty and mirror-shipping but provides no on-site service, money-back guarantee. The lifetime technical support, available weekdays from 8:00 to 6:00 Pacific time, is via a toll line.—BB

Compaq Computer Corp.

Compaq Contura 3/20

Compaq Contura 3/25

If there is a trend in laptops today, it's toward lower-price machines with less frills. Compaq breaks from that mold, with a line of full-featured, price-competitive notebooks: the \$1,892 Compaq Contura 3/20 and the \$2,074 Compaq Contura 3/25.

Each Contura weighs 6.2 pounds with a battery and has a charcoal-color case with rounded edges and an easy-grab ledge for secure carrying. Inside, the famous purple switches handle the power and standby modes. The battery is easy to remove, but you will have to take out the keyboard to get to the memory, math

coprocessor, and modem.

A full complement of I/O ports (including one for an external VGA monitor and a mini-DIN plug that doubles as an external keyboard or PS/2 mouse connector) are tucked away behind a small plastic door.

The 386SX/20 Contura 3/20 can accommodate between 2MB and 10MB of RAM (we tested it with 4MB) and comes with an 84MB hard disk; the Contura 3/25 we tested held a 386SX/25 processor, 4MB of RAM (expandable to 12MB), a 60MB hard disk (40MB, 80MB, and 120MB sizes are available), and a 64K four-way set-associative external cache. You also get an internal 3.5-inch floppy disk drive and even a Logitech TrackMan Portable that has been painted gray and carries the Compaq label. Compaq's 79-key keyboard has standard-spaced keys, including separate Home, End, PgUp, and PgDn keys and an inverted-T cursor-key layout. Though the key travel is inadequate, the resistance isn't too tight. A 9.5-inch-diagonal screen is bright enough to display Windows adequately. You can customize display and power-management features on the fly.

The documentation is complete, but not the most straightforward we've seen. Some Contura 3/25s come bundled with Windows 3.1 and PFS:WindowWorks.



The Compaq Contura 3/25 and the Compaq Contura 3/20

Check with dealers for current prices.

On our benchmark tests, the Contura 3/25 was an adequate performer, while the Contura 3/20's scores were the lowest in more than one category. Neither processor is one of the new low-voltage, 3.3-volt chips—probably a cost consideration on the company's part—but their battery lives were still fairly competitive: The

FACT FILE

Compaq Contura 3/20, 3/25

Compaq Computer Corp., P.O. Box 692000, Houston, TX 77069-2000; 800-370-0670

List price (tested configuration): 3/20—\$1,892.

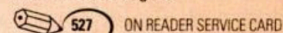
Tested configuration: 4MB DRAM, Compaq 84MB IDE hard disk, DOS 5.0, PFS:WindowWorks, 1.44MB floppy disk drive, Compaq passive TFT edge-lit LCD screen; 2,400/9,600-bps data/fax modem.

List price (tested configuration): 3/25—\$2,074.

Tested configuration: Compaq 60MB IDE hard disk, other components as above.

Options: 3/20 and 3/25—2MB RAM upgrade, \$131; 4MB RAM upgrade, \$279; 8MB, \$559; 2,400-bps modem, \$262; 9,600-bps modem, \$526; 2,400/9,600-bps data/fax modem, \$262.

In short: These competitive and practical low-cost portables should be considered seriously by buyers with limited budgets.



Contura 3/20 and Contura 3/25 lasted 2 hours 28 minutes and 2 hours 15 minutes, respectively, on our Battery Rundown test (without power conservation); on our ZDigit Rundown test (with power conservation), they lasted 4 hours 53 minutes and 4 hours 11 minutes, respectively.

Compaq's one-year parts-and-labor warranty includes on-site service and service via its authorized service centers. Tech support is toll-free.—OR

SUITABILITY TO TASK

Compaq Contura 3/20

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Road warrior/communications	●	●	●	●
DOS applications	●	●	○	○
Windows applications	●	●	○	○
Desktop replacement	●	●	○	○

Compaq Contura 3/25

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Road warrior/communications	●	●	●	●
DOS applications	●	●	●	○
Windows applications	●	●	○	○
Desktop replacement	●	●	○	○