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Getac PS336 Rugged Handheld

Updated rugged multi-purpose mobile computer now with Flexiconn field-changeable end-caps

(by Conrad Blickenstorfer)

On November 7, 2012, Getac announced their new PS336 rugged handheld computer in the United States. Equal billing in the announcement took Getac's "Flexiconn" system of exchangeable end-caps that can add a variety of features to the computer, potentially eliminating the need for multiple devices.

If the PS336 looks familiar to those who follow the rugged handheld computing field, it's because the new device is a technologically updated and even tougher version of Getac's existing PS236. Visual differences include the new model's expanded keypad (29 vs.



Specifications Getac PS336

Added/changed	Added 11/2012
Form-factor	Rugged handheld
CPU	Texas Instruments Sitara AM3715/1.0 GHz
CPU Speed	1.0 GHz
OS	Windows Embedded Handheld 6.5 Classic or Professional
RAM/ROM	512MB/256MB NAND Flash and 8GB iNAND
Card slots	1 micro-SDHC (up to 32GB)
Display type	Transflective "BlanView" TFT, sunlight readable (600 nits)
Display size/res	3.5"/480 x 640 VGA
Digitizer/pens	pressure-sensitive touch/1
Keyboard/keys	29-key alpha/numeric with Nuance XT9
Navigation	Onscreen and directional control
Housing	

Getac

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GETAC B300
Rugged Notebook

22 keys) and the newly available end-caps.

Additional changes are inside where the PS336 benefits from a faster processor, more RAM and Flash storage, a higher resolution camera (5mp vs 3mp), and more advanced GPS. The PS336 also runs the latest available version of Microsoft's legacy mobile OS, Windows Embedded Handheld 6.5.

The biggest news, however, is those available Flexiconn end-caps. Exchangeable end-caps to add additional functionality without having to buy a different products is not new. But this is the first time Getac is making this approach available to their customers.

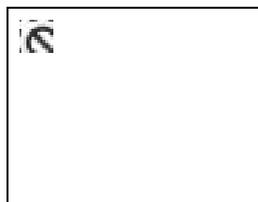
The lineup in the picture below shows the three available Flexiconn form factors. The one on the left adds either long-range Bluetooth or 13.56MHz RFID and a contactless Smart Card reader, the one in the middle a 1D barcode reader, and the one on the right a 3-in-1 card reader that combines RFID, Smart Card, and a SAM card slot (SAM stands for Security Authentication Module and is used to store cryptographic keys).



Operating Temp	-22° to 140°F (-30° to 60°C)
Sealing	IP68 (rated up to 390 minutes fully submerged)
Shock	26 6-foot drops
Tumble	Tumbling resistant: 1,000 cycles from 1.6 feet (0.5 m)
Size (WxHxD)	3.5 x 7.0 x 1.2 inches (89 x 178 x 30 mm)
Weight	18.7 oz. (530 grams)
Power	3.7V, 5,600mAh 20.7 watt-hour extended Li-Ion ("up to 13 hours"), "LiveSupport" battery swapping technology
Scanning	Optional 1D scanner via Flexiconn end-cap
GPS	48-channel SiRFstarIV L1 (C/A) receiver; 2.5 meter accuracy autonomous, 2 meter DGPS
Sensors	E-compass, altimeter, 3-axis accelerometer
Interface	1 x USB OTG, 1 x RS232, 1 x docking, FlexiConn (3-in-1 card reader, 1D barcode reader, long range Bluetooth or 13.56 MHz RFID with contactless smartcard reader)
Wireless	Bluetooth Class II 2.1 + EDR, 802.11b/g/n; optional 3.5G WWAN
List price	inquire
Contact	Getac PS336 product page
Brochure	PS336 brochure (PDF)



Getac FedEx TechConnect



Chattanooga, Tennessee, police using Getac computers



TDI Panamericana 2011 team using Getac V100 on 16,000 mile endurance challenge



And below is what the currently available Flexiconn end-caps look like from the front:



Note that Getac introduced Flexiconn as an open system with an open interface, meaning that independent hardware vendors can create new modules and caps to expand functionality as required.

Now let's take a look at the underlying technology. First, Getac switched from the venerable Marvell PXA processor in the PS236 to a 1GHz Texas Instruments Sitara AM3715. Apparently, the PXA/XScale processors that dominated the handheld market for so many years first under Intel and then under Marvell have run out of

Windows Mobile Info

- Windows Embedded 8.1 Handheld
- Windows Embedded Compact 2013
- Windows Embedded 8 Handheld
- Windows Embedded Compact 7
- Windows Embedded Handheld
- Windows Phone 7
- Windows Embedded CE 6.0 R3
- Windows Mobile 6.5
- Windows Mobile 6
- Windows CE 6.0
- Windows Mobile 5
- Windows CE 5.0
- Windows Mobile Smartphone
- Windows Mobile 2003
- Windows CE .Net
- Windows for Pocket PC 2002
- Pocket PC intro 2000
- Windows CE H/PC Pro 1998
- Windows CE 2.0 1997

Getac PS336 on the job

steam (or Marvell is no longer interested in that market). Add twice the RAM and 8GB of iNAND Flash, GPS with the SiRFstar IV chipset (lower power consumption, quicker cold start, more accurate) and a possibly brighter display (600 nits), and we're clearly talking a faster, more powerful device. And Getac isn't neglecting legacy connectivity either; the PS336 still has a full DB9 RS232 serial port to communicate with the many field and testing peripherals that still use serial.

The keyboard, while still technically a keypad and not a full keyboard, probably allows for quicker operation with dedicated directional navigation keys and a large central orange button to easily access punctuation and the unit's seven function keys.

Despite all the new technology and functionality, the PS336 is even more rugged than the PS236. The new unit can handle repeated 6-foot drops and it carries IP68 certification, which means it's totally dustproof and also totally waterproof, even against full, extended immersion. The operating temperature range remains an impressive -22 to +140 degrees Fahrenheit. The extra ruggedness is especially impressive given the addition of the Flexiconn end-cap modules.

We're not sure if the PS336 will replace the PS236 or if they'll co-exist, with the PS336 filling the role as the high-performance, high-end expandable model, and the exiting PS236 becoming the entry-level offering. Be that as it may, with the PS336, Getac adds a rugged mobile computer that'll fill the needs of many field data collection, mapping and GIS applications that must fit into existing Microsoft infrastructures and require devices a whole lot tougher than a smartphone in a case.

