

LARGER SCREEN VERSUS A WORKING WI-FI

I finally gave up to temptation and ordered a new [Asus Eee 901](#) to replace my one-year old 701. What basically convinced me was the larger screen and promises of much longer battery autonomy. Larger [SSD](#) drive is also a nice addition, although I didn't find 701's 4 GB drive too restricting.



However, when the package arrived I must say I was a bit disappointed at the changes Asus made.

I got my first bad impression immediately when I picked up the computer out of the box. While the 701 feels robust, 901 looks like it won't take that much beating before it breaks. For example, the display hinge on 701 is tight. It's strong enough that I was able to pick the laptop by the screen without the display moving. It was one of the things that really set 701 apart from other laptops as far as mechanical durability is concerned. 901 on the other hand goes back to a standard loose hinge that moves if you bump the laptop too hard.

Then there are LEDs. Obviously Asus succumbed to the idea that the more LEDs the better. Really, designers of these things should read a thing or two about usability of interfaces: a

LED should only be turned on if it means something is worthy of attention of the user. And it should only be blinking if something desperately requires some action.

901 on the other hand has one super bright blue LED on the charger that only tells you it's plugged in (now conveniently covered with black masking tape), two bright LEDs that just tell you the computer is turned on and a battery LED that *blinks* if the battery is full, but discharging (how surprising is that?).

Also the whole thing seems to be a bit sloppily built. The four silver hotkeys below the screen are bit broken - some only register a press if you press them really hard.

If I go on to the electronics inside, there are some more bad surprises. The Ralink wireless card is a far cry from the superb Mad-wifi-supported Atheros gem in the 701. It's tricky to setup in Linux, doesn't work well with Kismet and it's sensitivity is down in the dumps. I guess it's OK for your day-to-day home and office use, but forget about neighborhood surveillance.

The new 16 GB SSD is also a disappointing: it's very slow and surprisingly this shows the most when browsing the web with Firefox. It will sometimes annoyingly freeze for a second or two when opening a new web page or even when just entering an URL into the address bar. [Some tweaks](#) help mitigate the problem, but the bad feeling remains.

Well, not everything is bad of course. The hyperthreading Atom CPU is way faster than Celeron in 701. It also runs a lot cooler and is more comfortable to use. I haven't yet thoroughly tested the battery, but as far as I see Asus held its promise about that. Still, when you *upgrade* your laptop, you somehow expect that more things will get better than worse

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