

Tech[nology]News:

Acer Chromebook: modern hardware, useless software

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BUSINESS MANAGER

I have never owned my own laptop. In high school, I rented laptops from our IT department, and for my first semester of IIT, I relied on my modded Nexus 7 tablet. However, after seeing the Acer C720 Chromebook on sale for \$170, I decided it was time to take the plunge and buy a laptop.

The Acer C720 Chromebook is an excellent laptop with all the modern features that we have come to love. It has a non-glare 720p screen, USB 3.0, a solid state drive, Bluetooth 4.0, a Haswell based CPU, and HDMI out. Best of all, it boots up in a matter of seconds, and has a battery that will have juice to spare after a day of heavy use. While this sounds like the perfect machine, what they say is true; "If it sounds too good, it probably is."

There is one major problem with this laptop, Chrome OS.

While this operating system is not totally bad, it lacks a lot of features that other operating systems provided. It was limited to only chrome and any extensions that could be



Image courtesy of arstechnica.com

added to chrome. Chrome OS provides basic computer operations: web browsing, checking email, typing documents, and listening to music, but not much more. To get around this problem, I installed a variant of Ubuntu on my laptop. There are no features that I am

missing with Ubuntu over Chrome OS.

I still have chrome installed, therefore I could do everything that I could do before, but now I can play games, like Skyrim and Portal, edit photos and videos, run Math-

ematica, and have more control than before. When running Chrome OS on this laptop, I was able to get eight to nine hours of mild use, but with all the optimizations I have enabled in Ubuntu, I can now get upward of 12 hours of battery. I usually only charge it on the weekend, and just continue to use it during the week with no problems. Plus, I can now connect remotely to my desktop and use it just like a Windows 7 laptop.

There are a few minor problems, like the plastic feel of the construction and no Ethernet port, but this is to be expected from a thin, lightweight laptop. With the addition of a case, and a USB to Ethernet adaptor, both of these problems are solved. The only other complaint is the slow processor and 2GB of ram. Most modern laptops have better specifications than this, but at normal use these flaws are never really seen.

For the price of this laptop, there is nothing that can beat it. It is powerful, lightweight, lasts all day, and even looks great, and if Chrome OS isn't for you, just install Ubuntu and get ready to be amazed. If you are looking for a new laptop and do not need loads of power, I would recommend the Acer C720 Chromebook, the best laptop under \$200.

Tech[nology]News:

Mechanical keyboards for the win!

Austin Gonzalez
OPINION EDITOR

A buddy of mine recently got a mechanical keyboard. If you haven't heard about the latest rage from hipsters and gamers, mechanical keyboards are gaining popularity every day. Mechanical keyboards are fairly rare these days, unless you know one of these self-proclaimed keyboard snobs. Mechanical keyboards are much heavier and more expensive to produce. A good mechanical keyboard will run you over \$300 in some cases whereas a membrane keyboard can be found for free in just about every dumpster. I figured, heck, why not give the two a comparison while doing what I love most, writing an article for TechNews.

Mechanical keyboards are the exact opposite of something new. These guys have been around for as long as computers and their clickity-clackity is the iconic audible trope we all recognize. As the name suggests, they use mechanical switches which when actuated send a signal to computer. Membrane keyboards on the other hand are a more recent adaption and utilize little rubber domes in place of springs and sliding mechanisms. It really doesn't seem like there's much of a difference between the two styles except that mechanical keyboards are old fashioned, noisy, heavy, and tremendously expensive. It seems like no contest, but mechanical keyboards will win you over with their peculiarities.

Proponents of the mechanical keyboard say that everything is wrong with the membrane keyboard. You can type faster

on a mechanical keyboard thanks to shorter presses and easier actuation. For those who type for hours on end, mechanical keyboards can reduce fatigue as they require less effort to register each key. Furthermore, you can fine tune the gram weights of the keys to perfectly match your typing style. Some mechanical keyboards even have the benefit of not bottoming out. "Bottoming out" is a practice where you hit the back plate of keyboard in order to register a key, with mechanical keyboards this isn't necessary as the actuation is incredibly clear with a tactile and audible click. Mechanical keyboards have been shown to reduce typing errors, although it is not fully understood why this is. Some complain about the noise, but it's something that you can get used to that is easily mitigated. There are several types of switches, each possessing different attributes as far as tactile feedback, noise, and even actuation points. Brown switches have an actuation point halfway down a full press making it possible (with some skill) to register a "double tap" with incredible speed. So when you get your first mechanical keyboard, you'll realize that while there are many keyboards out there, this one is yours.

I've used the Black Widow Ultimate, a gaming mechanical keyboard, and a standard Dell membrane keyboard to type this article and I have to say that the mechanical keyboard is simply more fun to type on. The "experience of typing" sounds pompous, but it really is one of those things you'll miss without a side-by-side comparison. The clicking, rather than serving as a nuisance, helps to create a sort of rhythm in my typing. It's also

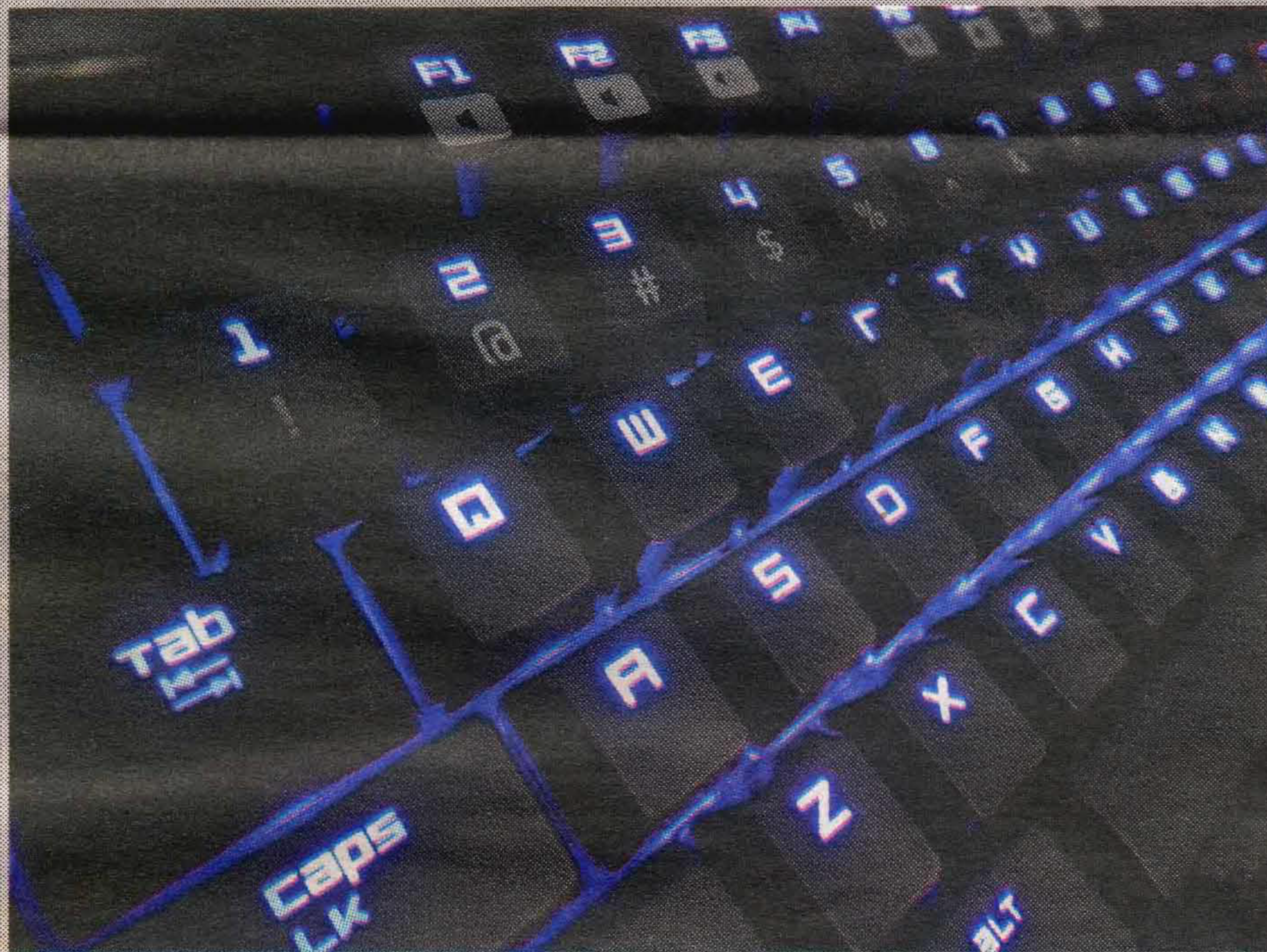


Image courtesy of www.techpowerup.com

very clear when a key has been pressed and it feels like I can use less force. The membrane keyboard feels understandably slow and mushy in comparison. The mush is what really gets me; it just feels disappointing. I don't know if I can justify buying a \$100 used keyboard, but typing the latter part of this article (after switching back to the mechanical) has been a bit of drag in comparison to the crisp feeling I got with the mechanical.

A membrane keyboard will always have its place. Chiclet-style keyboards found

in laptops simply aren't made to be mechanical keyboards and in terms of portability membranes can weigh just a few ounces as compared to a few pounds of a mechanical keyboard. If you're looking for the better typing experience, a mechanical keyboard is without a doubt the way to go. If you're an average Joe, it's difficult to justify spending so much on a piece of equipment you can usually get for free. Really, it isn't something you'll notice is significantly better, but once you switch to real switches, you can't go back.

Monday, April 21
Baseball
vs. Purdue University-North Central
1 p.m., Ed Glancy Field
Games 1 & 2

Friday, April 25
Men & Women's Track & Field
Twilight Invitational @ Benedictine University
3:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 26
Baseball
@ Maranatha Baptist Bible College
4 p.m.
Games 1 & 2

Sunday, April 27
Baseball
@ Purdue University-Calumet
11 a.m.
Games 1 & 2

Sunday, April 27
Baseball
@ Purdue University-Calumet
11 a.m.
Games 1 & 2

Wednesday, April 30
Baseball
vs. Calvin College
1 p.m., Ed Glancy Field
Games 1 & 2

Friday, May 2
Baseball
vs. Maranatha Baptist Bible College
Donation Night for St. James Food Pantry
3 p.m., Ed Glancy Field

Saturday, May 3
Baseball
vs. Maranatha Baptist Bible College
1 p.m., U.S. Cellular Field,
Home of the Chicago White Sox

Friday, May 9
Women's & Men's Track & Field
Dr. Keeler Invite @ North Central College
Time: TBA

