

# WORTMANN TERRA AURA A74 LD



Fresh from the SuSE certification lab, the Wortmann Terra Aura A74 LD was the only device to arrive with Linux pre-installed. The oddly metallic-looking case is actually made of plastic but nevertheless looks very elegant and has nothing to fear from comparison with other notebooks such as the Lifebook E-6560. As is representative of the high-end category, the diskette drive and 8x DVD-ROM are permanently fixed in place and cannot be removed.

## Ethernet socket for modem

An inventory of the ports brought a bit of a surprise. In addition to the usual ports, we found an apparent Ethernet port in the form of an RJ45 socket. However, this turned out to be a modem

port. Wortmann was unable to say why there was an RJ45 socket instead of the RJ11 normally provided for modem ports. A version of the notebook with Ethernet capabilities instead of the modem does not exist, which is fairly odd.

The keyboard is rectangular and has no offset cursor block. The space bar is pleasantly large and the left Shift key is fairly big. On the other hand though, Wortmann has unusually positioned the key for the pointed brackets on the left next to the cursor keys. The typing feel was very comfortable overall and the keys are mounted so as to move only slightly and have a soft feedback. As with the Lifebook, in the Terra Aura a touchpad with two mouse keys has been installed beneath the key field.

### Wortmann Terra Aura A74 LD

- (+) certified for Linux
- (+) hardware almost fully supported
- (-) no modem support, no Ethernet
- (-) CardBus slots too hot



Good news: Many notebooks already have two USB ports. The Wortmann Terra Aura unfortunately, needs a special plug for the TV connection.

## Linux Installation

Naturally although this is a preinstalled machine, we were keen to look at the course of a typical installation, this notebook being certified by SuSE. At this point it's worth taking a look at the small print of the certificate, as it includes restrictions with respect to the X-server and sound card. As there is an S3 Savage MX in the Wortmann Terra Aura, the patched X-server is needed, as we also used in the Toshiba devices and the HP Omnibook. Accordingly, we left YaST2 without having installed X. Also, the driver for the sound card is still brand-new and we used, as with the HP Omnibook, the Maestro-3 sound driver from Zab Brown, still in the Alpha stage, which can be found at <http://www.zabbo.net/maestro3>.

## ESS Modem

No driver of any kind could be found for the built-in modem with ESS-1989 chip so we can only hope that Ensoniq will soon remedy this. Maybe Wortmann can check just once more whether it might be possible to supply an Ethernet card instead of the modem. Nevertheless, the infrared port is immaculate and after the obvious adjustments it was installed without any problem.

## CardBus

The Terra Aura also contains the popular Ricoh RL 5c476 CardBus controller which, like most others, took 20 seconds for the initialisation of our PCMCIA hard disk. Unlike the Lifebook E-6560 the CardBus slots here are a bit further away from the main air vent but the cards still heat up to almost 50 degrees and at higher external temperatures could certainly get damaged.

## Conclusion

In principle at least the Wortmann Terra Aura is a Linux laptop and in a few months, when the Maestro-3 driver and the patched X-server are included in the distributions, there won't even be any manual work involved in configuration. Only the ESS modem somewhat spoils the overall impression. We had no problems worth mentioning otherwise – even the TV output could be wired up without complaint (up to 800x600 pixels). At higher resolutions, as with the Toshibas, only the upper left corner is visible.

Wortmann deserve huge praise for taking the trouble to get SuSE certification, even if it not yet quite "Ready for SuSE Linux 7.0". This clearly shows that at last one manufacturer is taking Linux users seriously and offering its devices with Linux. The Terra Aura is only just becoming available in the UK and Wortmann, which is a German company, advise you to enquire with your local notebook dealer about availability. ■



## Dell Latitude C600

*Just before we went to press, the Dell Latitude C600 arrived by express courier. It is equipped with a Pentium-III (750 MHz) and 128 MByte RAM and counts among the so-called 'ultraportable' class. As a special feature, it has two front slots – in the right one you can insert a CD-ROM drive, a DVD-ROM, a second battery or a diskette drive, as you choose. The left-hand slot is reserved for the main battery. A fully-functioning second drive slot would be very interesting, like the one there used to be years ago in the Scenic Mobile series from Siemens. This let people accommodate two drives at once if one were working in an office, for example. It has to be said that due to the very short time available we were unable to test the notebook with the detail used elsewhere, so you will only find here some first impressions from a brief test.*

*The unknown infrared port turned out to not be a problem after all. After a kernel patch was sought and found, the irda-utils could be started without*

*demur and the Nokia 6210 was specified in the list of accessible devices.*

*The ESS 1983S Maestro-3i sound card was correctly detected by YaST2 but SuSE did not supply an appropriate driver. We installed – as with the Wortmann Terra Aura and HP Omnibook – the Maestro-3 module from Zab Brown and were thus able to activate the sound card without any problems.*

*Network card and modem in the Dell Latitude C600 are located on a mini-PCI plug card. The 3com chips installed there were recognised in the SuSE standard installation but because of a limited timeframe we could not look for a suitable driver.*

*Posing more of a problem was the ATI Rage Mobility M3 – unlike the Mobility P1M present elsewhere in the test, this did not respond to the SVGA server and came up with a few oddities, mainly in connection with the framebuffer support. We will have to go into this, too, in more detail, before we can give a well-founded judgement.*

*One big fat plus to finish off is that the Latitude was the only device able to call up the BIOS set-up via function key both in text mode and under YaST2 and then to return without a problem. And the suspend function worked without complaint.*

*We will bring you the whole test report in one of our upcoming issues, together with other latecomers from Gateway, Apple and Fujitsu-Siemens.*