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Computex

[A Look into the Future, After Computex 2008](#)

Netbooks and the future of portable computers

The 2008 edition of the Computex trade show, which was held in Taipei, Taiwan and will close its doors today, has brought to light a number of new products which will most certainly change the way we perceive things around us. Starting with the much anticipated ASUS Eee PC, most of the manufacturers that were present at the show have had something to brag about. And products are not the only things that have been exposed to the world for the very first time, we should also take in consideration the high number of new technologies that have been released or have been speculated about, at Computex. And if we are to consider Computex as a battleground, then the computer trade show has seen its share of battles this year. And when I say battle, I mean competition, as a number of giant manufacturers have released or unveiled devices that make use of next-generation technologies. In my opinion, there were three battlegrounds at this year's Computex, which I'll entitle, Ultra Portable Computing, Graphics, and Storage. In this article, I'll try to sum up what has been going on in the so-called "Ultra Portable Computing" battleground, as the other two are yet to become spectacular. Let's take ASUS, for example, which obviously deserves credit for changing the portable computer market and setting the stage for a new breed of products, dubbed netbooks. With their Eee PC, ASUS has made almost every major manufacturer rethink its marketing strategy and release a competitor for the famous Eee PC. And because of that, this year, Eee PC users have been anxiously waiting for their favorite netbook lineup to receive new members, namely the Eee PC 901 and Eee PC 1000. But ASUS did even more, and released a desktop version of their Ultra portable computer, dubbed the Eee Box. On top of that, Eee PC users will now be able to control their Eee PC through two Wii-like devices, which ASUS also released at Computex. And MSI, one of the leading manufacturers of motherboards, graphics cards, portable computer systems and consumer electronics, has apparently done a great job in stirring up the public's attention with its [MSI Wind](#). Its Wind netbook has been set to be a real Eee PC killer, long before the two products were officially launched. Since the first rumors surfaced the web, the Wind took the spotlight, mainly because of the fact that it was going to sport a 10-inch display, a feature which ASUS ultimately matched with the released of their Eee PC 1000. Micro Star International also announced their own desktop version of Wind, dubbed Wind PC, thus becoming a real competitor for ASUS. But besides the fact that both netbooks feature similar characteristics, one of the most interesting things about them was their Intel Atom support. The highly anticipated Intel Atom is expected to bring the necessary computing power for the next-generation mobile Internet devices, while still providing a high energy efficiency level. Built on the same manufacturing technology as the latest Core 2 Duos, the Atom is yet to make itself accountable in the above mentioned devices. This is because Intel will not be able to ship any Atom CPU, until September, according to a recent statement of Sean Maloney, executive vice president and general manager of Intel's Sales and Marketing Group. But ASUS and MSI aren't the only two players on the netbook market; the competition includes companies such as [Acer](#), Gigabyte, [HP](#), [ECS](#) and even Dell. Dell is somewhat of a surprise, as there hasn't been any indication from the Round Rock, Texas-based company of such a product. In fact, details about the [Mini Inspiron](#) surfaced after a journalist "accidentally" caught Michael Dell carrying a small sized, candy red notebook, which he claimed to be the "perfect device for the next billion internet users." But unlike with the other devices, Dell's Mini Inspiron hasn't seen its share of technical specifications, being rumored about on the web, so we cannot say for certain whether Dell's netbook is also going to support Intel's Atom processor. Perhaps Dell

is waiting to see which is the best choice, as far as computing power goes, for its product. This is because the Ultra Portable Computing battleground can also be considered the place where VIA and NVIDIA try to compete with Intel's Atom processor. The past week, both VIA and NVIDIA [demonstrated](#) their Nano and Tegra processors, which seem capable of tackling some of the most demanding applications, currently available. Although NVIDIA's Tegra is more of a graphics processor, the company specifically designed it to take on Intel's Atom processor in the battle for the ultra portable computing devices market. And while all three processors are meant to provide computing power to MIDs(Mobile Internet Devices), there are some important differences between them, especially where [NVIDIA's Tegra](#) is concerned. Because unlike the other two, which have been built on the x86 architecture (which has been a leading industry standard for 30-years now), NVIDIA's Tegra relays on the ARM 11 architecture. Nevertheless, the industry has high hopes from all three processors, as we are heading into a future of small sized devices, capable of providing the basic computing power for handling Internet-related tasks. In fact, imagine that you are going to take with you your Eee PC, Wind or Mini Inspiron almost everywhere. And the number of possible users is very high as these netbooks are no more meant for educational activities only. So what we are going to see in the near future is more netbooks for people, that is if Intel can handle the high Atom demand. And because the price of netbooks is rather decent, they are also going to be sold on emerging markets, which have a high number of potential customers. Oh yeah, let's not forget! The Eee Box and the Wind PC are also expected to make a big impact.