



Micro Innovations Wireless Link

Review By Rick Broida

We've yet to find a keyboard that can make us toss our trusty Stowaway (a regular Top Pick and Product of the Year winner), but the **Micro Innovations Wireless Link Keyboard** (\$119.99) has us thinking about it. Not because it's more comfortable (it's not) or because it costs less (it doesn't), but because it's so clever. The Wireless Link connects to your handheld via the infrared transceiver. That means it's compatible with virtually every model—a huge advantage over all other keyboards we've seen. What's more, it's remarkably compact, and it reflects some ingenious design decisions.

When folded, the attractively styled **Wireless Link** looks a lot like a PDA. It has roughly the same measurements as Sony's Clie T615C, and therefore slips unobtrusively into any pocket. It weighs just four

ounces, and that's with its single AAA battery installed. Unfolded, the Wireless Link reveals a QWERTY keyboard, a small IR window, and a stylus stand. Appreciably absent is any kind of dock.

Instead, your PDA rests on a stand, which itself is another ingenious bit of engineering. It's reminiscent of the screen cover used on the Palm V and m500 series, and in fact can double as just that when not propping up your handheld. (If you don't have one of those models, the stand can ride shotgun with the Wireless Link thanks to a similar silo-type connector.) By now you're probably wondering, "How can the keyboard see the IR port on top of my handheld?" It's all done with mirrors: the stand has an arm that extends over the PDA, reflecting the IR signals to and from the keyboard. Like we said before, extremely clever.

The only Palm OS device that gave us trouble was the Kyocera QCP 6035, as the arm doesn't extend high enough to accommodate its IR port. We tried the stand with a Palm m500, Visor Prism (mirror arm not needed), and Sony Clie N760C, and it worked beautifully with all three. (It also works with Pocket PCs; we successfully tested the Jornada 568 and Audiovox Maestro.) If you have a Palm V or m500 series model, you can skip the stand altogether and use a special stylus to prop the unit at a comfortable angle. Honestly, the Wireless Link is like Inspector Gadget's keyboard kit.



For another stand-free solution, you can lay your handheld flat on a table with its IR port pointing at the keyboard (the Wireless Link driver lets you rotate the screen in any direction). However, rotating crashed our Kyocera, so we couldn't use the Wireless Link with that model, period.

The keyboard itself is small and cramped, with the top and bottom rows smaller than the middle row. Many keys are doubled up, including numbers and most punctuation. However, arrow, shift, application, and backspace keys stand alone, as they should. What's more, the keys offer surprisingly good feedback, and virtually all Palm OS functions are available as keystrokes. It takes time to get comfortable with the Wireless Link, and touch typists will never truly love it, but it's definitely acceptable for the hunt-and-peck crowd.

At \$119.99, the Wireless Link ranks as the priciest keyboard we've seen yet. It's also one of the coolest and definitely the most versatile. You pay a bit more now, but in theory you'll never need another keyboard, even when you upgrade your handheld. For that reason alone, the Pocketop Keyboard earns major kudos. -Rick Broida

***Editor's note:** We tested the Micro Innovations keyboard with a number of handhelds around our office and found compatibility was excellent. It worked well not only with the devices that it advertised compatibility with, but others as well. We tested a variety of Palm, Sony, Handspring, Kyocera, and Pocket PC models. The only compatibility problems we encountered were the aforementioned incompatibility with the Kyocera 6035, and the inability to use the Treo 90 upright. The placement of the IR port on the Treo prevented the reflector on the stand from working properly. However, we were able to use the Treo lying flat on the table, using the rotation features of the keyboard driver.*



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Alphasmart's Palm OS Laptop

Alphasmart's upcoming **Dana** is a small laptop computer reminiscent in design of the classic Radio Shack Model 100, but powered by the Palm OS. Aimed at the education market, this \$399 notebook runs Palm OS 4.1 and sports dual USB and SD/MMC slots. Its monochrome screen boasts a 560x160 display; existing Palm OS programs can run on a 160x160 window in the center of the screen, complete with a virtual Graffiti area. Although it's targeted at schools, this may very well be an attractive inexpensive notebook alternative for those who primarily need email, word processing, and spreadsheet support on the road.

New Products

KeyContacts

Chapura's **KeyContacts** is definitely worth a look for the serious Outlook user. Current sync programs like Chapura's own PocketMirror are limited by the number of fields in Palm's Address Book program—some Outlook fields just have no counterparts on the handheld. KeyContacts "addresses" that problem by including a replacement for the Palm OS Address book that supports 40 additional contact fields, including work address, birthday, job title, and so on. It also supports over 250 categories, and lets you assign multiple categories to individual contacts. The program is slated for release on June 25.

Documents to Go

DataViz has released a free update for the **Sheet to Go** spreadsheet component of its document viewer/editor utility that adds hires, 320x320 pixel support. We hope the company will follow up with hi-res versions of its Word and PowerPoint counterparts as well.

TealDoc

TealPoint has released **TealDoc 5.00** (\$16.95), which adds anti-aliased font support, the new TealDoc Maker Windows file converter/installer, full-screen support on the Samsung I300 smartphone, and more. The update is free for registered users.