

Palmsize

MULTIMEDIA

Roundup



Can one device do many things well?

After a depressing string of market failures, the “Windows Powered” Palmsize PC was singlehandedly saved by Casio. Their Cassiopeia E-100 redefined what these devices were supposed to be, and the market responded by snapping them up at a rapid clip. The E-100 had a stunningly bright and crisp color screen that is capable of displaying 64,000 colors at a time. Compared to the dim and anemic 256-color screens of the competition, this was something to get excited about. Even the PPC’s harshest critics had to concede that this changed the whole game.

But the E-100 story was more than just

a pretty display. It was faster than any previous PPC, with its 133MHz NEC RISC processor. After putting up with slugs like the Philips Nino 500, this newfound speed changed the whole PPC experience, even overcoming the general slowness of Windows CE 2.11. The E-100 also had a standard stereo headphone mini-jack for MP3 or spoken audio playback, a small digital camera attachment with excellent software for capturing stills and short video clips, and a big front-mounted speaker for decent sound. Top it off with a long life lithium-ion battery and you have a winner.

But other makers were hot on Casio’s

heels with multimedia-enhanced versions of their own devices. Compaq and Hewlett Packard released the Aero 2180 (US\$449) and the Jornada 430se (US\$499), respectively. These machines offered many of the same features of the Casio, which responded by releasing the best-selling Cassiopeia E-105 (US\$599). This new machine had twice the memory (32MB) and new multimedia software for converting QuickTime movies on your PC and viewing them on the handheld. The E-105 remains the best selling Windows CE product ever.

My intention here is not necessarily to rate these fine machines against each oth-

