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ACCESSORY REVIEW

ATPM 12.05
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Hardsleeve

Developer: Axio

Price: \$130 (large); \$90 (small)

Requirements: iBook or PowerBook; soon available for MacBook Pro

Trial: None



The Axio Hardsleeve is unique. Its name describes it well: it is hard, and it is a sleeve. It is similar to the Axio line of [backpacks](#) popular with motorcyclists, using a combination of rigid polycarbonate plastic with fabric.



In this case, the exterior is glossy plastic, in either black with a faux carbon-fiber checkerboard pattern, or in pearl white, except for strip of cloth in the middle that allows a

zipper to be used as the closure mechanism. The interior is lined with felt that has a very nice “hand” and has the Axio logo subtly imprinted.

High-density foam is used for a form-fitting padding system. An inner strip of foam can be carefully pulled out to make room for the larger models. It has been lightly pre-cut to the precise dimensions needed, and the job is easily finished with a sharp knife. Semi-circular cutouts in the foam facilitate removal of the machine.



There is a guitar-style strap that clips onto two metal studs. A pouch can be attached in turn to the strap to hold a power adapter, though it just barely fits and then not even the cord portion.

What makes this product attractive is its size. It adds as little bulk to the contents as possible, and it offers enough protection that it can be carried alone instead of being inserted into another bag—it actually would be a belt-and-suspenders approach to put the Hardsleeve into a briefcase. The Hardsleeve beats any of the other sleeves on the market in terms of protection. The only competitor to the Hardsleeve might be a Pelican briefcase. But the Hardsleeve looks far better and the Pelican is considerably larger.



So the Hardsleeve enforces the discipline of traveling light. You have to be a minimalist to appreciate the aesthetic. You could take your PowerBook (or MacBook Pro once the new model of Hardsleeve is introduced) to the library to do research, but you could not take anything else: no accessories, no files, not even a magazine.

The real negative with the Hardsleeve, however, is that because the interior has a much tighter fit than most carrying cases, when the case is opened up the PowerBook tends to be pulled open too. This may be exacerbated by a weak latch on the PowerBook tested, but it's enough to pose a concern. Furthermore, the dual zipper doesn't operate as well as it would if it were pulling together only textiles. If the tabs are pulled without care, they easily miss teeth. Finally, the metal studs on the exterior (for the carrying strap) protrude and could easily damage a surface the Hardsleeve rests on. If you set it down on a dining room table made of wood, for example, you could mar it without even being too reckless.

Nonetheless, the Hardsleeve is a great combination of style and sturdiness. It combines great looks with exceptional protection.