

1992 — IBM “Soap” mouse

This mouse, officially known by the hard-to-remember name “model 13H6690” (and almost identical “model 33G5430”) was apparently released to the market in 1992 as an update to the 1987 IBM PS/2 mouse. In addition to the obvious association with a well-rounded bar of soap, this model was also unofficially called “IBM Fat Mouse”.



Figure 1: IBM Soap mouse

Despite its wide distribution, this mouse is practically not represented in press reviews. IBM supplied it with some models of PS/1 and PS/ValuePoint computers (however, along with this mouse, you can find promotional materials for these computers with the previous IBM PS/2 Mouse model).



Figure 2: IBM Soap mouse, top and bottom views

The mouse was produced in several color options: a solid beige body, and two-color versions with dark buttons (fig. 2) or a dark lower part of the body [2]. On the top side there are two large buttons and an engraved IBM logo; in general, the case is minimalistic and, apart from that, does not contain

any additional elements. On the bottom you can see a ball and a swivel ring that allows you to remove it for cleaning.



Figure 3: IBM Soap mouse on a graduated pad with a grid step of 1 cm

The mouse is compact in size (fig. 3) and does not provide wrist support. However, as can be seen in fig. 4, the curved shape of the body allows you to comfortably rest your palm on it and press the buttons in a natural hand position. At the same time, the mouse is symmetrical and is equally suitable for left-handers and right-handers. In addition to ergonomics, the mouse was also successful in terms of reliability [1], which apparently made it popular and caused a fairly long mass production.



Figure 4: IBM Soap mouse with a human hand model

The internals of the IBM Soap mouse are shown in fig. 5. This is an optomechanical encoder device manufactured by Logitech. The heavily slotted encoder disks, the low number of discrete PCB elements, and the plastic rollers are typical of mid-90s rather than early 90s mice, making the IBM Soap mouse one of the pioneers of this trend.



Figure 5: IBM Soap mouse disassembled

References

- [1] Wendt P.H. Mice & other stuff <http://www.mcamafia.de/mycomp/mycomp06.htm>
- [2] Przytul grata. IBM Mouse PS/2. <http://hugold.pl/gratym0126/ibm33g5430.html>