

PC

MAGAZINE

DIGITAL EDITION

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MAY 2010

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Up Close
Everything
You Need
to Know



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FIRST WORD LANCE ULANOFF

At Home with the iPad

In my home, the Apple iPad is battling .250. That's not bad for a new, not-quite-market-tested product. Extrapolated to the general population and one in four people may want Apple's first tablet.

I don't live in an Apple-centric home. While I've used Macs on and off over the years and even trained people on early Apple systems and software, there isn't a single Mac in my house. There are, however, three iPods: two touches and one nano. My two children (one almost 12 and the other 15) instantly recognized the iPad as, essentially, a giant iPod touch. So when I brought the iPad home for a visit, I was not surprised that both of my children knew all the interface and navigation metaphors in advance. They were even more familiar with a few of the pre-loaded apps than I was.

The Ulanoff Proving Ground

My wife, a long-time Windows user, owns a nano, but the iPad was not familiar to her. Still, I had each family member spend some time with the device: They tried out apps, checked out the e-reader, used the virtual keyboard, and viewed photos and video.

My son immediately found the single first-person shooter on the iPad. For a minute or so, we both struggled to figure out how you move the character forward. Then he noticed the virtual joystick on the screen. To use it, he simply moved his thumb around on top of it, as if it were a real controller.

When I handed it to my daughter, she seemed startled and said, "It's so light!" A budding artist, she quickly found a beta drawing app Apple had loaded on the iPad. She recognized it as the plus-sized version of one she already had on her iPod touch. I'd tried the app a few times and found it interesting, but struggled to draw with my fingertip; I still prefer a tablet. While she agreed with me, my daughter did try her finger at a few sketches.

Typing and Reading

I then passed the iPad back to my wife. I told her that she is just the kind of person who would want and love an iPad. In fact, Apple seems to be targeting hyper-busy stay-at-home moms with the iPad. Too bad my wife wasn't cooperating with my theory.

She clearly enjoyed shuffling through photos, though her lack of experience with

When I packed up the iPad, my daughter looked stricken. She didn't want to see it go.

a touch-screen showed. She tapped too emphatically and was surprised at how the screen did or didn't respond to her gestures. Bit by bit, however, she got the hang of it.

I asked her to bring up the virtual keyboard and try to use it. Granted, she's never used a keyboard like this, but she is the best typist in the house. I could see her struggling with the iPad keyboard; the lack of physical feedback was throwing her.

I was also curious to see whether the iPad's rather spectacular e-book capabilities might turn her head. As she paged through her first virtual book, I could see that even she was impressed. She loved the bookshelf and, once she understood how closely the page turning mimicked real life, she easily got the hang of turning virtual pages. She even quipped, "Your Kindle is now obsolete." I asked her if she would want one for e-reading. No, she told me. She feared falling asleep in bed while reading and dropping the iPad.

Apps for the Kids

While reading is a chief component in the iPad's bag of tricks, interaction, media consumption, and gaming are probably equally important. I wondered if my son, who doesn't read for enjoyment, might find pleasure in these other features. We took the Marvel Comics app for a spin, and he quickly figured out how to navigate from page to page and even panel to panel. Overall, I think my son was interested in the iPad,

but, ultimately, he concluded that it didn't offer him more than his iPod touch.

My daughter was another story. She asked repeatedly for more time with the iPad. She tried out as many features as she could, including the iPod, games, video playback (which is truly a device highlight), and even typing on the iPad's keyboard dock accessory. She had only one criticism of the docking scheme: Why doesn't Apple also offer a way to dock in landscape mode?

When it came time to pack up the iPad, my daughter looked stricken. She didn't want to see it go. She asked what it cost. I told her that this model was almost \$700 (there are, of course, cheaper models). At her current allowance, she quickly calculated that it would take her at least three years.

Final Judgment

So, Apple, you have at least one customer in my home. For me, I'm still on the fence. The e-reader is amazing, but I think I still like my single-purpose device more. The video playback is clearly a killer app on the iPad, and I could imagine flying cross-country and enjoying films of my choice. So, who knows, maybe iPad will end up batting .500 in my home.

>> CHECK OUT OUR REVIEW OF THE APPLE IPAD IN THIS ISSUE'S FIRST LOOKS.

FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER! Catch the chief's comments on the latest tech developments at twitter.com/LanceUlanoff.



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Anatomy of a Hack

Inside the biggest online theft case in U.S. history.

In late March, those in the technology world were talking about little else than the Apple iPad. But at the same time, in a Boston courtroom, a chapter was closed with little fanfare on the biggest case of online identity theft in U.S. history. U.S. District Judge Douglas Woodlock sentenced Miami resident Albert Gonzalez, 28, and two Russian co-conspirators to 17 to 25 years in prison

for hacking into, among others, Heartland Payment Systems, a business that credit-card companies and vendors use to process sales transactions. The three men stole some 130 million credit-card numbers and reportedly made up to \$4 million on the scam. Gonzalez and his cohorts hacked their way into those databases using a method called SQL injection.

Many companies are exposed to SQL injection hacks because of the prevalence of SQL.

Behind the Hack

SQL (Structured Query Language) is a computer language developed to more easily manage and parse the vast amounts of information in large-scale databases. John Verdi, senior counsel at the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) says that an SQL injection hack is similar to a buffer overrun attack but is “a brute-force way to do it.” In other words, Gonzalez found just the right false commands to send the SQL database at Heartland to access the information he needed.

According to Molly Crawford, the Federal Trade Commission’s senior attorney at the Division of Privacy and Identity Protection, the FTC’s first known case involving an SQL injection hack occurred in 2005, when a hacker used it to steal credit-card numbers from big-box pet store Petco.

How Serious is SQL Injection?

How does it stack up against other threats we are more familiar with, such as botnets? Verdi says that botnets are more common

because they are low risk, low reward. Most individual users don’t report every bit of malware their security software detects, thus bad guys stay in the shadows. “It’s highly unlikely you will ever be caught trying to send a Trojan to an individual user,” Verdi says. An SQL hack, on the other hand, is high risk, high reward.

Verdi says that many companies are exposed to SQL injection hacks because of the prevalence of SQL and a lack of strong security practices. “Heartland did something dangerous,” he says, “but it didn’t do anything other companies aren’t doing also.”

Any Protection?

On the good side, Crawford says that SQL injection hacks are “commonplace and relatively simple to prevent” via simple encryption methods. Though consumers have no control over which third-parties their credit card companies use, Crawford says that purchasing only from vendors you trust and monitoring statements are good practices.—*Chloe Albanesius and Erik Rhey*

BEST OF THE INTERNET

APPBRAIN

AppBrain is a database of popular Android apps that can sync with your phone and keep track of the apps you have installed and how frequently they update. —*Alan Henry*

FRIENDGIFTR

This Web service lets you give gift cards from more than 140 retailers online by choosing the store and then directing Friendgifr to the social network of the recipient to deliver the gift.—*AH*

SUITE ARRIVAL

This site lets you order travel-size toiletries and other goodies ahead of time so they’re waiting for you at your destination.—*AH*

Another Look at Privacy

The tech industry wants to revise a key piece of legislation.



Google, Microsoft, and AT&T have joined a coalition to push Congress to update electronic privacy laws, which they believe have been antiquated by the explosion of social networking and cloud-based storage.

Called the Digital Due Process Coalition, the group includes other industry companies and trade groups, and is targeting changes to the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA).

When Congress passed the ECPA in 1986, it struck a balance between the user, law enforcement, and businesses as to how their digital information could be accessed. But there is increasing concern that the ECPA no longer fits the way technology has evolved and the way people have built this technology into their daily lives, says Jim Dempsey, vice president for public policy at the Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT).

As more and more people store their information with services like Google Docs or share personal information on sites like Facebook, the ECPA has become outdated, Dempsey says. "1986 was light years ago in

Internet terms."

First on the coalition's agenda is establishing that private communications stored with an ISP, such as e-mail, instant messages, and browsing history, are protected like any other physical document. The coalition also wants this standard to apply to location-based information from a mobile phone.

"Some GPS data is protected by a warrant; other data is not," he says. "The courts have been all over the ballpark [on the issue]."

The coalition also wants to revise the act to prevent the government from obtaining subpoenas to collect subscriber data in bulk. Rather, it could only gather data on the person or persons in question.

In the near future, the coalition anticipates that Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, will hold hearings on the issue, as will the appropriate House committee. Those events will "set some of the stage for this," Dempsey says, adding that the industry is dedicated to the issue and "in this for the long haul."

—Chloe Albanesius

ExtremeTech

Microsoft's IE Testing Lab Revealed

A rare look inside the Internet Explorer testing lab.

On Microsoft's campus in Redmond, Washington, there lies Building 50. Inside this building is where the world's most used browser—Internet Explorer—is put through its paces. During an advance briefing on IE9, Microsoft partner test manager Jason Upton gave us a rare peek into the workings of the Internet Explorer Testing Lab.

First of all, the lab is an impressive sight—aisle after aisle of desktops lined up like an army of digital soldiers. According to Upton, there are 948 PCs and 119 servers in the lab, each individually configurable through an automation system. Why so many? Upton says that the lab's vast capabilities let Microsoft configure its browser testing to get the finest possible slices of data.

Microsoft's opt-in customer improvement program takes in data from around the world, letting the labs duplicate predominant hardware trends and software setups of users anywhere. "If we wanted to project, for example, how many [Core] i5 processors there were in China or what's the RAM configuration in Japan, we can," Upton says.

The ranks of systems are impressive, but they're not the entire test bed. The team has also built a system called Internet Explorer



PC ARMY A rack of IE test systems, complete with energy-saving power distribution.

Virtualization Manager (IVM) running on HP ProLiant 7000 blade servers. Another set of servers is capable of running up to 300 variants of Windows and IE in virtual machines.

All that heat and cooling draws a lot of power. Microsoft's development team, however, has done a considerable amount to mitigate this. Not only are the hundreds of PCs remotely addressable, but even their individual power sockets are addressable through IP power distribution units. This system is used to power down machines not being used, saving some 1.8 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.—*Lance Ulanoff and Michael Muchmore*

BEST OF OUR BLOGS



GOODCLEANTECH

Fight Vampire Draw

We've all heard about the "vampire effect" of keeping battery chargers plugged in. Well, now there's another answer than simply unplugging and replugging your chargers. The EcoCharge energy-efficient wall charger draws zero power when no device is connected or a connected device is fully charged. The EcoCharge is able to charge two devices at once and comes in mini USB and micro USB versions, each for \$29.99. And an iPhone/iPod version will be available by the time you read this. —Troy Dreier



AT WORK

Free Trial of Management Tool

Stacks, from interactive design agency Imulus, is a group task-management tool that gives members of a project team instant views into the project's status. Stacks sorts, filters, and visualizes task information. Business users can try out Stacks for free for 60 days. After the trial period is over, Stacks offers several membership packages from \$20 a month for five users with 2GB of storage, to \$80 a month for 40 users with 20GB of storage. Get more info and download it for free at the Stacks Web site.

—Errol Pierre-Louis

GEARLOG

Check that Netbook Quickly

Netbook owners, now you too can get through airport security a little faster. Mobile Edge has just expanded its line of ScanFast checkpoint-friendly bags with new models just for netbooks (\$49.99 list). The line include a briefcase, messenger bag, and backpack, and each bag has an adjustable computer protection compartment that will accommodate 8.9- or 11.6-inch netbooks with a power supply, or a 13.3-inch laptop. —TD



SECURITY WATCH

Emergency IE Updates

Microsoft has just released updates for critical vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer Versions 5, 6, 7, and 8. The update is named MS10-018: Cumulative Update for Internet Explorer. Users should apply the update as soon as possible, as one of the vulnerabilities is already being exploited in the wild and others are rated by Microsoft as being likely to result in working exploit code. —Larry Seltzer

Connected Traveler

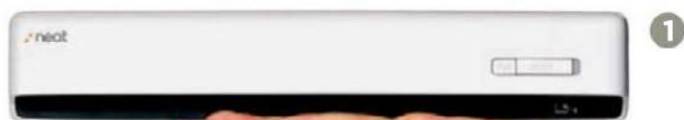
Your Virtual Briefcase

A portable document scanner can keep you organized and lighten your load on the road.

The paperless office may be a pipe dream, but the paperless travel bag is still a goal that can be realized—with some help. A portable document scanner can be your paper-free pal to keep your important business documents safe and accessible on your laptop or USB storage drive. And once you accumulate all those flyers, tear sheets, and business cards at conferences, just scan and store them as PDFs, recycle the paper at the hotel, and go home as light as you arrived. Here are a few top choices in the field.

The industry standard for portable document scanners are manual-fed bar-type scanners, such as Neat Company's [1] **NeatReceipts** (\$199.95 direct, ●●●●○), which includes optical character recognition (OCR) software to organize your documents, receipts, and business cards. This device lets you scan to searchable PDF and





1



4

5

includes Twain and WIA drivers. Similar in look and feel is the [2] **Xerox Travel Scanner 100** (\$199.99 direct). Like the NeatReceipts scanner, this unit is USB powered (so no power cord to carry) and weighs less than 1 pound. It uses Nuance PaperPort and OmniPage Pro software to organize scans.

For light scanning duties—and the extreme in thin and light design—take a look at the [3] **PlanOn DocuPen Xtreme X05** (\$369.99 direct, ●●●●○). This pen can scan both text excerpts and whole-page documents by dragging it along the page. And you don't need a computer to scan. You can transfer documents to a computer via USB or a cell phone via Bluetooth. The tradeoff for ultimate portability, however, is a slight downgrade in scanning accuracy.

Another wand-type scanner is the [4] **Brookstone iConvert** (\$99.95 direct). This scanner is ideal for scanning books and other media that will not easily fit through a scan feeder. It requires just two AA batteries and can also scan photos.

Though not as portable as some others, the versatile [5] **Visioneer Strobe 500** (\$399.99 direct, ●●●●○) has a dock you can leave on your desk as well as a 20-page ADF, fast speed, and excellent OCR. It also has a duplexing feature, so it can scan two sides of a document at once.—*Erik Rhey*

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INSIDE

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First

Apple iPad

A Groundbreaking Tablet from Apple



After it was announced back in January, the unfortunately named Apple iPad seemed like it could be the company's first major clunker in a long time. Aside from Apple enthusiasts, many of us wondered who would drop hundreds of dollars for this not-quite-computer. But having used the iPad for some time, I can tell you that the device just makes sense. When you combine basic-but-essential work tools with iWork; improved browser, e-mail, iPod, and photo applications; a well-executed e-book platform; and throw in thousands of apps and games, and package it all in a gorgeous, slim slate with a beautiful 9.7-inch touch screen, you have yourself a winner.

There are two different iPad flavors: Wi-Fi-only and Wi-Fi plus 3G (with 3G requiring an AT&T data plan). Pricing starts at \$499 for the 16GB Wi-Fi-only model and goes up to \$829 for 64GB, Wi-Fi-plus-3G version. The iPad measures 9.56 by 7.47 by 0.50 inches

(HWD) and looks a lot like a giant iPod touch, except for its brushed aluminum back. And at 1.5 pounds, the iPad feels a little heavier than you might expect. The LED-backlit IPS touch-screen display features 1,024-by-768 resolution. The fact that you won't find a single port, USB, or otherwise, tells you that this product is not meant to be a full-fledged computer, or the substitute for one. Apple expects you to use e-mail and syncing to shuttle files and documents between the iPad and your computer—which could be a deal-breaker for potential buyers. Another potential deal-breaker is the lack of a physical keyboard. But after typing this review on the iPad, I can tell you that the keyboard is large and nicely spaced, lending to a comfortable typing experience (especially with the \$39 case that puts it at a comfortable working angle).

Under the hood, the iPad runs iPhone OS 3.2, an iPad-optimized version of the current iPhone OS, tweaked for the iPad's larger

Looks

OUR RATINGS KEY:

- EXCELLENT
- VERY GOOD
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR

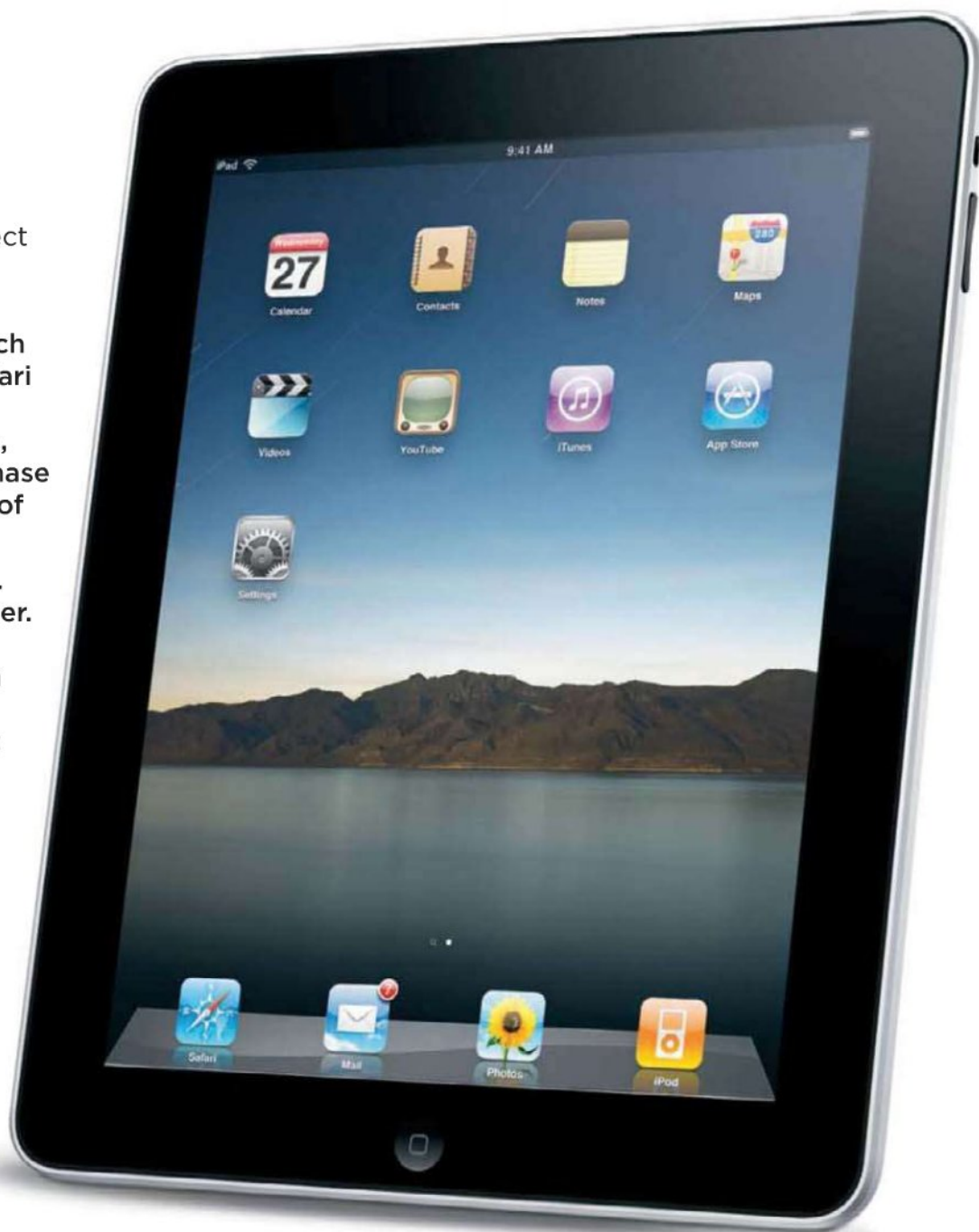
Apple iPad

64GB with Wi-Fi, \$699 direct



PROS Sleek design. Gorgeous, sharp, accurate touch screen. Improved iPod, Safari browser, photo, and e-mail apps. iBooks look fantastic, and titles are easy to purchase and download. A plethora of downloadable apps.

CONS Lacks Flash support. No camera or video recorder. No multitasking capability. Cover Flow is missing from the iPod app. Doesn't ship with a case. Earbuds aren't included.



screen and new apps. So just like an iPhone, the iPad lacks the ability to run multiple tasks at one time. It also has the mysterious, in-house-designed 1-GHz A4 processor and PowerVR SGX graphics. The power effi-

ciency of the A4 chip translates to 9 hours 25 minutes on our battery-rundown test. Our Wi-Fi-only review unit supports 802.11n and Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR technology. The 3G model adds support for UMTS/HSDPA and



GSM/EDGE, along with assisted GPS.

In terms of the user experience, the biggest bummer about the built-in Safari browser is, of course, the lack of support for Flash video. Even so, browsing in Safari is impressive—and fast. Setting up accounts in the Mail app is a breeze, and is virtually identical to the process on an iPhone. There are 12 preloaded apps on the iPad: Calendar, Contacts, Notes, Maps, Videos, YouTube, iTunes, App Store, Safari, Mail, Photos, and iPod—with Maps being particularly useful. The infinite potential of the iPad rests in the hands of third-party app developers, and at review time, there weren't too many iPad-optimized apps. However, Apple expects

more than 1,000 iPad apps in addition to the over 150,000 currently available for the iPhone and iPod touch, almost all of which will run on the iPad—they just won't be optimized for the iPad's screen. And as expected, books from the iBook Store and movies/TV shows from the iTunes Store both look predictably awesome on the iPad's big, bright display.

Is the iPad a perfect product? No. Omissions including support for multitasking, a built-in camera for video chats, and Flash support in Safari leave room for improvement, but otherwise, the Apple iPad is a very convincing debut.—*Tim Gideon*

[>>CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

TURNING A PAGE

Among other great features, the iPad's iBook app makes reading e-books a joy.



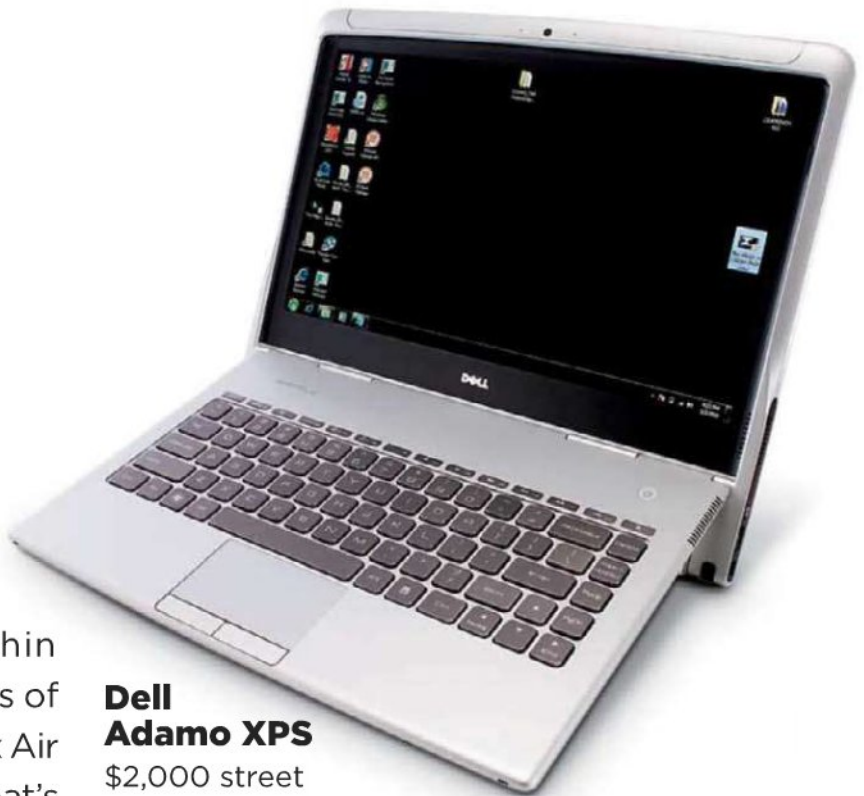
Dell Adamo XPS

Exquisitely Thin

The Dell Adamo XPS takes thin to a whole new level. At just 0.4 inches thick, the Adamo XPS is so thin that it makes the thinness of the original Adamo and Apple MacBook Air almost laughable. In the end, however, that's all it is—a system of unquestionable style with a very minimalist approach to performance and features.

Wrapped in aluminum metals, the Adamo XPS's 13.3-by-10.7-by-0.4 inch (HWD) dimensions are a bit deceiving. This system has the profile of a 15-inch laptop, like the Apple MacBook Pro, only to reveal a screen almost the size of the one on the MacBook Air (13.3 inches). The keyboard is at a 30-degree slant for a more ergonomic typing experience. Though its feature set is slightly more impressive than that of the MacBook Air, the Adamo XPS is skimpy on ports, and its 128GB SSD drive is half the capacity of the Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS's 256GB (see page 17) drive.

Performance is another tradeoff. Although the 1.4-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo SU9400 processor and integrated graphics are ade-



Dell Adamo XPS

\$2,000 street



PROS Thinnest laptop yet. Elegant design. Structurally sound. Lightweight. Good typing and navigating experiences. Two batteries included.

CONS Steep price. Uses last year's parts. Limited features. Small SSD drive.

quate for basic computing tasks, you're paying a big premium for last year's parts. On the bright side, its video encoding (1:34) and CineBench R10 scores were faster than those of the MacBook Air and Lenovo X301. The Adamo XPS includes two batteries: A 20-Wh (3-cell), which lasted 1 hour 55 minutes on MobileMark 2007, and a 40-Wh (6-cell), which lasted 3:55. So although there is simply nothing else like the Adamo XPS on the market, high design comes at a high cost, in terms of cash, performance, and features.

—Cisco Cheng

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SPECS 1.4-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo SU9400 processor; 4GB SDRAM; 128GB SSD hard drive; Intel GMA 4500MHD graphics; 13.4-inch display; Intel WiFi Link 5300; 3.4 pounds; 20-Wh and 40-Wh batteries; Windows 7 Home Premium (64-bit).



Maingear Shift

A Game-Changing Desktop



The Maingear Shift is a crazily high-end gaming rig, which isn't surprising when you look at the price tag.

Those six Grover Cleverlands will buy you one of the fastest gaming PCs on the market today. The three technologies that contribute to the system's speed and price are the Crucial c300 SSD (solid state drive), twin ATI Radeon 5970 graphics cards, and the overclocked Intel Core i7-980X processor. The rest of the cost went toward an innovative chassis, excellent workmanship, and (a little) prestige factor. All of these culminate in a high-end gaming PC that earns our Editors' Choice.

The top of the Shift's panel has a pop-up access panel with two USB ports, audio, FireWire, and a multimedia card reader. The I/O ports are on the top because the motherboard is mounted vertically, pushing hot air out of the top instead of the back. There's a half-dozen drive bays inside, and four are unoccupied. My review system came with 6GB of memory, leaving three slots open.

On our tests, the Shift achieved some of the fastest scores I've seen on both PCMark Vantage (23,625 points) and 3DMark Vantage (23,849). This system also swept the

Maingear Shift

\$6,399 direct



PROS Speedy on benchmark tests. Intelligent packaging. Intelligent thermal design. Easy-to-upgrade hard drive bays. Uncluttered exposed surfaces. Quiet during normal operations.

CONS No eSATA ports. Must open lid with screwdriver to get to ports. Doesn't top every single benchmark test. Graphics cards get loud during 3D gaming.



gaming tests with playable scores for both Crysis and World in Conflict games, running at 125 frames per second (fps) and 212 fps, respectively (at 1,280-by-1,024 resolution). The Shift is just as fast at multimedia tasks, though its scores were not the fastest I've seen—32 seconds on Windows Media Encoder and 47 seconds on Photoshop CS4. In a nutshell, this system not only talks the talk with a radical chassis design, it also walks the walk with superior performance.

—Joel Santo Domingo

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SPECS 3.33-GHz Intel Core i7-980X processor (overclocked to 4.3 GHz); 6GB SDRAM; 128GB SSD and 2TB SATA hard drives; two ATI Radeon HD 5970 graphics cards; Blu-ray drive; Windows 7 Ultimate.

Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS

Sony's Almighty Ultraportable



Before it lost serious ground to netbooks and CULV laptops, the Sony Z-Series reigned as the most elegant, powerful, and naturally, most expensive ultraportable on the market. Well, not much has changed. The Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS still has its predecessor's bragging rights—this time for being the only 13-inch ultraportable (so far) to run an Intel Core i5 processor and a switchable graphics system. And luxuries such as a backlit keyboard, high-resolution screen, and support for multiple SSD drives rarely come in packages this small. Yes, its price tag can buy you at least four netbooks, but it still earns an Editors' Choice for being such a powerful, feature-packed system.

Like the previous models, the Z116GXS is wrapped in carbon fiber and magnesium metals, though its incredibly scant, 3-pound frame belied its surprising sturdiness. This system's 13.3-inch widescreen bests many of its peers', with 1,600-by-900 resolution, creating a larger workspace. And amazingly (given the weight) there is an internal optical drive. You also get Bluetooth and 802.11n Wi-Fi, but no internal 3G solution.



Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS

\$1,800 direct



PROS The most powerful ultraportable. Switchable graphics. Excellent performance and gaming scores. Incredibly light. Internal optical drive can be swapped out for a Blu-ray one. Supports dual SSD drives. Excellent resolution. Backlit keyboard. Excellent navigating experience.

CONS Average battery life. No cellular modem.

The Z116GXS's new Arrandale processor and 4GB of DDR3 memory make this a very fast machine, dominating speed tests such as CineBench R10 and PCMark Vantage. In video-encoding tests, its 47-second score is as fast as a business laptop like the Lenovo ThinkPad T410. And the switchable graphics make it good for 3D tasks and power savings, though this system scored a somewhat underwhelming 4 hours 10 minutes on MobileMark 2007. Despite that, the Z116GXS is the most powerful, luxurious ultraportable out there, hands down.—*Cisco Cheng*

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SPECS 2.4-GHz Intel Core i5-520M processor; 4GB SDRAM; 256GB SSD drive; Intel GMA HD and Nvidia GeForce 310M graphics; 13.3-inch widescreen; Intel Centrino Advanced-N 6200 Wi-Fi; 3.0 pounds; 57-Wh battery; Windows 7 Professional (64-bit).



DESKTOPS		LAPTOPS		
				
Falcon Northwest Mach V (Core i7-980X) \$4,999 direct	Alienware Aurora ALX (Core i7) \$4,249 direct	Dell Inspiron i1764-7629OBK \$798 list	Toshiba Satellite T135-S1305WH \$649.99 list	
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PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speedy performance• Less expensive than class leader• Sound-deadening material• 12GB of memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great case design• Very quiet• Core i7 CPU	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean design• Excellent keyboard• Bright 17.3-inch LCD• Outstanding battery life• Good overall performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dual-core Pentium processor• Inexpensive• Excellent battery life• Lightweight and thin• GreenTech approved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pricy• Only one graphics card• Blu-ray reader only• Upgrades are not tool-less• Smallish solid state drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• No multimedia card reader• No expandability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weak speakers• Inelegant battery foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design needs update• Mouse buttons are poorly engineered
BOTTOM LINE	The Mach V is a hardcore gamer's dream. Three-monitor Eyefinity support creates an immersive—albeit expensive—gaming experience.	The latest iteration of Alienware's ALX line, the Aurora ALX is as flashy as its predecessor and just as powerful, but it will cost you an arm and a leg.	The Inspiron i1764-7629OBK multimedia laptop is a great choice for multitasking generalists as well as photo and video editors.	Thanks to the dual-core CULV processor, the Satellite T135-S1305WH now has performance on a par with its peers—though its design could use updating.
SPECS	3.33-GHz Intel Core i7-980X processor; 12GB SDRAM; 80GB SSD (Solid State Drive) and 1TB hard drive; ATI Radeon HD 5970 graphics; Blu-ray DVD±RW combo drive; Windows 7 Home Premium (64-bit).	3.3-GHz Intel Core i7 975 processor; 6GB SDRAM; 2TB hard drive; ATI Radeon HD 5870 graphics; Blu-ray drive; Windows 7 Home Premium.	2.13-GHz Intel Core i3 330M processor; 4GB SDRAM; 500GB hard drive; Intel GMA HD graphics; 802.11g Wi-Fi; 17.3-inch widescreen; DVD±RW drive; 6.6 pounds; Windows 7 Home Premium (64-bit).	1.3-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo SU4100 processor; 3GB SDRAM; Intel GMA 4500MHD graphics; 13.1-inch display; Realtek 802.11n Wi-Fi; 3.7 pounds; 61-Wh battery; Windows 7 Home Premium (32-bit).
Product name in RED indicates Editors' Choice.				

	NETBOOKS	STORAGE	PRINTERS
			
HP Pavilion dv7-3180us \$1,449.98 list ●●●●○	Lenovo Ideapad S10-3 \$370 direct ●●●●○	Western Digital My Passport Elite (500GB) \$119.99 direct ●●●●○	Dell P713w All-In-One Wireless Photo Printer \$199 direct ●●●●○
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intel Core i7 CPU and Nvidia graphics • 17.3-inch screen • Blu-ray drive • 2.1 integrated speakers • Decent battery life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-size keyboard • Attractive designs • Very light chassis • Inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity gauge • Included USB 2.0 drive dock • Backup software included • Three-year warranty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prints, copies, and scans • Duplexer for two-sided printing • Reasonably high-quality output • Both Ethernet and Wi-Fi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen resolution falls short of 1080p • Glossy touchpad doesn't provide best feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritating navigating experience • Small hard drive • Not very configurable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't backup individual folders • Immediate firmware and software upgrade needed when first setting up the drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fax • No automatic document feeder • Relatively low paper capacity
<p>The Pavilion dv7-3180us is a high-end desktop replacement and an excellent all-around performer, but Core i5-based laptops are nipping at its heels.</p>	<p>The ThinkPad S10-3 is one of the few 10-inch netbooks that can pull-off a full size keyboard, but it sacrificed the touchpad.</p>	<p>The Passport Elite is a sleek hard drive with an illuminated capacity gauge for quick and simple backup.</p>	<p>The P713w is a good fit for the dual role of home and light-duty home office multifunction printer.</p>
<p>1.6-GHz Intel Core i7-720QM processor; 6GB SDRAM; 640GB hard drive; nVidia GeForce GT 230M graphics; Blu-ray DVD±RW drive; 802.11n Wi-Fi; 17.3-inch display; 7.5 pounds; Windows 7 Home Premium.</p>	<p>1.6-GHz Intel Atom N450 processor; 1GB SDRAM; 160GB hard drive; Intel GMA 3150 graphics; 10.1-inch display; Atheros 802.11n Wi-Fi; 2.5 pounds; 48-Wh battery; Windows 7 Starter (32-bit).</p>	<p>500GB capacity; USB 2.0; 4,200 rpm.</p>	<p>Ink jet; 1-pass color; maximum paper size, legal; direct printing from cameras; LCD preview screen; duplexing.</p>

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TiVo Premiere

\$299.99 list



PROS Revamped, faster, high-definition (720p) interface. More robust search function with integrated online features. Video playback in background during search. 30-second skip is improved. Box is more compact. 320GB hard drive is larger than most cable-company DVRs, and is expandable.

CONS CableCard is still required for cable systems. Still requires extra paid subscription. New slide-out QWERTY remote isn't bundled. Loses dual DVR control. Interface is faster, but there's still some waiting involved. Main screen searches titles and actors, but not keywords. True on-demand support is only available on RCN.

TiVo Premiere

A Faster, P

TiVo has taken its sweet time (about three years) to build its latest DVR, TiVo Premiere. This unit takes most of what was good with the TiVo HD and updates it with new hardware and software. The Premiere is a Series4 DVR that comes with a 320GB hard drive—good for about 45 hours of HD programming. Series4 brings better, broader search capabilities along with faster hardware. But you also get some of the not-so great things that have always come with TiVo, the biggest of which is having to pay an additional monthly service fee on top of your cable subscription.



ricier TiVo

The Premiere is a much more compact box than was the TiVo HD, at 2.5 by 16.5 by 10 inches (HWD)—and a little sleeker. Along with the CableCard slot around back, there's component video out, standard A/V out, optical audio out, HDMI, Ethernet, two USB ports, and an eSATA connector to hook up an additional hard drive (a big advantage over cable-company DVRs). The Series4 user interface is displayed in 720p HD, which is a vast improvement over the previous 480i/480p UI. With TiVo's new search function you can type a movie title or actor, and TiVo will display the results on the right side of the screen. The results can include

programs on Amazon Video on Demand, Netflix, and YouTube.

In my tests, menu navigation and channel changing on the Premiere was faster than with the previous TiVo HD, and much faster than a Cablevision DVR, but on a par with a Verizon FIOS DVR. Navigation and search are faster than before, but there are still times you'll be waiting before you can navigate further. So if you're already a TiVo aficionado, the new DVR is an improved version of what you already have. If you're a new user, however, it's less compelling. —Joel Santo Domingo

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LG BD570

A Loaded Blu-ray Player



LG BD570

\$299.99 list



PROS Very fast load times. Wi-Fi enabled. Lots of Internet content-streaming options.

CONS Finicky remote buttons. So-so upconversion performance.

When we reviewed the LG BD390 Blu-ray disc player last year, we were impressed with its quick disc handling and networking prowess. We're happy to report that the company's new BD570 builds on the BD390's success, delivering even faster disc-loading times and a slew of online streaming options, including content from Netflix, Vudu, and YouTube. It could do a better job of upconverting standard DVDs, however, and the remote could use a makeover.

Housed in the requisite black cabinet, the BD570 continues the trend towards smaller home theater components. It is only 16.9 inches wide, and the entire front of the player flips down to reveal the disc tray, a small LED status panel, and four player controls. On the far right is a USB port for reading photos and music files from a flash drive. Other ports include one HDMI connector, an Ethernet port, coaxial and optical digital audio outputs, one set of component (1080i) video outputs, and composite audio

and video (480i) ports. This player also offers built-in 802.11n Wi-Fi capabilities. The remote can also control your TV, but it has no backlight, and the four-way rocker is not very responsive.

On our tests, the BD570 had a fast load time of 12 seconds, and Blu-ray image quality was outstanding—with no visible artifacts. And this player aced the HD HQV benchmark, which tests noise reduction, film resolution loss, video resolution loss, and de-interlacing performance (a.k.a., the jaggies test). Standard definition DVDs, on the other hand, were not quite as sharp as I would have liked. Sure, there are cheaper players out there, but considering the BD570's robust feature set and top-tier HD quality, it is a great deal.—*John R. Delaney*

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Sony Bravia KDL-52NX800

\$2799.99 direct



PROS Smooth, crisp HD picture. Integrated Wi-Fi. Attractive, intuitive design. Built-in cable organizer. Recessed power port. Familiar Sony XrossMediaBar interface.

CONS Pricey set for a set that doesn't support 3D. Very limited viewing angle. So-so SD performance.

Sony Bravia KDL-52NX800

Sony's Well-Designed HDTV



The 52-inch Sony Bravia KDL-52NX800 LED-sidelit HDTV may seem pricey for a non-3D set—and its picture quality isn't perfect—but a slick design and thoughtful features, such as built-in cord management and integrated Wi-Fi, might just help this set justify its price.

Measuring approximately 32 by 50 by 16 inches (HWD) with its glossy silver plastic pedestal attached, the NX800 has a very attractive 52-inch (diagonal) panel, thanks to its sleek, all-glass design. A recessed panel on the rear left houses two HDMI ports, along with one Ethernet, composite video, component video, coax, and digital and RCA audio output ports. PlayStation 3 owners will find Sony's XrossMediaBar interface very familiar. Like many current HDTVs on the market, the NX800 offers a variety of Internet-connected fea-





tures, thanks to its Ethernet port and built-in 802.11n Wi-Fi.

On our tests, I found that the NX800's viewing angle is very limited; colors begin to fade noticeably and blacks appear with a blue tint when you're seated more than 25 degrees off-center. That said, the NX800's sweet spot is indeed very, very sweet, but it can only measure the width of a sofa. This HDTV's other performance test results were on par with similar models. Its contrast ratio measured 2319:1 and action scenes looked fantastic, thanks to Sony's 240-Hz Motion-flow technology. Also, its LED side-lighting technology makes it very efficient, consuming 125 watts of power—more efficient than a 150-watt light bulb. Overall, the NX800 is a good choice if you value clean design and have a big budget—just keep the limited viewing angle in mind.—*Zach Honig*

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SMARTPHONES			CAMERAS
			
Motorola Backflip \$199.99–349.99 list			Leica X1 \$1,995 list
● ● ● ○ ○ ○			● ● ● ○ ○ ○
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good keyboard• MotoBlur integrates e-mail and social networking well• Solid battery life		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacitive touch screen• Good call quality• Good video recording• 16GB internal memory		
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design renders it nearly unusable• Last year's specs• MotoBlur still running Android 1.5• A boatload of crapware		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oddly skinny screen• Awkward virtual keyboards• Overall middling performance		
BOTTOM LINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports 3G data speeds• Useful preloaded GPS software• Decent camera, music, and video playback		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dull style• Non-standard headphone jack• microSD card slot is buried underneath the battery		
SPECS	The Backflip is a mediocre Android phone with one of the worst designs we've seen.		
	Nokia's first capacitive-screen smartphone won't convert anyone who doesn't already love the Symbian Series 60 OS.		
SPECS	It's not much of a looker, but the 3711 offers powerful Web browsing and a decent array of media options.		
	The Leica X1 offers the best image quality for a camera of its size, especially at higher ISO settings, but it's the least versatile shooter in its price range.		
SPECS	AT&T; Android OS; 3.1-inch LCD; 5MP camera; Bluetooth; 4.2 by 2.1 by 0.6 inches (HWD); 4.7 ounces.		
	AT&T, T-Mobile; Symbian OS; 3.2-inch LCD; 5MP camera; Bluetooth; 4.3 by 2 by 0.5 inches; 4.3 ounces.		
SPECS	T-Mobile; 2.2-inch LCD; 2MP camera; Bluetooth; 3.5 by 1.8 by 0.6 inches (HWD); 3.3 ounces.		
	Compact; 12.2MP; 2.7-inch LCD; 2.4 by 4.9 by 1.3 inches (HWD).		
Product name in RED indicates Editors' Choice.			

HEADPHONES		BLUETOOTH HEADSETS	GADGETS
			
Klipsch Image X10i \$349.99 direct	Thinksound TS01 \$74.99 list	Jabra Extreme \$79.99 list	Kempler & Strauss W PhoneWatch \$199.99 direct
● ● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ● ● ○
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent audio performance • Lightweight and secure fit • “Works with iPhone”-certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very cool, wood-based design • Deep low-end for bass junkies • Secure fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm sound quality in the earpiece • Plays music and podcasts • Lower price than the competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlocked GSM phone on your wrist • Works well with some third-party Bluetooth headsets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Not terribly bassy • Some cable thump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep bass and scooped-out high-mids won't please audiophiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tinny sound to other callers • “Improved” noise cancellation still doesn't cancel much noise • A little bulky 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiny screen • Texting is nearly impossible • Poor multimedia features
The Image X10i isn't the cheapest pair of mic-equipped earphones out there, but it does have a solid design and seamless phone operation.	The TS01's sonic output is intentionally bass-heavy, so audiophiles may want to steer clear but environmentalists and fashionistas will be impressed.	The Jabra Extreme is a decent Bluetooth headset with a nifty parlor trick—A2DP audio streaming—but it has uneven sound quality.	Kempler & Strauss's watch phone is a nifty idea, but it's not really usable.
In-canal; 50-ohms impedance; 0.37 ounces.	In-canal; passive noise canceling; 0.36 ounces.	1.1 by 0.7 by 1.9 inches (HWD); 0.4 ounces.	AT&T, T-Mobile; 1.5-inch LCD; 0.3MP camera; Bluetooth; 2.2 by 1.8 by 0.7 inches (HWD).

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Visioneer Strobe 500

A Portable Combo Scanner



There's nothing new about a portable device that you can plug into a dock to use as a desktop unit, too. Somehow, though, the idea of a scanner doing the same thing seems like an exciting new trick, and it's the one feature in the Visioneer Strobe 500 that's most likely to grab your attention. Ultimately, though, it's best appreciated as a capable desktop scanner first and a portable only as a decidedly secondary role.

The scanner comes mounted in its docking station, which includes a 20-page automatic document feeder (ADF) and an output tray. The combination of the two is about the same size as a typical personal desktop scanner, with an 11.7- by 4.7-inch (WD) footprint, not including the output tray. The Windows programs that come with the Strobe 500 are focused on document management, OCR, and business cards. In addition to programs for those three applications, the scanner also comes with Twain and WIA drivers as well as Visioneer's OneTouch for controlling scans and sending the scanned data to various programs.

Among the other settings built into OneTouch are the options to scan in simplex (one side) or duplex (both sides at once), recognize text or save the file as an image, and save the scan in a variety of formats. Probably the most noteworthy option in OneTouch is the ability to scan using OneTouch's embedded version of Kofax Virtual ReScan (VRS), which converts essentially unreadable scans into usable information.

The Strobe 500 did very well on our test suites, despite being a little slower than Visioneer claims. It scanned our standard 25-page PDF document in 11.1 pages per minute in simplex mode and 21.3 images per minute in duplex mode. It also scored well on OCR accuracy, scanning Times New Roman at sizes as small as 8 points without a mistake.

Judged strictly as a desktop document scanner, the combination of hardware and software makes it a better value—and even a better package in absolute terms—than some more expensive choices. This makes it easy to recommend—as well as our new Editors' Choice.—*Edward Mendelson*

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Visioneer Strobe 500

\$399.99 direct



PROS Portable. Docking station adds automatic document feeder. Fast text recognition. Digitally enhances hard-to-read originals.

CONS Both attaching the scanner to and removing the scanner from the docking station is a little tricky.





Ruckus ZoneFlex 7363 Access Point

\$599 list



PROS Automatic configuration. Redesigned, slimmer AP housing is more convenient, less obtrusive. Includes Ruckus's smart antenna array technology. Easy setup and deployment.

CONS Slower performance than previous Ruckus APs.

Ruckus ZoneFlex 7363 Access Point

Simplifying Mesh Networking

Ruckus Wireless' latest Wi-Fi mesh solutions are the Ruckus ZoneFlex 7300 Series. I tested the dual-band 7363, which makes Wi-Fi mesh networking a delight to set up. The new models emphasize ease of setup over extreme speeds; the result is hassle-free, acceptably speedy, and a very good choice for small to medium businesses.

The 7363 has Ruckus's praiseworthy integrated smart antenna array, which supports dynamic beam-forming. This patented antenna design supports more than 3,000 signal paths; these APs literally take the path of least resistance, creating a stronger Wi-Fi connection. The 7363 also has 10/100/1000 Ethernet connectivity and supports both AC power and Power over Ethernet (PoE). The manual is precise and easy to follow,

and the entire setup process took only 15 minutes.

The secret to the simplicity is that the technology does everything for you. This access point uses auto-mitigation to connect to a wireless channel with the least interference. Even the radio band gets auto-negotiated to cater to the 2.4-GHz and 5-GHz wireless adapters in your network. While all this auto-configuration is great, there has been a noticeable performance decrease on some of our more rigorous throughput testing benchmarks. Despite the decreases, I still got laudable bandwidth speeds, as reported by SpeedFlex, Ruckus's bandwidth-measuring tool. In the end, the 7363 makes mesh networking dead-simple to deploy, resulting in a strong solution for the typical SMB.—*Samara Lynn*

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3M Pocket Projector MPro150

\$390 street



PROS Can show images from computers, video sources, internal 1GB memory, or MicroSD card. Exceptionally high audio volume.

CONS A little large for a pico projector. Icon-based menus are hard to understand.

**3M Pocket Projector MPro150**

A Bright, Versatile Pico Projector

As anyone who keeps track of pico projectors can tell you, the category is still new enough to show significant improvement with each product release. The MPro150 is the latest proof of that. Slightly bigger and brighter than its predecessor, the MPro150 adds the ability to read files from internal memory or a MicroSD card, as well as an audio output jack for a headset or external powered speakers. This makes it one of the most versatile pico projectors yet.

At 1 by 2.4 by 5.1 inches (HWD), the projector is on the large side, but still small enough to fit in a shirt pocket. The MPro150 has VGA (640 by 480) native resolution and a red-green-blue LED light source whose life is rated at 20,000 hours. Ports include a proprietary connector for both computer and

video connections, a miniplug audio output, and a mini-USB port so you can connect to a computer both to transfer files and as an alternative to using a power outlet.

As with virtually all pico projectors, the MPro150's image quality is best described as good enough to be useful. Among other issues, I saw a halo of light around the image in dark viewing conditions and a slight rainbow effect. The MPro150 is the brightest pico projector I've tested, but just barely, at 14 lumens. This is also the first pico projector I've tested that's loud enough to be heard above ambient noise. Unfortunately, the confusing controls and menu system kept it from being an Editors' Choice. But once you get over the learning curve, you'll find that the MPro150 is one of the most capable pico projectors out there.—*M. David Stone*

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CyberLink Media Suite 8 Ultra

CyberLink Takes The Prize



CyberLink's latest media playing and editing suite has been updated with a spiffy new starter interface, Blu-ray playback in its Ultra version, and a sound editor.

These updates, along with the suite's excellent video editing, graphics-card acceleration for faster performance, and a consistent modern UI across all modules, keep it at the top of the media editing and playing pile.

The newly streamlined black PowerStarter start screen is less cluttered than the main UI screens of its competitors. And this suite still installs faster than the competition's—taking about 20 minutes. You can also choose which specific apps in the suite to install.

The new WaveEditor sound-editing app lets you open a slew of audio file formats stored on your system, and it pulls down sound files from Freesound.org, which offers Creative Common-licensed sound clips. You can record from your PC's mic or line in, and any sound your computer is playing. CyberLink's photo-editing features are tucked into the MediaShow media

manager/viewer, and casual users will find everything they need for basic photo fixes—rotation, crop, red-eye correction, straightening, brightness.

For video editing, Version 8 adds a nifty Zoom-in Cut view, which shows a local zoomed-in timeline below a full-length timeline, making it easy to navigate around your video project. The video editor also now takes advantage of GPU acceleration and multicore CPUs to speed applying effects and transcoding among video formats. Once your video clips and effects are edited to your taste, you can produce an AVI, MPEG, AVC, WMV, or RM file, and even target the Sony PSP or Apple iPod format with portable MPEG-4 using H.264. You also get the PowerBackup feature for backing up projects to your local hard drive.

So CyberLink retains its Editors' Choice thanks to, among other things, its smooth video playback, slick photo organization with face tagging, and excellent video-editing and disc-burning workflow. —*Michael Muchmore*

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POWER PLAY CyberLink's video editor, PowerDirector, is full-featured, with multiple tracks for effects.

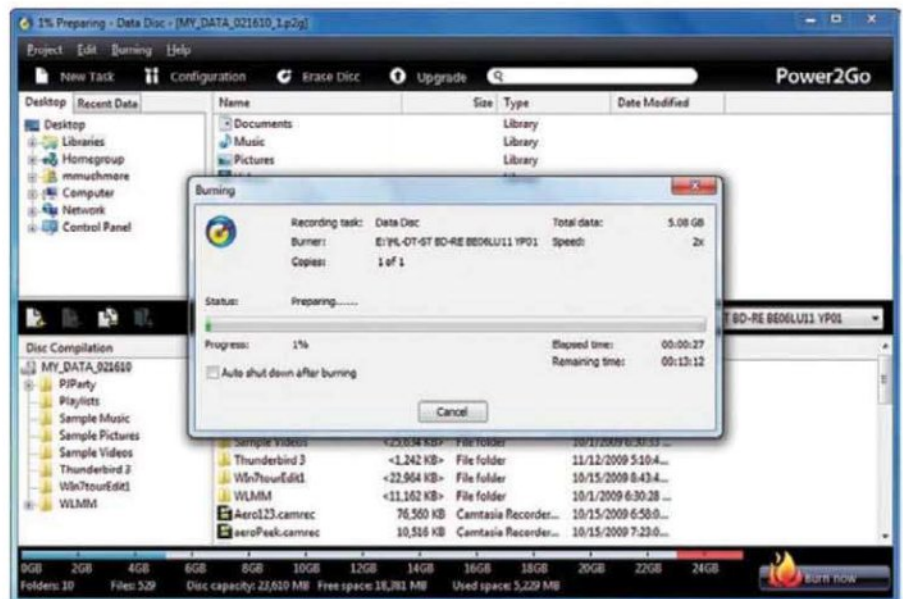
CyberLink Media Suite 8 Ultra

\$129.95 list

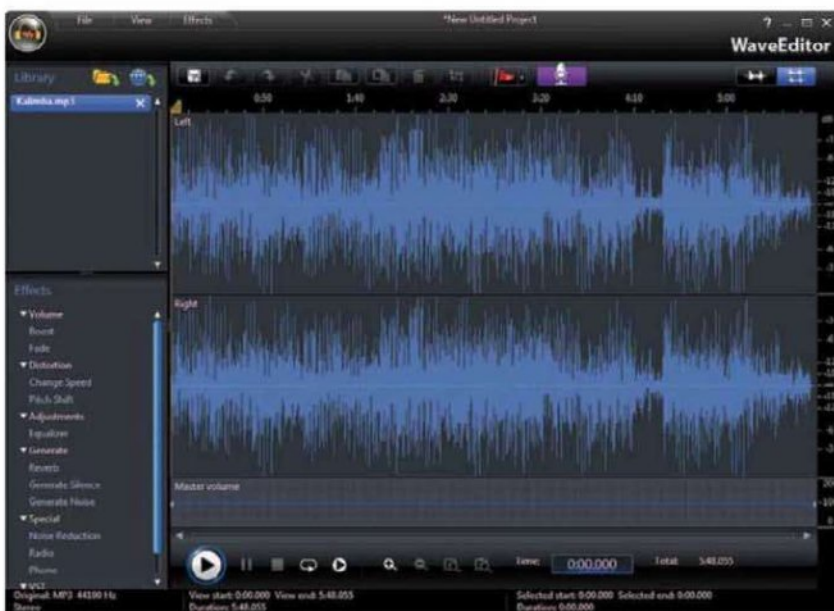


PROS Slick, intuitive design. Fast operation. Excellent video editor. Blu-ray capable. Face recognition for easy photo management.

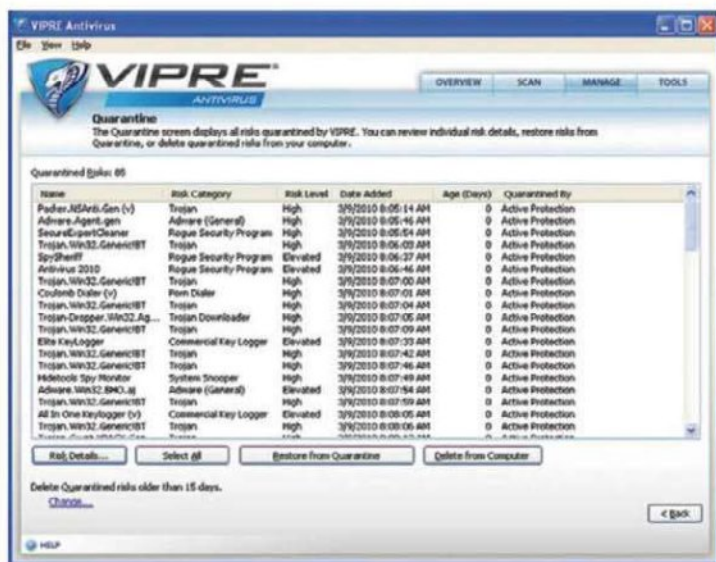
CONS Minimal audio editing. Blu-ray playing doesn't handle mouse input in menus. Frequent upgrade advertisements.



AUTHORING ACUMEN Power2Go provides accurate info about the burn process.



THE NEW SOUND CyberLink now has a sound editor—though it is limited.



Vipre Antivirus 4.0

\$29.95 direct; unlimited home license, \$49.95



PROS Scored well in malware removal and malware blocking tests. Free Vipre Rescue tool solves installation problems. Includes useful bonus tools.

CONS Simplistic behavior-based advanced protection, disabled by default, can cause system problems. One malware sample still running after alleged removal.

Vipre Antivirus 4.0

Solid Virus Protection

Most of Sunbelt Software's business lies in supplying malware protection to its 25,000 enterprise customers. But Vipre Antivirus 4.0 is nonetheless a strong consumer product, with good performance and some bonus features that are most often found in suites rather than in a standalone antivirus utility.

As almost always happens, malware on some of the test systems interfered with the install process. But downloading and running Sunbelt's Vipre Rescue command-line scanner cleaned up both systems and let me finish the installation. Once installed, Vipre schedules a full system scan daily at 1:00 A.M. On my standard clean test system, the scan finished in a half-hour, which is about average. By default, Vipre collects a list of

threats and displays it upon completion of the scan, with a default action selected for each threat. Inexperienced users may prefer to just let Vipre take its recommended action without asking.

I also found in testing that Vipre detected 94 percent of the threats but didn't fully remove the traces of all those it found. In particular, it left behind executable files for a quarter of the samples and left one of them actually running—that's not good! But with 7.6 of 10 points, Vipre's final score was very good. It also scans incoming and outgoing e-mail and blocks e-mail containing URLs of fraudulent (phishing) sites. Overall, this is a superb standalone anti-malware tool that may be a bit behind Norton, but tested better than most of the competition.

—Neil J. Rubenking

[>>CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010

Reliable Disk Management



Paragon Hard Disk Manager performs almost every imaginable task that involves hard disks and files. It's the latest version of a mature product that I use to copy disk partitions from one physical disk to another, resize partitions, or prepare disks for multi-boot Windows installations. Paragon's app also backs up and restores anything from complete drives to the contents of any set of files you specify, wipes data from partitions or whole drives, and copies hard disks to images that can boot in VMware Workstation or Microsoft Virtual PC.

Hard Disk Manager has an interface much like other long-established disk-management programs—but more appealing. The Express interface leads directly to specific tasks, such as splitting or expanding existing partitions, wiping data from partitions or the free space on your drive, and backing up your e-mail or documents or whole drives to “archive” files. The Express interface can also install a sophisticated boot manager that lets you boot Linux and Windows easily on the same drive. Experienced users will prefer the traditional hard-disk management dialog, with a tree-structured diagram at the top and a graph-style diagram of the disk at the bottom. Paragon is



Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010 Suite

Basic, \$49.95 direct; Pro, \$129.95



PROS Powerful, flexible hard disk manager and backup software. Dozens of additional features. Single integrated interface. Copious safety features.

CONS For advanced users.

also the only program of its kind that has always worked with all the hardware I could throw at it.


This sort of sweeping hard disk management always entails some risk, but Paragon comes with a confidence-inspiring set of safety features. It's the only disk-management utility I trust on my key systems.
—Edward Mendelson

[>>CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)



SECURITY		GPS		
	UserLock \$10.50 direct <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Autoruns 9 Free <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Navigon MobileNavigator 1.4.0 (for iPhone) \$79.99 direct <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	AT&T Navigator 1.5i (iPhone OS) \$9.99 direct <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes away pain using Group Policy for user account control• Intuitive interface• Easy install	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Displays every process that launches automatically• Can link to Systinternal's own Process Monitor app	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed map graphics• Smooth animation• Robust lane assistance• Well-tuned voice prompts• Locally stored maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate navigation• Verbose voice prompts• Easy-to-use POI database
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writes session history to Access database by default• Challenging to change default database	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unwise disabling of startup items can destabilize Windows• Doesn't restore state after switching to "Run as Administrator"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stubborn POI search• Drab UI• Disappointing traffic plug-in costs extra	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• No locally stored maps• Navigation view isn't informative enough• Crash-prone
BOTTOM LINE	UserLock locks down PCs, and does it well. It supplements Windows' Group Policy abilities and it does so via an impressive, familiar interface.	Autoruns 9 reveals every single program and process that launches automatically on your computer. It's especially useful for detecting malware, but it can also destabilize Windows if used carelessly.	MobileNavigator is a solid performer and a good choice for anyone looking for a do-it-all iPhone GPS navigation app.	Navigator 1.5i fills in many of the features missing when the app launched last summer, but numerous lower-cost competitors could overtake it.

Product name in **RED** indicates Editors' Choice.

WEB CONFERENCING	GAMES		
Dimdim 5.5 Free; Pro version, \$25 per month 	God of War III \$59.99 list 	Dante's Inferno \$59.99 list 	Star Trek Online \$39.99 list 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun to use • Affordable business-class versions • Open API for integration and customization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epic, breathtaking visuals • Viscerally satisfying and fun hack-and-slash gameplay • Wide variety of weapons and special items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold, creative story-telling • Intriguing depiction of hell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leonard Nimoy and Zachary Quinto lend their voices to the game • Epic space visuals • Wonderful soundtrack • Great space gameplay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some latency with desktop sharing • Audio/video tricky to get going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't innovate much from previous entries in the series • Mini-games can become annoying or repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain enemies seem out of place • Copy-cat gameplay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground levels look like they came out of Second Life • No interaction with bridge crew
This affordable, feature-packed Web conferencing solution gets better with each version	God of War III finally makes owning a PS3 worthwhile.	Dante's Inferno is a nicely done depiction of Hell and provides hours of epic fun, but the developers should have spent more time tweaking the gameplay.	Star Trek Online is a great strategic space-fighter, but, once they beam down, the dream becomes something of a nightmare.

Visit pcmag.com for the full reviews of these and scores of other software products.





JOHN C. DVORAK

Software Discovery Is Broken

A combination of SEO (search engine optimization) tricks, product duplication, fake companies, and bogus product reviews have muddied the water for software. No wonder app stores have begun taking over—it's almost impossible to find good software on the Internet. It's hard to find anything beyond big names like Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop, because little sleazeball companies have taken over the space.

You see them all the time. If you're looking for any sort of utility on Google, you'll come across a ton of crappy and often useless (if not outright fraudulent) garbage that has risen to the top, thanks to what I call "active" SEO trickery. The normal SEO ideas used to improve search results are being modified on what seems like a day-by-day basis.

Try searching "free video converter." Say you want to convert an .avi file to .mp4. Which one should you use? [Note: None is actually free.] Start digging through the list, and you'll find a number of anomalies. First,

the cream doesn't rise to the top anymore. That's where the empty plastic bottles and flotsam are. The cream has dissolved, and you can't use Google to find it.

To find the cream, you have to go to a forum and ask around. Of course it's nearly impossible to find a subject that everyone agrees on. If you have enough followers, you can use Twitter or Facebook for crowd-sourcing, but you have to have a lot of tech savvy followers for this to work.

In the days when computer magazines ruled, these things were done by staffs within a rigid review framework. That's impractical nowadays. You'd be hard pressed to find any print computer magazine that will tell you which is the best video utility out there. And if one did, few of today's users would know to source from the magazine.

Sourcing directly from Google is problematic. Sellers market crap by repackaging it on numerous similar Web sites, rebranding it so it competes with itself. Various SEO tricks help bring the product to the top of the search results. These are one- or

Most companies don't want their products reviewed; they'd rather just market them on the Internet and make bogus claims about them.

two-person operations with sometimes slick packaging and products that seldom work as advertised. The companies protect themselves with onerous EULAs that say the product stinks, so it's all good and legal. A few offer bogus trial periods or shareware-like deals that are frauds, with nearly all of the important features disabled. Often times the products just don't work at all.

People credit Apple's creation of the iTunes App Store as part of the company's control-freak nature. That may be part of its impetus, but we can't overlook the fact that the store manages to reign in the kind of crap we see in the online world where scammers dominate.

There are a number of reviewing initiatives that hope to compete with the App Store for mindshare. I suspect that they will eventually have some impact. For now, however, there are simply too many sub-categories and too much confusion. Which are the best font cataloging and organizing tools? What is the best software for moving a DVD recording to my laptop? What is the best software for converting an old XYwrite document to HTML? What software best converts hard CRs to soft CRs?

It's rare to find what you're looking for if there's any complexity involved. Even when a trusted source actually offers a review of the particular utility you're seeking, it's a

miracle if it shows up in the Google results. Why? Because these sites aren't doing active SEO on every single page of content they're publishing.

I've complained in the past about SEO and its impact on the Web. All I get is flak from SEO consultants. But that hasn't stopped me yet. My favorite search example is "best cell phone plan." Good luck with that one.

The app store of the future will have the 10 utilities that might work with star ratings telling readers what other users think. Within the app store structure, if anyone tries to rig the rating, his company and products will get permanently ejected.

Yes, public reviews are often corrupted. This is another good reason to turn to a trusted source. But where are they? They're buried, too. I would include myself in that group, but I don't do much reviewing anymore. Most companies don't want their products reviewed because they're not very good—and they know it. They'd rather just market them on the Internet and make bogus claims about them.

I'm actually amazed when I find a great product that does everything it says. The system is hopeless.

DVORAK LIVE ON THE WEB John's Internet TV show airs every Wednesday at 3:30 ET on **Cranky-Geeks.com**. You can download back episodes whenever you like.





SASCHA SEGAN

The Mac's Executioner

The Mac's greatest enemy may not be Microsoft Windows. It may be Apple itself. In a conversation at a Goldman Sachs technology conference, Apple COO Tim Cook said that Apple is a "mobile devices company," and that more devices will get the iPhone OS. A bit later, AT&T's CEO said the iPad would mostly be a Wi-Fi (read: home) product rather than something you tote around.

This jibes with something I've been thinking about Apple: If the company could do the Mac all over again, it would use the iPhone OS. Don't think of the iPad as a big iPod touch. Think of it, rather, as the new Mac—a new mode of home-based computing that Apple hopes will bubble up through its product line.

The Apple Lockdown

Moving to the iPhone OS means no independent software stores, fewer open-source projects, and perhaps a blanket ban on BitTorrent, Flash, and Firefox. It means a much more restricted peripheral market. The Mac will no longer be a PC as we know it; instead, the Mac will be an "end-to-end experience"

like the iPhone. Netbooks and nettops have been popular in the Windows world, and it looks like Apple will try to seize some of those buyers with mini PCs running iPhone OS. If that market explodes and Apple takes its focus away from the Mac, the Mac platform very well might wither in favor of this new, smooth, controlled experience.

Obviously, today's iPad won't replace Macs. But it's not hard to imagine Apple building more powerful computers based on the closed iPhone-OS platform, even supporting productivity apps like graphics creation and video editing. Gradually, the iPad's descendants could usurp many of the Mac's usage models.

The MacBook and Mac mini lines will succumb first, as they are lower-cost and appeal mostly to consumers. Mac Pros will last the longest, as professionals tend to require a range of peculiar hardware and accessories, including scriptable applications.

Who's Afraid of the iTunes Store?

The biggest difference between a Mac and an iPad isn't ARM versus x86, or multitouch versus mouse. Both devices run modern Unix-based operating systems, and HP and

Having a single gatekeeper—Apple—with no checks or balances is almost never a good thing.

others have shown that touch screens can scale up to PC sizes just fine. The new iWork for the iPad is proof that Mac-like productivity apps and ARM-based platforms can go well together.

But the Mac is an open platform, and the iPad is closed. Anyone can write and distribute PC or Mac software or compatible gadgets, without having to have them verified or approved. Open environments have created an incredible pace of innovation, though they have their downsides, too, such as the incredible pace of malware innovation on many open platforms.

Early smartphones took the PC approach of offering relatively unrestricted platforms. The iPhone has a different model of strictly managed software and accessories. The pluses are obvious: less buggy software (because it has to be verified), easier distribution through a single store, and cleaner user interfaces. Non-techy users download software with gusto because the platform is easy to use and quality is at least somewhat assured, which boosts the fortunes of everyone involved with the App Store.

A Benevolent Dictator?

The perils of Apple's gatekeeper approach are more subtle, and they depend on how benign Apple's dictatorship is. Apple frowns on alternative JavaScript engines and peer-to-peer apps. It keeps potential competitors in a state of uncertainty, thanks

to vague bans on "duplicating functionality" of Apple's own apps.

Now, it might be that innovation is moving to the cloud, and Web services are going to be really disruptive in the future. Google is certainly making that bet with Chrome, and HTML5 will boost the abilities of Web apps even beyond what we're seeing today. But I think native apps and hardware peripherals still have a healthy future, and that their ecosystems are worth worrying about.

Maybe it's just that I was raised on 1980s personal computers, or that I took too many American civics classes in school. But I feel that absolute power tends to corrupt, and having a single gatekeeper with no checks or balances is almost never a good thing. Obviously, the iPhone ecosystem has flourished under Apple's benign dictatorship. But the whole ecosystem is reliant on that dictatorship remaining benign. (And even now people who enjoy BitTorrent would argue that it isn't benign at all.)

As someone who's owned a Mac since 1986 and likes the vibrancy and innovation that open platforms bring to the marketplace, I'll admit I'm fearful, uncertain, and doubtful. Apple has fallen in love with end-to-end experiences, and I don't want anyone other than me to have the last word on what I can install on my own computer.

STAY PHONE-SMART Keep up with the latest on smartphones by reading Sascha's column at go.pcmag.com/segan.





DAN COSTA

Patently Absurd

Apple's claim that HTC's Android phones violate at least 20 of its patents seems, at a glance, like simple corporate maneuvering. Android is, arguably, the iPhone OS's strongest competitor, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that Apple would throw up some legal hurdles. But the suit, ultimately, shows how our patent system protects large, veteran companies and punishes upstart contenders.

First, let's examine Apple's claims. The company filed suit in the U.S. District Court in Delaware with 20 instances of patent violations, most involving the iPhone. Apple also appealed to the International Trade Commission, whose only recourse would be to ban the import of HTC phones to the United States entirely. There are a fairly wide range of patents, but many of them are interface-related. Truly understanding the claims requires some engineering experience, a law degree, and a finely tuned B.S. detector. I have one of the three.

To Name a Few...

Take patent number 7,657,849: "Unlocking A Device By Performing Gestures on

an Unlock Image." That's right, Apple owns that sideways swipe that wakes up the iPhone—and just about every other smartphone on the market. As written, it would also apply to the Palm Pre's Upward Thumb Swipe Unlock gesture. I suspect that the act of touching, itself, is patent pending.

Also revolutionary is patent number 7,633,076: "Automated response to, and sensing of, user activity in portable devices." This is just the sensor that turns off a phone's screen when you hold it to your head. Clever, no doubt, but patentable? Evidently.

And then there is patent number 7,362,331: "Time-based, non-constant translation of user interface objects between states." According to the patent filing, "The present invention relates to a method for moving objects within the graphical user interface (GUI) of an operating system in a manner that provides a transitional effect between window states, which is pleasing to the user." In other words, that zooming effect you see when you minimize an application or window in Mac OS X—or Windows 7, webOS, Android, and basically every modern operating system. Yeah, Apple owns that, too.

Apple doesn't have to win in court to win this war; slowing the spread of Android is enough.

There are 17 more, and many of them are pretty technical. Evidently Apple owns the patent on an "Object-oriented graphic system" (patent number 5,455,599). Seems like that could be a serious money-maker. But even with the basic patents listed above, it's clear that the entire smartphone—and even the PC—industry is beholden to Apple. So why is Apple just attacking HTC?

Bringing a Knife to a Gun Fight

Every tech company, and especially those that have been in business for a while, have huge stashes of patents, most of which are quite arcane. It would be damn hard to build a PC, smartphone, or piece of software that doesn't infringe on someone else's patent. That is the nature of innovation. Few of these patents are enforced, and when they are, the companies usually settle on a fair licensing fee, and everybody wins. All the companies involved have incentives to play along, since everyone has the goods on everyone else. Just don't try to play the game unless you have your own arsenal of patents. I think that is what happened to HTC.

There are plenty of other targets to choose from. Google developed Android and is also selling Nexus One phones. Don't those phones violate Apple's patents, as well? For that matter Motorola, Microsoft, and Palm are no doubt in violation of many of these same patents. But they are too well-armed with their own patent arsenals. I am

sure HTC has some patents of its own, but not as many as the other, more established firms. HTC brought a knife to a gun fight.

Google Turning the Tide

Only time will tell whether Google will defend its hardware partner to help balance the scales, but the company has hinted it might do so. Recently, Google issued a statement that reads: "We are not a party to this lawsuit. However, we stand behind our Android operating system and the partners who have helped us to develop it."

Either way, it is unlikely the suit will ever go to court; cases like this are so expensive few ever make it to a jury trial. Besides, what Taiwanese company would want to walk into a Delaware court and battle a U.S. firm with catchy, colorful commercials running on TV every night?

But Apple doesn't have to win a court battle to win this war. Just slowing down the rapid growth of Android would be a win. Just getting manufactures to think twice before rolling out Android phones would be a boon. Even a few months of legal wrangling would help Apple pad its lead.

Business is business, and as a tech writer, I can appreciate a good bare-knuckle fight. But this HTC suit is just the undercard match. The title bout begins when Google—and all of its patents—steps into the ring.

TALK BACK TO DAN E-mail your thoughts to dan_costa@pcmag.com.



THE TOP 100

Best Free



44 Anti-Malware



44 Audio



45 Backup/Synchronize/Storage



49 E-mail



49 File Transfer/Sharing



50 File Viewers/Converters



These programs cost nothing but will make your computing life richer—all while keeping your wallet fat. *By Eric Griffith*

We don't want to make you feel bad, but, uh... are you really still paying for software? Wow. Well, we're here to spread the word: There's no lack of free software to be found online. Some of it is as powerful, if not more so, than the name-brand packages found on Best Buy shelves for big bucks. By free, we mean you don't pay a dime except for what it costs to download and install the software. There are even times when you don't have to install anything, since there are a lot of great Web-based applications available these days.

Knowing all this, every year PCMag puts together a fresh look at the best free software. We check the previous year's picks to make sure they've still got the chops (and the \$0 price tag) and cull through other options that have come our way. We concentrate on productivity apps and utilities for Windows users, but we also note when a program works with Mac OS X and Linux distributions. Every product in this list that is classified as a Windows product is compatible with XP up to Windows 7 unless otherwise noted.



Software



46 Blogging



47 Browsers



47 Calendar/PIM



48 Conferencing/VoIP



50 Finance



51 Fun/Home



52 Graphics



53 Instant Messaging



54 Maps



55 Media Manager



55 Networking



56 Office



57 Printing



58 Process Monitors



58 Remote Access



59 RSS Readers



59 Security/Encryption



59 Social Networking



60 System Utilities



61 Video

ANTI-MALWARE

Ad-Aware Free 8.2

www.lavasoft.com/products/ad_aware_free.php

WINDOWS The latest version (8.2) of this venerable tool includes new tech that looks for malware patterns to ID threats, and an ultra-simple mode to handle problems automatically before you need to worry. It's free for home use; naturally, the Plus and Pro versions throw in extras, but they'll cost you (\$26.95 and \$39.95, respectively).

>> [Read PCMag's review of Ad-Aware Pro 8.1.](#)

AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition 9.0

free.avg.com/us-en/homepage

WINDOWS This app is better for keeping an already clean system clean rather than rooting out problems (according to our tests), but it excels at that, even when you're running a Windows system in Safe Mode.

>> [Read PCMag's review of AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition 9.0.](#)

Microsoft Security Essentials 1.0

www.microsoft.com/Security_Essentials/

WINDOWS Microsoft realized the dirty truth: Windows is susceptible to viruses! And rather than try to make a buck off this fact, it's doing the right thing by putting out its own anti-malware for free to the masses. This is not great protection, but it's better than nothing. Security Essentials works great with Windows, of course, in 74 countries and 25 languages.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Microsoft Security Essentials 1.0.](#)

Panda Cloud Antivirus Free Edition 1.0

<http://www.cloudantivirus.com/en/>

WINDOWS This is our PCMag Editors' Choice among free anti-malware software and with good reason. Half the detection action happens in the cloud (over the Internet) so you're not downloading oversized definition files anymore. There's no update button. It's also great at finding malware. Security expert Neil J. Rubenking called it "the best free antivirus software available."

>> [Read PCMag's review of Panda Cloud Antivirus Free Edition 1.0.](#)

AUDIO

Audacity 1.2

audacity.sourceforge.net

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE This open-source tool sets the bar for what you can do with audio for free. It can record anything you play on your computer and edit it in ways you can't conceive of until you start playing around. Limitations, such as no native MP3 export, are overcome by free plug-ins. If you want to podcast or mix music on the cheap, Audacity is what you need.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Audacity 1.2.](#)

Foobar2000 1.0.1

www.foobar2000.org

WINDOWS Want to play just about any kind of audio file you can imagine in Windows? Foobar2000 1.0.1 has you covered. Its extensive set of additional components ensures a smooth process for working with compressed files, burning CDs, and even adding Dolby 5.1 surround-sound support when you listen through headphones.

MP3 Skype Recorder 1.9.0

voipcallrecording.com

WINDOWS You might be shocked to learn that this software records Skype calls to MP3 format. Yeah, that's it, but MP3 Skype Recorder does it incredibly well. It even saves the call as mono or stereo tracks, with an adjustable bit rate. There are no time limits or file size limitations. It even records SkypeOut calls to regular phones or conference calls with multiple people.

BACKUP/SYNC/STORAGE

DriveImage XML V2.13

www.runtime.org/driveimage-xml.htm

WINDOWS Free for private use, this utility makes full "hot images" of your drives or partitions that are stored as XML files, so you can still access data on them. It works for Windows versions XP to 7, and it has a number of command-line parameters for power users.

DriverMax 5.5

www.innovative-sol.com/drivermax

WINDOWS Drivers are the magic software sauce that keeps your computer hardware humming. But when you switch from PC to PC and take your peripherals with you, or you just need to make sure you have the latest drivers, what do you do? Easy, turn to DriverMax. It will do a back-up and restore of all the drivers you need, or just download the latest for your (new) operating system on the same PC. Use it for Windows XP through Win7, whether it's 32- or 64-bit version.



BACKUP/SYNC/STORAGE

Dropbox

www.dropbox.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | WEB | MOBILE

Our Editors' Choice for cloud-based automatic file sync, Dropbox is the epitome of a set-it-up and let-it-go service. Install it on any desktop or laptop computer and all the files in your Dropbox folder appear on all systems (or on a friend's if you share a folder). It's free for up to 2GB of data synched, and that's data you can access on your iPhone or via the Web, too.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Dropbox.](#)

MozyHome Online Backup mozy.com/home

WINDOWS | MAC You've got lots of files that need protection, including big media files. They can take hours and hours to upload to the cloud. Let MozyHome handle it in the background. You get up to 2GB free. (More than that, and you'll pay a subscription fee.)

[>> Read PCMag's review of MozyHome Online Backup.](#)

Syncplicity

www.syncplicity.com

WINDOWS | MOBILE | WEB Synchronize up to 10,000 files or 2GB—whichever comes





BLOGGING

WordPress.com www.wordpress.com

WEB If you're itching to get your daily thoughts out to the world but aren't sure how to get started, this is the site. WordPress will host your new blog while you control it. You only pay if you need extra space or even more control (such as CSS modification).

>> Read PCMag's review of WordPress.com.

first—on up to two computers free (you pay for more). Sign up friends and you can add another 1GB per new user recruited. What's more, Syncplicity goes out of its way to work with other cloud-based services, such as Google Docs.

>> Read PCMag's review of Syncplicity.

Windows Live SkyDrive skydrive.live.com

WINDOWS Let's get serious about free storage space. 2GB is fine for documents, but it's not enough for everything you've got. Maybe you can't get enough free space in the cloud for everything, but Microsoft comes close. Its SkyDrive online storage delivers 25GB—free. The only limit: You must keep to no more than 50MB per file.

BLOGGING

Posterous

posterous.com

WEB This might be the easiest way for anyone—newbie or experienced—to get started with a new blog, podcast, or sharing site. Posterous hosts your Web page, on which you can post just about anything, from your deepest thoughts to most types of digital media (stills, video, or audio). Here's the kicker: You (or others in your group) can autopost directly from e-mail, so anyone can become an instant Web publisher.

>> Read more about Posterous on Appscout.com.

Ustream.tv

www.ustream.tv

WEB If you've got a webcam or some compatible screen-casting software and a good Internet connection, you can stream video live with Ustream.tv, a PCMag Editors' Choice for live video broadcasting. It's not exactly TV quality, but being able to build up a fanbase this way is priceless.

>> Read PCMag's review of Ustream.tv and check out the PCMag Radio channel at Ustream.tv.

Windows Live Writer 2009

download.live.com/writer

WINDOWS Want a word processor that's specifically for blogging and can automate posting to top blogging platforms, such as Movable Type, WordPress, Live Journal, TypePad, and others? The new version of Writer offers enhancements for sharing images and even cropping and tilting pictures on the fly, or creating albums. You can even auto-publish video to sites like You-

Tube. Plug-ins integrate Writer with sites like Digg, Flickr, and Twitter.

BROWSERS

Firefox 3.5

www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | MOBILE | PORTABLE

What more can we say about Mozilla's flagship product? There's always a new and more innovative version on the way. It's the primo example of a perfected extensible architecture (that is to say, plug-in), and it remains our Editors' Choice in desktop browsing.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Firefox 3.5.](#)

Maxthon

www.maxthon.com

WINDOWS Back on this list by popular demand is Maxthon, a browser that introduced many to the idea of tabs. It now supports Windows 7 features, such as multi-touch. It sports a built-in RSS reader and ad blocker, as well as support for plug-ins and skins.

Opera 10.5

www.opera.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | MOBILE Opera claims to be "the fastest browser on earth," thanks to a new JavaScript engine, Carakan, and a new graphics library, Vega.

>> [Read PCMag's Hands On of Opera 10.5.](#)

Prism

mozillalabs.com/prism

WINDOWS There are a lot of Web-based programs out there, and a lot of them are on this list. There are times, though, when you want your apps to run on your desktop alone, so if the browser crashes, your Web app doesn't go with it. That's what Prism



BROWSERS

Google Chrome 4.0

www.google.com/chrome

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX

Firefox once reigned supreme—as a browser with extensions—but Chrome is coming to usurp the throne. It doesn't offer a big library of extensions, comparatively, but couple what it has with incredible speed and you've got a winner.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Google Chrome 4.0.](#)

does. It's a site-specific browser. You specify the site, then an app like Gmail, Meebo, or Mint.com can run on your desktop as if it's installed software.

CALENDAR/PIM

30 Boxes

30boxes.com

WEB This Web calendar actually looks 100-percent like the calendars of yore. You won't get confused using 30 Boxes, even on the months with 31 or 28 boxes.

Google Calendar

www.google.com/calendar

WEB One of the best of the many Google online apps, Calendar displays your sched-



CONFERENCING/VOIP

ooVoo

www.ooVoo.com

WINDOWS | MAC If all you want to do is have a straight-up two-way video chat with someone else via webcam, then try ooVoo. The free version even lets you send and receive 1-minute video messages to fellow users. You can also use it for chatting (with up to six people) and to send files.

ule any way you want. It's imminently searchable, of course, and has its own Labs section, with experimental ideas from Google that you can implement, if you want.

Lightning

www.mozilla.org/projects/calendar/lightning

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE Another project of Mozilla Labs, Lightning is technically an extension for the Thunderbird e-mail software. And what an add-on it is, providing full calendaring support with a task list. You can even synch it with your Google Calendar.

Remember The Milk www.rememberthemilk.com

WEB | MOBILE You don't want to forget the milk, or anything else, and this superior

cloud-based task manager will make sure your to-do lists are easily managed and accessible via a variety of smartphones (iPhone, Android, Blackberry) and even through other Web services, such as Gmail.

CONFERENCING/VOIP

Dimdim 5.5

estore.dimdim.com/user/signup

WEB If you want to hold an online conference with people in far-flung places, and you're looking to do it for free, check out Dimdim. Dimdim lets you schedule online meetings for up to 20 people—no software installation needed.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Dimdim 5.5](#)

Skype 4.0

www.skype.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | MOBILE | PORTABLE

Practically synonymous with VoIP and now with one-on-one free video conferencing, Skype offers its core function—PC-to-PC communication—totally free. That goes for talking to Skype users on smartphones as well. Skype has gotten so big, entire phone systems have been built to use its backbone. You pay only if you want extras, such as the ability to call landline phones or built-in voice mail, but even those are super-cheap compared to what's offered by traditional providers.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Skype 4.0](#)

TokBox

www.tokbox.com

WEB You can video chat with up to 20 people simultaneously via webcams using TokBox. This video-based phone service also ties into your existing IM accounts to find

other users (it won't call regular phones). If you'd rather not use the Web, an installable application is also available. You can check out the equally free TokBox AIR.

E-MAIL

Affixa 2.2010.1.23

www.affixa.com

WINDOWS Once there were programs called gAttach and yAttach, which integrated Gmail and Yahoo Mail with your desktop. They've both been replaced by Affixa, which does the same for both. It even handles those "mail to" links that crop up online, as if it were the native e-mail app. To support multiple accounts, you need the \$3 Pro version.

Gmail

mail.google.com

WEB Google's version of online e-mail is a standard now. Because it lives in the cloud, it continues to innovate via the Gmail Labs experiments, some of which become standard features. In the last year alone, Google made sure every Gmail session is secure (notice the *https* in the address), and maybe most remarkably, it is no longer in beta. If that label was holding you back, you've got no excuse now.

VoxOx 2

www.voxox.com

WINDOWS | MAC You want a tool that does it all? This could be the one. VoxOx 2 integrates with a wide variety of services and software: It does voice and video calls, SMS text messaging, instant messaging, file sharing, e-mail, and even faxing. It helps that the parent company is a telco. You might have to



E-MAIL

Thunderbird 3

www.mozillamessaging.com/en-US/thunderbird

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | MOBILE | PORTABLE

It's been the best desktop alternative to Outlook for a long time. Version 3 of Mozilla's e-mail and RSS news reader adds a new feature to the interface: tabs (just like in Firefox). And, of course, it has always supported cool extensions. It's not for businesses, but for everyone else eschewing Web-based e-mail, it's the best choice.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Thunderbird 3.](#)

pay for some calls, but the charge is minor. It even includes a new digital "personal assistant" and on-the-fly translation of text.

[>> Read more about VoxOx.](#)

FILE TRANSFER/SHARING

FileZilla 3.3.2.1

filezilla-project.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE We once mistakenly called this a Mozilla project because of its name. It's not. This free FTP client software started as a computer science project in 2001 and blossomed into an open-source staple.





FINANCE

Mint.com

www.mint.com/

WEB | MOBILE PCMag's Editors' Choice for online financial Web services is a big name now: Intuit, the makers of Quicken, bought the company, realizing this was the future of online finance. Mint gathers your banking information and spending data from all of your bank accounts, credit cards, and loans, and gives you a constant, up-to-date report on how your finances fare, with advice on how to improve things, if needed.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Mint.com.](#)

manage the bandwidth it uses.

>> [Read PCMag's review of uTorrent 1.8.4.](#)

FILE VIEWERS/CONVERTERS

FoxIt Reader 3.2

www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader

WINDOWS | PORTABLE You don't need Adobe to read Acrobat files. FoxIt Reader is a long-time popular PDF reader that is famed for having no bloat. It allows you to annotate a file, or convert all of a PDF's text directly to a TXT file.

IrfanView 4.25

www.irfanview.com

WINDOWS A true classic, IrfanView (pronounced ear-fan-view) is all about viewing and converting graphics files, covering just about any graphic format you can conceive of. It even has some editing and annotation capabilities, all in a tiny 1.3MB download.

xplorer2Lite 1.7.2.7

zabkat.com/x2lite.htm

WINDOWS So, you've heard that dual panes and tabs are the way to go if you're looking to replace Windows Explorer? So did xplorer2, which also adds folder comparison/synchronization, previews of certain file types (like TXT and RTF), and a text editor of its own.

FINANCE

RightLoad 1.9

rightload.org

WINDOWS This tiny FTP client does one thing: It sends files directly to pre-configured servers, with a simple right-click. It even lets you quickly throw images onto Facebook and Flickr.

uTorrent 2.0

www.utorrent.com/downloads

WINDOWS | MAC | PORTABLE Our favorite BitTorrent client (it's our Editors' Choice) is also yours, since half the protocol's users prefer it. No wonder: It's super small, super fast, and gives you all the controls you need to

Billeo

www.billeo.com

WINDOWS | MAC | WEB Billeo is a combination electronic-wallet, form filler, password manager, and more. It helps make it easier to conduct financial transactions online, whether paying a bill or making a purchase. Grab the

browser plug-in for Firefox to get started.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Billeo.](#)

Outright

outright.com

WEB Having a hard time imagining keeping your small business' finances online? Outright makes online biz bookkeeping easy, by tracking income and expenses, creating reports on that data, and then providing an overview of what you need to pay in taxes. It imports data from your financial institutions (like Mint does for your individual accounts) and partner sites, all for free.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Outright.](#)

FUN/HOME

calibre 0.6.45

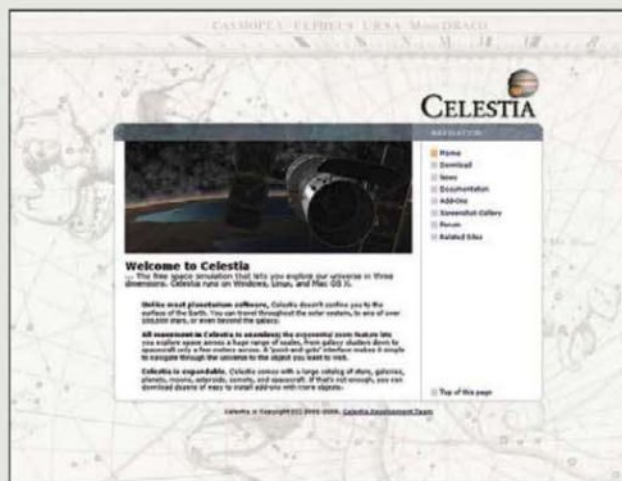
calibre-ebook.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX As e-books get more popular, you need a way to keep track of them all. Calibre is gaining thousands of users each month doing just that. It sorts e-books by title, author, rating, and more, plus you can tag them as you like. It converts e-book formats (so you can make EPUB or PDF files from MOBI and TXT, or vice versa). It will even sync with some e-book readers if you don't use the built-in viewer to read on your computer screen.

Kindle

www.amazon.com/kindle-store-ebooks-newspapers-blogs/b/ref=topnav_storetab_kinc?ie=UTF8&node=133141011

WINDOWS | MAC | MOBILE You don't have to own a Kindle to buy Kindle-based e-books. Amazon, smartly, created software that makes them readable on all operating systems and



FUN/HOME

Celestia

www.shatters.net/celestia/

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE Travel the galaxy with this planetarium software, which uses an "exponential zoom feature" to make traveling through the stars seamless, no matter the scale. If the package doesn't include the stars and celestial objects you desire, there's a good chance an add-on in The Celestia Motherlode will.

mobile phones with decent screens—all the better to sell more e-books, obviously. What's nice is, with the WhisperSync tech, you can start reading on your desktop or laptop and continue where you left off on your iPhone or BlackBerry (or the actual Kindle hardware).

[>> Read PCMag's review of Kindle for iPhone.](#)

Penzu

penzu.com

WEB Dear diary, I had no idea that I could write online and be able to keep my thoughts and feelings private and secure until I found Penzu. I can even insert pictures from Flickr, share entries if I want to, and search past entries. I can get even more cool features (like customized backgrounds





GRAPHICS

Paint.NET 3.5.4

www.getpaint.net

WINDOWS What used to be a student project is now perhaps the best available free Photoshop-esque tool. Paint.NET is fast, too, something Photoshop can seldom claim. Paint.NET, which requires the .NET framework in Windows, can also take plug-ins of its own, including one that lets it read Photoshop's own native PSD files.

and AES encryption) if I want to pay \$19 a year for the Pro version.

Sweet Home 3D 2.3

www.sweethome3d.eu/index.jsp

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | WEB This interior design app lets you build a 2D view of your home's floorplan, with 2D representations of furniture. Then, Sweet Home 3D gives you a 3D preview of what the room will look like. It's better than making a friend (and by friend, I mean me) help you move a couch around to find the perfect spot.

GRAPHICS

Aviary.com

aviary.com

WEB Aviary isn't just a single graphics tool, it's a whole flock of tools for creating and editing images in the cloud. If you install a Firefox extension, Aviary can even do screen captures of Web pages, which you can then quickly edit. Brand new to the site: a full-blown audio editor.

Blender

www.blender.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE Open-source tools for making animated movies that rival anything out of Hollywood server farms? Yes, it's possible with Blender—and a metric-ton of hard work and talent. If you lack the latter, you can still play with Blender's serious modeling, shading, animating, and rendering tools—even if it's just a 3D stick figure.

GIMP 2.6

www.gimp.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE The GNU Image Manipulation Program is the ultimate open-source alternative to Photoshop; in fact it can handle just about any professional image editing and creation tasks asked of it, at a price anyone can afford. There's a separate download site if you want GIMP 2.6 for Mac OS X.

Picasa 3.6

picasa.google.com

WINDOWS | WEB Google's Picasa doubles as an image editor and master manager of images and video that is extremely simple to use, even though it looks like nothing else

you've seen. It works directly with digital cameras to download images to the master image collection; it even supports images in RAW format. Picasa's Web Albums give you an online repository for sharing your favorite pics with the world. The previous version is our PCMag Editors' Choice for consumer image organization and editing. Stay tuned for a full review of 3.6.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Picasa 3.5.](#)

Picnik

www.picnik.com

WEB This cloud-based image editor is so good, even Google took notice of it—and then bought it. For now, Picnik remains a standalone app for touching up images, which you can gather from (or save to) sites like Flickr, Facebook, Yahoo, Webshots, or Picasa. We're looking forward to seeing it integrated with Google's other online tools in the future.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Picnik.](#)

Photoshop.com

www.photoshop.com

WEB | MOBILE You're not exactly going to get the full power of Photoshop in your browser window, but you get a nice subset of tools to put to work on an online library of photos at this URL. The online version offers standard editing and uploading to sharing sites. Mobile versions, like that for iPhone, give you limited cropping, rotation, and exposure modification for pics on your handheld.

INSTANT MESSAGING

AIM 7 (Beta 2)

products.aim.com

WINDOWS | MAC | WEB | MOBILE AOL Instant Mes-



INSTANT MESSAGING

Trillian Astra

www.trillian.im

WINDOWS | MAC | WEB | MOBILE PCMag's Editors' Choice for multiservice IMs is an old favorite reborn with an improved UI and support for social networking status updates. It has a Web-based interface you can access for free (thereby taking on Meebo), and an iPhone app (though that, strangely, isn't free).

[>> Read PCMag's review of Trillian Astra.](#)

senger, as AIM was once known, still has the biggest IM network and is the easiest to access from multiple places and services—a network used by most of the other tools in this section. Using the actual AIM software, however, can get you a few extras, like easy ability to send IM as SMS texts, but mostly it's all about staying in touch with friends and family, no matter what computer or handheld (iPhone, Android, BlackBerry, and Windows Mobile) you use. The new LifeStream feature makes sure the desktop software captures your social networking as well.

[>> Read PCMag's review of AIM 7 \(Beta 2\).](#)

Digsby

www.digsby.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX This multi-protocol IM



MAPS

Google Maps

maps.google.com

WEB | MOBILE There isn't much left you can't mash-up with a Google Map, or that Google hasn't mashed up itself (the latest: Google Maps Biking Directions). It's available as a free app on most smartphones, too. Naturally, it's big on Android phones, where it powers the GPS navigation and offers real-time traffic reports.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Google Maps.](#)

client is one we once loved, and still like (see the review for particulars). It's especially noteworthy because it was among the first to deeply integrate social networking with IMs by including access to updates from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and MySpace. It even includes e-mail, such as Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo Mail, as well as POP3 and IMAP accounts. It's nicely customizable in appearance, too.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Digsby.](#)

Meebo

www.meebo.com

WEB | MOBILE Tops in the Web-based IM trade,

Meebo gives you one account that lets you instantly sign into your individual instant-messaging clients with AIM, Yahoo, Google, Windows Live, and Facebook and use them all in a single interface. It keeps a transcript of conversations for future reference. Being Web-based keeps it light, and new features appear automatically, too. Mostly, however, it's just a fast way to instant message with friends on the most popular networks without installing a bunch of unneeded programs. And the iPhone app? It's priceless, despite being free.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Meebo.](#)

Pidgin 2.6.6

www.pidgin.im

WINDOWS | LINUX | PORTABLE Open-source Pidgin gives you single-interface access to multiple IM protocols both well-known (AIM, ICQ, Google Talk, MSN, Yahoo) and not-so-well-known (hello, Gadu-Gadu!). Pidgin has plug-ins for some others' services (Facebook) and features like advanced security and interface tweaks. Being open source, it's also probably available in more languages than any other multi-instant messaging tool. (The Mac equivalent goes by the name Adium.)

MAPS

Google Earth 5.0

earth.google.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX This is so much more than just Google Maps in a desktop app. Earth is a virtual exploration app that lets you explore not just the surface of our planet, but also the ocean floor and the sky. Google Earth can even take you on a quick

trip to Mars, or back in time via historical satellite images.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Google Earth 5.0.](#)

MEDIA MANAGER

Apple iTunes 9

www.apple.com/itunes

WINDOWS | MAC The best known music and video collection organizer, iTunes has also mastered syncing with Apple's media products and the shopping experience of the iTunes Store (where most of America gets its music). iTunes is still PCMag's Editors' Choice in this category.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Apple iTunes 9.](#)

Songbird

www.getsongbird.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE Wishing you had iTunes for your non-Apple smartphone? Organizing audio for these devices is just one of Songbird's better features. It will play just about any music format—even music embedded on a Web page. Songbird also handles DRM files from iTunes by hooking into QuickTime. And it organizes everything in an iTunes-esque interface that's easy to understand.

Windows Live Photo Gallery

download.live.com/photogallery

WINDOWS Windows Live apps are frequently items that used to come with Windows, but for various reasons they don't ship in Windows Vista and 7. Photo Gallery is such a product: a capable photo (and video) organizer that can upload images to sites across the Web. Plus, it will do some minor image editing and automatically tag people in



MEDIA MANAGER

CopyTrans

www.copytrans.net

WINDOWS Getting music on your iPod or iPhone is easy with iTunes, and even a few other programs; getting music off of them is another matter. In fact, it can be a nightmare. We used to recommend EphPod, but that's no longer in development; the former developer suggests CopyTrans, and we agree. It copies not just the files, but also the ratings and artwork, all in the right categories. The CopyTrans Manager does all that and takes over for iTunes as your media manager.

photos using facial recognition.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Windows Live Photo Gallery.](#)

NETWORKING

LogMeIn Hamachi2

secure.logmein.com/US/products/hamachi2/

WINDOWS Hamachi has always been a “zero-configuration” virtual private network (VPN) connection, and the free version can instantly connect up to 16 clients at once. You don't need special software. Hamachi creates a secure tunnel between the com-





OFFICE

OpenOffice.org 3.2 www.openoffice.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE The open-source office software suite that includes all the tools you find in expensive off-the-shelf products, Open Office does Microsoft one better by supporting all operating systems (Mac users should check out NeoOffice for a more Mac-centric interface). Furthermore, OpenOffice does just about everything you can imagine in an office suite (including extras like math and drawing applications), it works with MS Office files, and it's free for everyone, all the time, for any purpose. Period.

>> Read more about OpenOffice.org 3.2.

puters for fast, safe file transfers.

WiFi Stumbler meraki.com/tools/stumbler

WEB Is there a browser-based tool for troubleshooting your wireless network that works? Meraki thinks so. Its WiFi Stumbler doesn't install any software; it just discovers the access points/routers on your network and gives you all the information you need to make it work better.

>> Read PCMag's review of Meraki WiFi Stumbler.

OFFICE

Dia

dia-installer.de/index_en.html

WINDOWS | LINUX | PORTABLE Want to diagram something, but don't want to pay for Visio? That's where Dia gets its inspiration, providing all the flowcharting goodness you can stand. Grab the portable version at PortableApps.com to keep it on your USB drive.

Evernote

www.evernote.com

WINDOWS | MAC | WEB | MOBILE The ultimate note-taking app? It may be. Evernote lets you save anything you see online, your private notes, public notes—just about everything. You can synchronize your Evernotes on the desktop app, the online version, and Evernote for mobile phones (iPhone, Android, and BlackBerry). You get a little more for subscribing (like more upload space), but you can get plenty out of Evernote for nothing.

Google Docs

docs.google.com

WEB | MOBILE Finally out of beta, Google's cloud-based answer to Microsoft Office continues to innovate. Google Apps' word processor, spreadsheet, presentations, and online forms were already fast and easy to master (since they don't have all the extras you'd find in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and now Google lets you upload any file you want to store in your Docs account. As Google buys more products like Picnik, who knows what might find its way into the Docs suite.

>> Read PCMag's review of Google Docs.

Notepad++ 5.6.8

notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/uk/site.htm

WINDOWS | PORTABLE A classic update to the anemic Notepad that has always come with Windows, this editor is about much more than text; it's about code, with color-coded syntax highlighting for programmers in languages from HTML to C and tabs for opening multiple documents at once.

SlideRocket

www.sliderocket.com

WEB A complete platform for creating presentations found entirely online, SlideRocket lets you upload PowerPoint files so you can access them anywhere, or just create your own online, in collaboration with your colleagues. The free version is limited to 250MB of storage, but you can pay monthly or yearly to upgrade.

Springpad

springpadit.com

WEB | MOBILE Recently relaunched, Springpad (like Evernote) is all about saving snippets of the Internet (plus your own documents, pictures, and more) into a personal notebook for future reference. What it does differently is bolster that saved info with extras it pulls from the Web. Springpad's iPhone app lets you take it on the road.

[>> Read about Springpad at AppScout.](#)

Zoho

www.zoho.com

WEB Zoho's massive suite of productivity and collaboration apps is unique in how it takes on the leader in online apps (Google) while still being fully in favor of working with Google's tech and even as a partner. Most of



PRINTING

GreenPrint World www.printgreener.com

WINDOWS Stop printing out wasted "ghost pages" with useless info and page flotsam. GreenPrint World offers a free utility that ties in with the Windows print dialog to stop the excess, saving you money in paper and ink (thus saving the world to boot). You can avoid advertising by paying \$29, but the free version works just fine.

[>> Read PCMag's review of GreenPrint World.](#)

the Zoho apps have a free component that you'll get more from by subscribing.

[>> Read PCMag's review of Zoho.](#)

PRINTING

PrinterShare

www.printershare.com

WINDOWS | MAC | MOBILE Install PrinterShare on a PC with an attached printer. Have all your friends and family do the same. Then you can print to any of them, anytime (if the PC is connected to the Internet), and everyone you know can print to your personal printer as well. All you or they need is the PrinterShare ID of the printer in question to send the job. Even iPhones and Android-based phones can print this way.



RSS READERS

FeedDemon 3 www.newsgator.com/Individuals/FeedDemon/Default.aspx

WINDOWS A desktop app for reading RSS feeds fast, FeedDemon also knows you need to track your feeds wherever you are and thus it syncs with the view-anywhere Google Reader. FeedDemon makes it easy to tag posts for future searches, and it watches for your favorite keywords to pop up so you don't miss a thing.

PROCESS MONITORS

Autoruns 9.57 technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb963902.aspx

WINDOWS No program knows more about what is autorunning at Windows startup. Its 17 tabs show everything you can prevent from starting, even items you might not want to touch. That's why using MSCOFIG might be better for the uninitiated. But if you're brave and have the tech know-how, this is the ultimate start-up adjustment maker.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Autoruns 9.](#)

Process Monitor 2.8 technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896645.aspx

WINDOWS Process Monitor (free, courtesy of

Microsoft's Windows Sysinternals group) logs everything happening in the underbelly of your PC. Patience as you wade through that data later can pay off with surprising revelations and powerful help with Windows troubleshooting. Some expertise doesn't hurt, of course.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Process Monitor 2.8.](#)

Process Explorer 11.33 technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896653.aspx

WINDOWS Windows Task Manager can only do so much. Process Explorer does all that and more; it even IDs running DLLs and will tell you what process opened specific files. Make this your Ctrl-Alt-Del tool of choice.

>> [Read PCMag's review of Process Explorer 11.](#)

REMOTE ACCESS

TeamViewer www.teamviewer.com/index.aspx

WINDOWS | MAC | MOBILE | PORTABLE Super-simple remote access for support, access, or just a meeting is the hallmark of TeamViewer. The full version can connect with others, or wait for incoming connects. There's also a version that doesn't require admin rights. It can even run on a USB flash drive without installation. New features, such as VoIP, mean hosts can converse with clients over the remote connection. The latest addition is a free iPhone app that still displays a remote PC's full desktop quite well.

TightVNC www.tightvnc.com

WINDOWS | LINUX | PORTABLE The company's description says it all: "you can see the desktop of a remote machine and control it." That

makes it great for people who are constantly asked to help friends and family (even the occasional IT person) with tech woes. If you want to use TightVNC with Windows Vista or 7, best to try the beta of Version 2.0.

RSS READERS

Google Reader www.google.com/reader

WEB | MOBILE The premiere RSS reader these days, Google Reader makes subscribing to feeds a breeze and displays them in an easy-to-view format. It even makes posts in your favorite blogs and sites easier to share via e-mail or the built-in Share feature.

SECURITY/ENCRYPTION

KeePass Password Safe 2.10 keepass.info

WINDOWS | PORTABLE You have a lot of passwords. They're not all the same. And your memory is like a sieve with particularly large holes in it. KeePass is your software vault. It uses AES and Twofish algorithms to encrypt all the passwords (and everything else) it holds for you. And it's portable, so you can put it on a USB flash drive and take it with you anywhere, storing nothing locally. If you suck at creating passwords, it'll generate strong ones you can use. It doesn't integrate much with the browser, but if you use Firefox, the KeeFox plug-in takes care of that.

TrueCrypt www.truecrypt.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX Open-source TrueCrypt creates a virtual disk for your most important data which it then encrypts, or you can just encrypt an entire drive or partition, even the one on which Windows is installed. The



SECURITY/ENCRYPTION

LastPass lastpass.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX We don't hand out 5-star ratings to many products, but LastPass got one last year and became our Editors' Choice for password managers. Security expert Neil J. Rubenking says it has almost every feature of the competition (like auto-filling in browser forms), as well as a few unique tricks of its own. Your info is stored securely online, so you can share it across operating systems (and, if you're willing to pay a \$1 a month, with your mobile smartphone). And LastPass integrates with multiple Web browsers (IE, Firefox, and Chrome, plus Safari on the Mac).

[>> Read PCMag's review of LastPass.](#)

strength is AES-256 and it's automatic, happening in real-time when files are saved.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Fishbowl www.fishbowlclient.com

WINDOWS To show off Silverlight in Windows 7, the Microsofties created Fishbowl as a desktop client for accessing Facebook in a whole new way. It integrates the social net-





SYSTEM UTILITIES

Eraser 6 www.heidi.ie/eraser

WINDOWS Eraser 6 does what the delete key and emptying the Recycle bin can't. It ensures every little bit of information on your hard drive is obliterated—without destroying the drive physically—before you give it, or the entire computer, away.

work with your computer desktop and provides unique views of pictures, status from friends, and more. It also works with XP and Vista.

Seesmic Look

seesmic.com/seesmic_desktop/look

WINDOWS Seesmic makes a lot of clients for accessing Twitter, but none changes the feeling of the service as much as Look, a tool optimized for Windows 7. Instead of just a list of tweets, you get floating boxes, dynamically moving about as you surf the tweets.

TweetDeck www.tweetdeck.com

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | MOBILE Since it uses Adobe Air, TweetDeck runs on all the major desktop OSs, using the same popular, multi-column interface to show off Twit-

ter updates (plus Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace updates). You can even access multiple Twitter accounts, keep track of hot trending topics, and manage your Twitter lists. Your TweetDeck column setup can be synced across multiple PCs and even to the iPhone app for backup.

SYSTEM UTILITIES

CCleaner 2.29 www.piriform.com/ccleaner

WINDOWS Don't be upset that Windows occasionally needs a sweeping out. CCleaner will take care of that, and it can optimize your PC at the same time. It looks individually at Web browsers and other third-party apps, plus the Windows registry, seeking out the crap (that's what the first "C" is for) slowing down your OS.

EULalyzer

www.javacoolsoftware.com/eulalyzer.html

WINDOWS Do end-user license agreements (EULAs) make you nervous? You're not alone. Luckily, we've got EULalyzer to take a look at these "contracts" to tell you about the hidden pitfalls that might be installed, restrictions on what you can do with it, even what the privacy policies are at Web sites you sign up for. What you do with the advice it gives is up to you.

PC Decrapifier 2.2.1 www.pcdecrapifier.com

WINDOWS Brand-new PCs are pristine examples of perfect operating-system performance, right? Ha! Buy a name-brand computer and you'll likely find it filled with shovel-ware and other crap that the manu-

facturer is paid to include. Before you try to do any serious computing, run PC Decrapi-fier and it will delete a lot of the pre-installed junk you'll never, ever need.

Revo Uninstaller 2.1.5 www.revouninstaller.com

WINDOWS An uninstalled program in Windows is seldom completely gone. Revo Uninstaller goes the extra mile to make sure it's all gone. A lot of the best bits are now part of the Pro version (\$39.25), but there's still more cleaning with the free Revo than you'll get with any program's built-in uninstall routine.

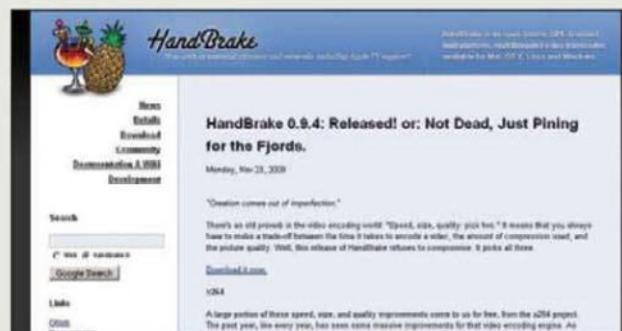
VirtualBox 3.1.4 www.virtualbox.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX You can get more features with a full commercial virtualization program like VMware or Parallels, but try to beat the price of VirtualBox, which lets you run just about any other operating system you can imagine within any other OS. They all have to support x86 chips. Shared folders mean you can access the same files on the host OS or the virtual OS; the same goes for USB devices.

VIDEO

VLC media player 1.0.5 www.videolan.org

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX | PORTABLE Looking for no-frills video and audio playback on any OS that works with any media format you can imagine (including DVD but not Blu-ray)? That's what VLC media player is all about. It can even stream media, both live from a mic or webcam, or using pre-recorded files. VideoLAN's Wiki will take you through this



VIDEO

Handbrake 0.9.4 handbrake.fr

WINDOWS | MAC | LINUX Got a DVD you want to back up to your hard drive (which you'll only do if you own it, right)? The open-source and cross-platform Handbrake will do this for you on any OS. What's more, it can convert video from the DVD, or any other digital video on your hard drive, into other formats more useful for playback.

program's powerful feature set.

>> Read PCMag's review of VLC media player 1.0.5.

Windows Live Movie Maker

download.live.com/moviemaker

WINDOWS It used to come with Windows XP; now Movie Maker is part of Windows Live Essentials, so you download it separately for Vista or Windows 7. This is a completely new program and ties in tightly to other Live components like the Live Photo Gallery. Another sign of Movie Maker's relative modernity: it uses the "ribbon" interface introduced with Microsoft Office 2007. For easy Windows video-editing, it's hard to beat.

>> Read our hands-on analysis of Movie Maker in Windows 7 ■

Solutions

BUILD IT

A Child's Desktop PC

Tired of having your kids hog your home computer? It's time to think about building them their very own system. With our step-by-step guide, it's never been easier. *By Daniel S. Evans*

Picture it: You're trying to upload some photos on your home desktop PC, or just trying to check out some scores on ESPN.com. Only, you have to compete with your offspring, who are busy typing up a paper for school, playing online games, or checking the videos on Nickjr.com. You can, of course, exert your right as a parent and kick them off of your PC, but you may have to brace yourself for some whining, possibly some crying, and a fair amount of guilt that you're not letting them develop their computer skills. That's when getting a PC for their exclusive use makes sense.

When most people think of building a PC for their children (specifically for the 5- to 10-year-old range), they usually associate it with using a collection of cast-off

components from old PCs or doing some minor upgrades to an out-of-date system they have laying around. While these are both viable options, you could also start from scratch. The challenge here is to build a PC for kids that is fairly inexpensive (why should the kids live better than you?), offers solid performance, and can be expandable as the kids' needs grow.

Unlike most of the systems that we build, the motherboard is the most expensive part of a child's PC. That's because the motherboard should have the ability to be easily upgraded with a new CPU as kids begin to need something with a bit more power. The Gigabyte GA-P55-UD6 motherboard we use in this build has an 1156 socket that can handle the new Intel Core i3, i5, and i7 CPUs so you can switch out the Core i3 for

68 WORK

Looking for a new business laptop? Here are our top 5 picks

72 SECURITY

Pick the best standalone antivirus software for your needs



Case

F1 Red Race Car PC

\$69 list

CPU

Intel Core i3-530

\$113 list

Motherboard

Gigabyte GA-P55-UD6

\$230 street

Graphics Card

ATI Radeon HD 5450

\$50 street

Optical Drive

**Lite-On 24X Internal
CD/DVD Drive
(iHAS424-08 A)**

\$38.99 list

Memory

**Corsair
CM3X2G1600C9DHX
DDR3 SDRAM
(2 x 2GB)**

\$120 street

Operating System

**Microsoft Windows 7
Home Premium**

\$199.99 direct

Hard Drive

**WD Caviar Blue
(7,200 rpm)**

\$40 street

Extras

LearningBoard

\$29.95 list

Child's Desktop PC: Step-by-Step Instructions



1 OPEN IT UP

Open the side of the case. Set the case on its side on a flat surface.



2 MAKE ROOM FOR THE MOTHERBOARD

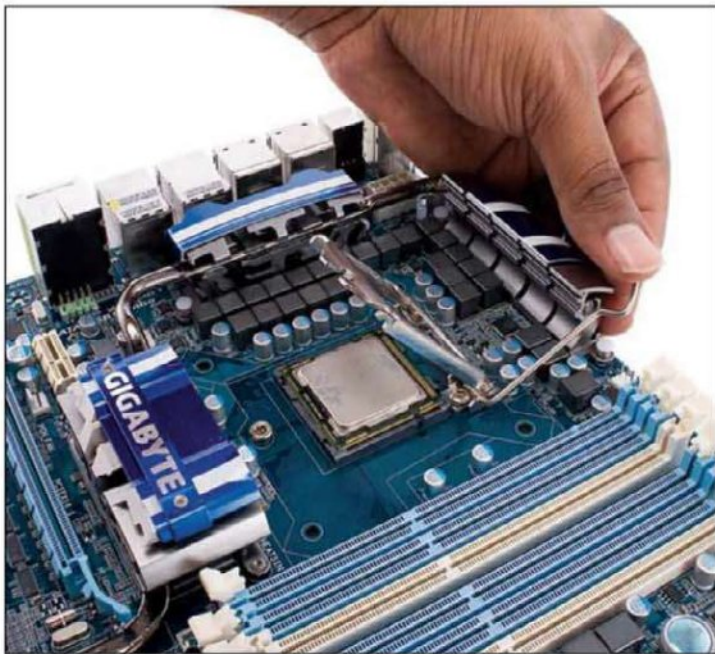
Insert the motherboard risers into the case.

a more powerful Core i5 later; it also uses speedy DDR3 memory. In addition, we can take advantage of the board's PCI slots and give the kids a bit more than the Clarkdale integrated graphics. The motherboard has 10 USB ports including 2 USB/eSATA ports, along with the standard Ethernet, optical, and audio ports.

For the CPU, I decided to go with an Intel Core i3-530, which is relatively inexpensive, compared with the new Core i5 and i7 chips. Some would argue that there are other chips at the same price point that pack more of a punch, like AMD's quad-core Athlon II X4 635 (\$119 list). I'll admit that the allure of the quad-core is strong, but I decided not

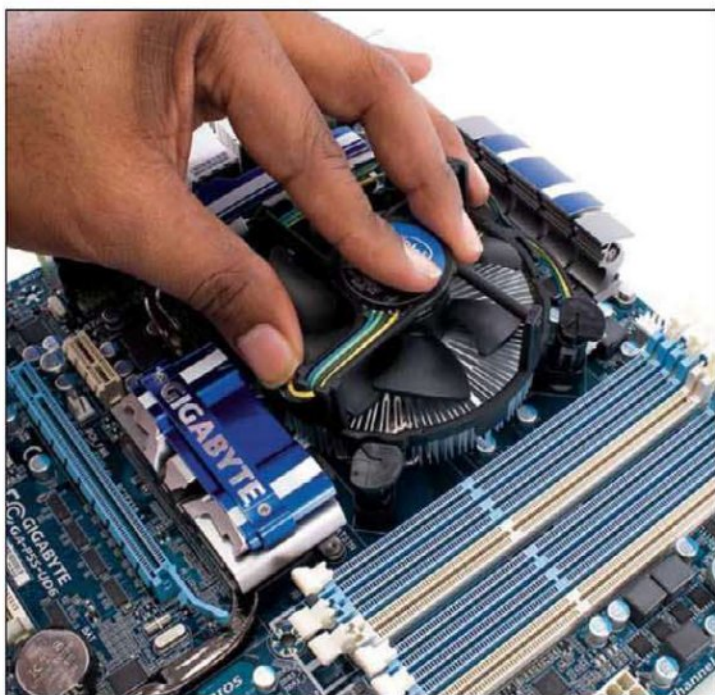
to go in that direction for two reasons. First, you wouldn't be able to quickly upgrade to a new Intel CPU later. Second, if you decide to save some money and not install the ATI Radeon HD 5450 graphics card that we recommend here, the Core-i3's Clarkdale architecture comes with Intel's integrated HD graphics. This is just fine for everyday graphics and media playback if your child is not really a big gamer and will just be watching Internet clips and working on his or her homework.

For graphics, I went with the new ATI Radeon HD 5450 (\$50) graphics card, an extremely low-cost entry point into 3D graphics that features an HDMI port.



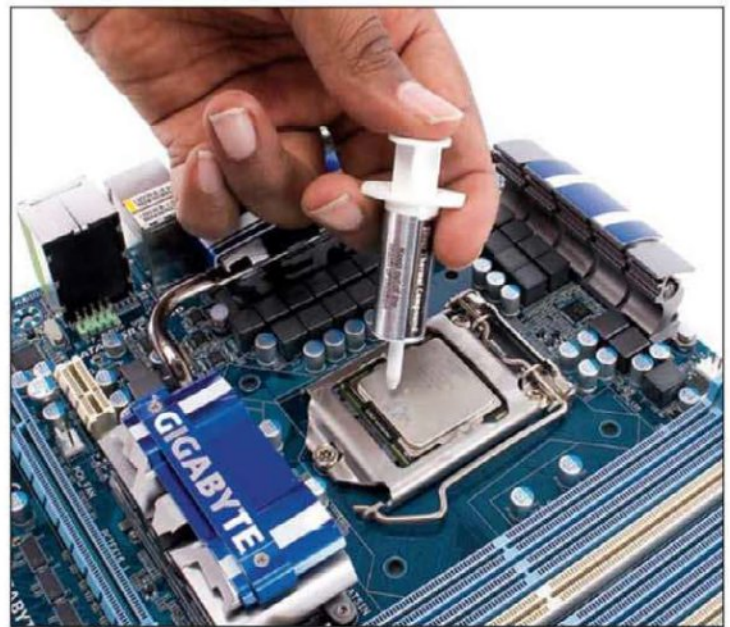
3 INSTALL THE CPU

First, release the socket lever by moving it slightly sideways, then raise it to a 90-degree angle. Line up the chip, but make sure that you don't force the chip into place. When you have the CPU lined up, bring the lever down and lock it back into place to make sure that the CPU is held securely.



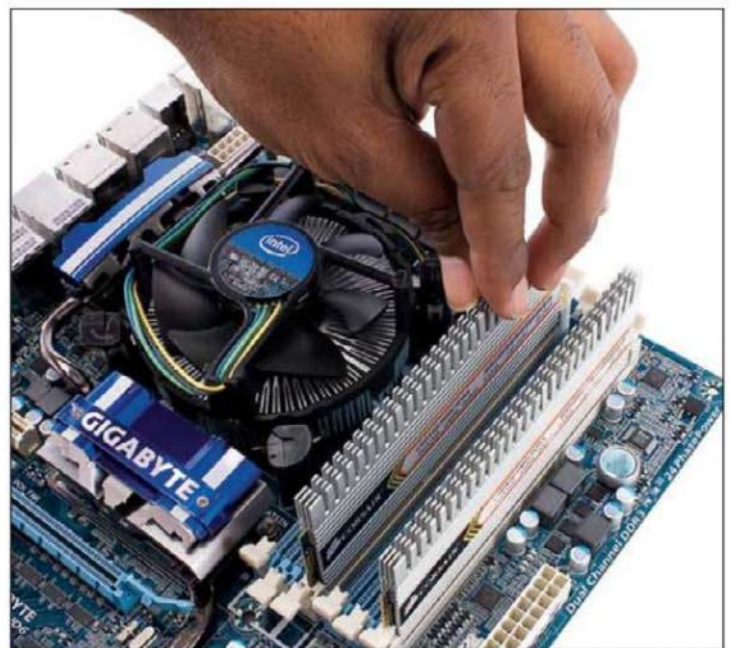
5 KEEP IT COOL

Install the cooler on top of the CPU and clip it onto the motherboard.



4 ADD SOME PASTE

Place a dollop of thermal paste on top of the chip. The compound conducts heat well and increases cooling efficiency by filling in the small spaces between the CPU and the surface of the heat sink.



6 ADD THE ALL-IMPORTANT MEMORY

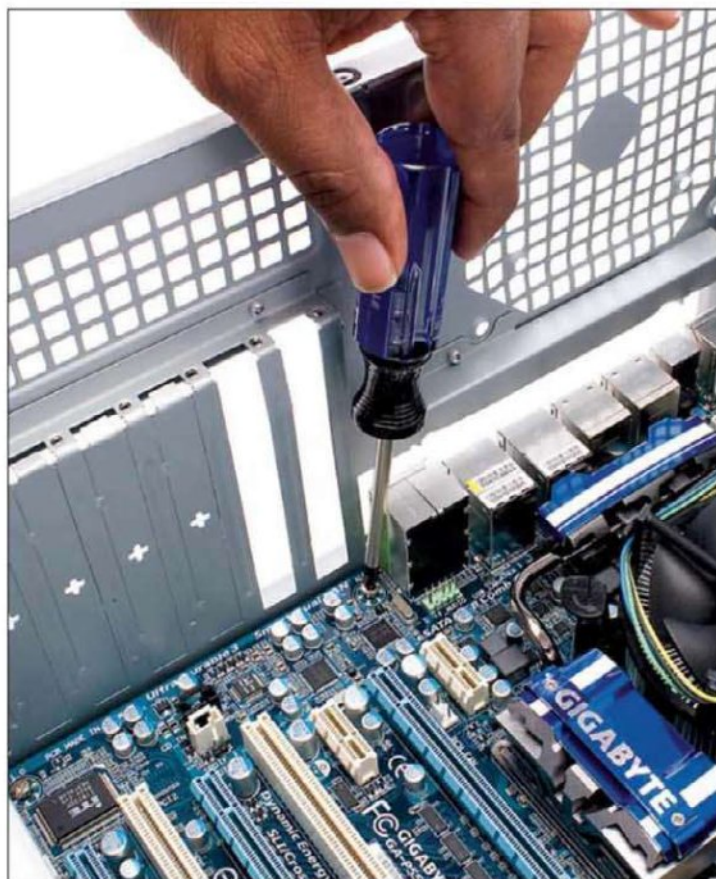
Insert the RAM. The memory slots you use (you'll see several) will depend on your memory configuration, so consult the manual before you install the sticks. The RAM modules are designed so that you can't put them in backward—if one isn't going in, don't force it.





7 GIVE IT POWER

Install the power supply.



8 INSTALL THE MOTHERBOARD

Set the motherboard on the risers and screw it into place.

Chances are, you're not looking for a system you're kids can play 3D games on, but since it's a DirectX 11 card, you'll still be able to dip your toes into the high-end gaming market. Just don't try to play anything more graphics-intensive than Sims 3 or Lego Star Wars.

In an effort to keep costs down on this PC, we decided to forgo a Blu-ray drive and go with a standard CD/DVD drive, which are becoming both faster and cheaper. The new Lite-On (iHAS424-08 A) drive is a 24X writer and burner. It also comes with LightScribe technology that will let the kids label the mix CDs or home movies that they create.

Finally, we added some custom extras, in

keeping with the child-friendly theme. For starters, we went with an F1 Red Race Car PC tower case, with its shiny, red exterior. We also decided to add a child-centric keyboard (there are several on the market). In this system, we went with the Chester Creek LearningBoard (\$29.95), which color codes the keys for young typists. Vowels, numbers, and command keys are easily found and identified.

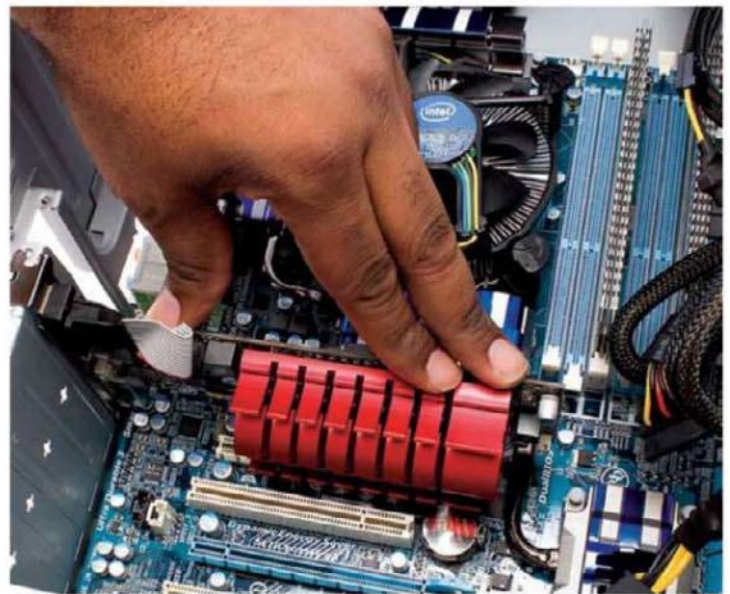
All in all, building this desktop PC is fairly simple, and at \$890, it won't be a huge drain on your wallet. Plus, doing so ups your coolness factor significantly with your most discriminating audience: your kids. What more can a parent ask for? ■



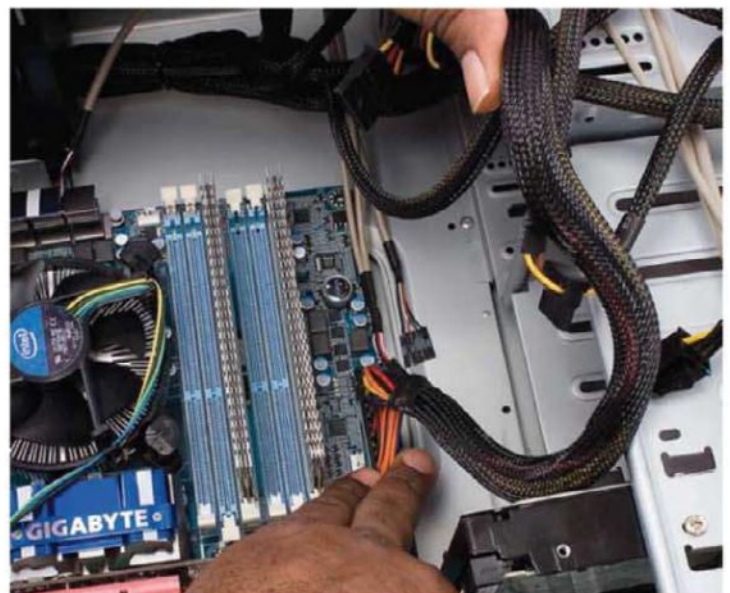
- 9 WORK ON THE FACE**
Open the front panel of the case and then take out the temporary face plates.



- 11 INSTALL THE OPTICAL DRIVE**
Slide your optical drive into the front of the case.



- 10 GET THE GRAPHICS IN PLACE**
Install your graphics card and hard drive.



- 12 WIRE IT UP**
Find the 20-pin power socket on the motherboard, and plug in the matching power-supply connector. Do the same with the power plug that mates with the four-pin socket near the CPU. Connect all of the leads from the external USB ports, indicator lights, status display, and audio jacks to their motherboard partners. Next, do the same with the leads from the internal drives. Your hardware work is done. Load Windows 7 and your kids' new PC is ready!



Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS

This is, hands down, the lightest and most powerful ultraportable money can buy.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

The Top 5 Business

Looking for a durable, powerful, portable, business laptop that can last through a cross-country flight? These are the best models you can buy.

By Laarni Almendrala Ragaza

Finding a great laptop for work is serious business. After all, you need something that's durable, secure, powerful, light, and can keep you working through a six-hour flight. With countless options available, it can be a daunting task to find the perfect one. But we're here to help with our top five business laptop picks.

Lenovo ThinkPad X201

With netbooks and CULVs running the show, the X201 wields the kind of power that you don't see in ultraportables anymore.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)



Laptops

If weight is the biggest factor in your buying decision, then you can't do better than the **Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS** (\$1,800 direct, ●●●●○), our Editors' Choice for ultraportables. It weighs a scant 3 pounds, and runs a powerful Intel Core i5 CPU. Add to that switchable graphics and support for two solid state drives (our review unit came with only one 256GB SSD), and you've got

the lightest and most powerful ultraportable around.

Another ultraportable that should be on your short list is the **Lenovo ThinkPad X201** (\$1,625 direct, ●●●●○). Though it might be mistaken for a netbook, given its 12-inch screen and tiny footprint, it's a lot more powerful. It packs an Intel Core i5 540M CPU. And thanks to a big battery, it can last





HP EliteBook 2540p

It makes the fewest sacrifices among its rivals, but you have to be willing to put up with a 12-inch screen.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

an impressive 9 hours 36 minutes.

The **HP EliteBook 2540p** (\$1,629 direct, ●●●●○) also sports a 12-inch screen, but comes with a low-voltage Intel Core i7 CPU to maximize the system's battery life (8 hours 2 minutes, in this case). The chassis design is both aesthetically pleasing (with aluminum metals on its lid) and ruggedized for travel. Like the Lenovo X201, the EliteBook 2540p sports dual pointing devices (pointing stick and touchpad), and it also

has a full-size keyboard.

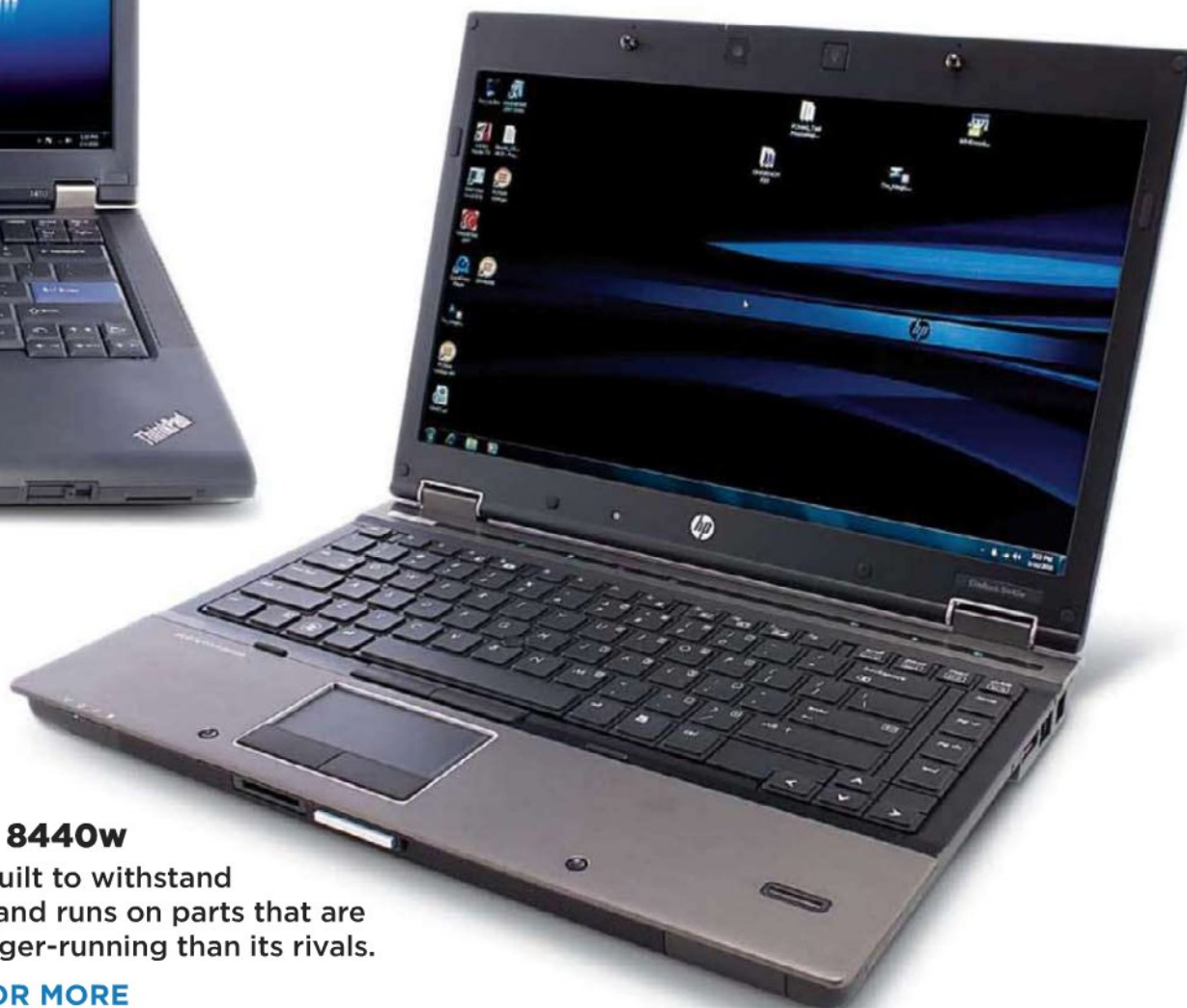
Those who crave a feature-packed business laptop will want to take a serious look at our Editors' Choice in this category, the **Lenovo ThinkPad T410** (\$1,484 direct, ●●●●○). Its design is pretty bland, but it's what is inside the T410 that impresses. It features a strong inner framework and shock-proof component protection. With its 2.53-GHz Intel Core i5-540M processor, 4GB of DDR3 memory, and Nvidia Quadro



Lenovo ThinkPad T410

The T410 has all the essential features to prevent your company from experiencing downtime, including solid performance and good battery life.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)



HP EliteBook 8440w

The 8440w is built to withstand physical abuse and runs on parts that are meaner and longer-running than its rivals.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

NVS 3100M graphics chipset, it made short work of CPU-intensive tasks. The trade-off for this much performance is battery life; the T410 scored 5 hours 30 minutes on MobileMark 2007—though not stellar, this is still respectable for most daily commuters.

For those looking for a business laptop that's both visually pleasing and powerful, the **HP EliteBook 8440w** (\$1,650 direct, ●●●●○) is one to check out. Like the HP 2540p, it's ruggedized for travel, and it

features a dual-core Intel Core i7 processor, workstation-class Nvidia graphics, and speedy hard drives. And like the Lenovo T410, it has a 14-inch screen and a big 9-cell battery. Its fully-loaded feature set includes four USB ports, FireWire, an ExpressCard slot, and a multimedia-card reader. The HP 8440w adds a standard three-year warranty to sweeten the deal.

[>> FOR MORE LAPTOP REVIEWS, CHECK OUT OUR LAPTOP PRODUCT GUIDE](#)



Antivirus, and Much More

When most people talk about antivirus software, they're really talking about an app that blocks spyware, rootkits, keyloggers, scareware, Trojans, and more—not just viruses. We review 13 antivirus apps that do just that. *By Neil J. Rubenking*

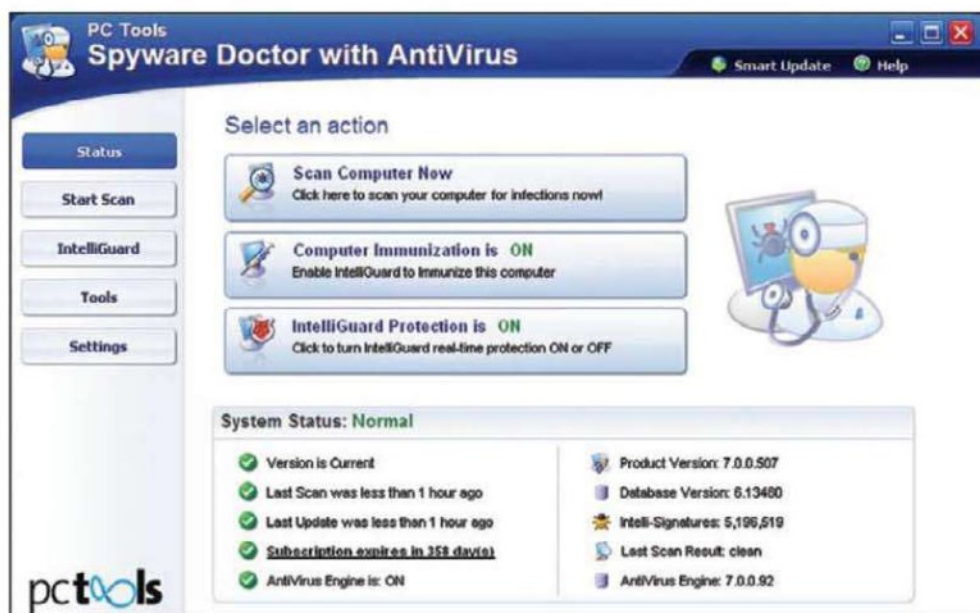
Malicious programs come in a huge variety of different types:

- Viruses, which spread from computer to computer by infecting other programs
- Worms, which spread by exploiting capabilities of the network
- Trojans, which pretend to be useful and valuable programs—until they turn and do something nasty
- Adware/pop-up ads, which interfere with your work

- Spyware, which can steal personal information
- Keyloggers, which steal everything you type, and more
- Rootkits, which subvert the operating system to hide their activities, and
- Scareware, which pretends to be security software but at best does no good

Which of these should your antivirus remove? Simple—all of them! Viruses make up only a small part of threats “in the wild,”

SPYWARE DOCTOR WITH ANTIVIRUS 2010 adds numerous new “guards” against malware and promises enhanced malware detection and clean-up—and delivers. This product, our new Editors' Choice, broke records in my malware-removal and malware-blocking tests.





NORTON ANTIVIRUS 2010 is good at cleaning up malware and even better at protecting a clean system. Its Quorum and SONAR 2 technologies help catch zero-day threats. And its built-in self-repair systems let it install and run on most malware-infested systems. Just be wary of tech support agents trying to sell you expensive malware cleanup services.

but the term *antivirus* has come to define protection against all types of *malware*—a term that hasn't gotten much traction outside the security industry. When most people talk about antivirus software, what they really mean is anti-malware software, and that's also how I'm using the term here.

A full-blown security suite is the best protection against the gamut of security threats, as it combines antivirus protection with a firewall and other protective components. Still, many users prefer to build their own protective suite from separate best-of-breed components. Here's a run-down of your choices for standalone antivirus utilities.

Spyware Doctor with AntiVirus 2010 (\$39.95 direct, ●●●●●), our Editors' Choice for for-pay antivirus, is the star player in the security lineup from PC Tools. In my hands-on testing, it returned top scores for both malware removal and malware blocking, even beating out previous

champion **Norton Antivirus 2010** (\$39.99 direct, ●●●●●), though Norton remains the rootkit removal king). **PC Tools Internet Security 2010** (\$49.95 direct, ●●●●○) offers this same level of protection plus anti-spam, firewall, antiphishing, and a browser-protection toolbar.

Avast! Free Antivirus 5.0 (free, ●●●●○) includes the same anti-malware protection found in the company's full suite, avast! Internet Security 5.0. However, its protection level is more on a par with the better free products than with the best suites or standalones. Yes, the best commercial products are significantly more effective than the free products. **Avira AntiVir Personal 10** (free, ●●●●○) is also free for personal use. **McAfee AntiVirus Plus 2010** (\$39.99 direct, ●●●●○) offers the same protection found in McAfee Total Protection 2010, though neither of these is free. All of these products are significantly better at keeping malware out of



AVAST'S NEW USER

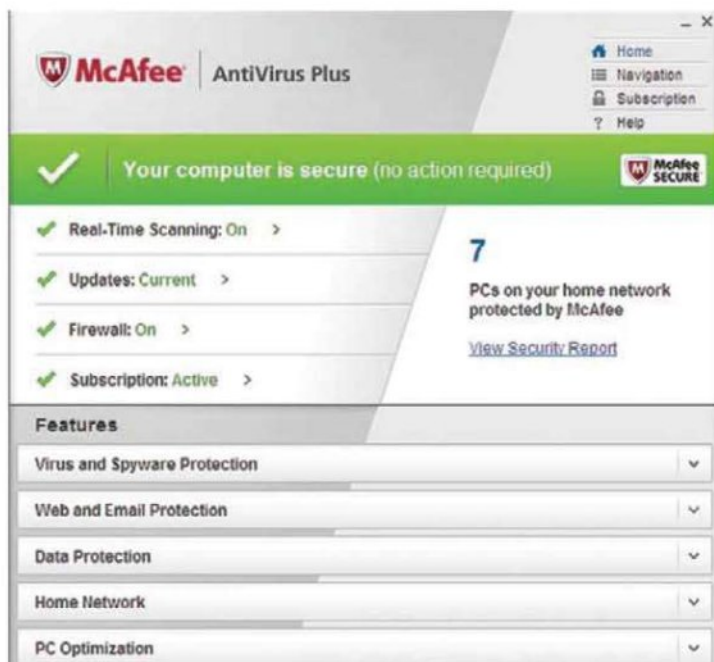
INTERFACE makes it easier to use, and its new technology eliminates more malware. This tool offers more control over settings and more detail in reporting than some of its free competitors.



a clean system than at cleaning up malware on an infested system. AntiVir in particular left a number of rootkits and other threats actively running after its alleged removal.

Sunbelt Software's VIPRE Antivirus 4.0 (\$29.95 direct, ●●●●○) outscored all but

the very best of its competitors in my testing, and it includes some bonus features more often found in suites than standalone antivirus products. Sunbelt's own suite, **VIPRE Antivirus Premium 4.0**, adds little to the antivirus—just a firewall and a malicious Web site filter.



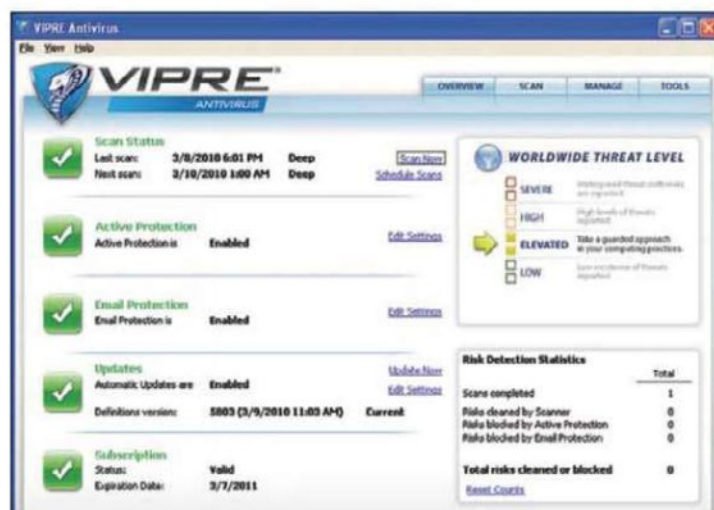
McAfee ANTIVIRUS PLUS 2010's new interface is a welcome departure for McAfee. On clean systems, it's great at blocking malware. Installing and running it on infested systems can be tough, but it offers tons of solutions for such problems.

Unlike the pairs of products mentioned so far, **AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition 9.0** (free, ●●●●○) and **AVG Internet Security 9.0** offer different levels of malware protection. The free product scored significantly lower than the suite for both malware blocking and malware removal, and also scored lower than several other free antivirus solutions. **Microsoft Security Essentials** (free, ●●●○○), another free solution, offers average protection against most sorts of malware but is especially weak against rootkits and commercial keyloggers.

Panda Cloud Antivirus Free Edition 1.0 (free, ●●●●○) and **Trend Micro House-Call 7.1** (free, ●●●●○) don't have a direct link with their related suites (Panda Internet

Security 2010 and Micro Internet Security Pro (Version 3). The free Panda standalone, PC Mag's Editors' Choice for free antivirus, scored noticeably better than its sibling suite in my malware blocking test, tying with Spyware Doctor. HouseCall, on the other hand, wasn't as effective at malware removal as the Trend Micro suite, and it doesn't include real-time malware blocking at all.

Not every antivirus product forms the center of a corresponding security suite. **IObit Security 360** (free, ●●○○○) distinguished itself by scoring lowest or second-lowest in all of my tests—avoid it. **Double Anti-Spy Professional 1.4** (\$29.95 direct, ●●●●○) relies on two anti-malware engines, but its performance against malware was just decent. However, it scored better than all others at removing commercial keyloggers and preventing their installation, even those that use rootkit technology to evade detection. **Ad-Aware Pro 8.1** (\$39.95 direct,



VIPRE is a very good standalone antivirus tool that outscores all but the very best of its competition on my tests. Those with more than three computers will love its \$49.95 unlimited home license.

●●●●○) brightened up my testing day by scoring better than all the rest at removing sneaky scareware programs that masquerade as valid security solutions.

If your aim is to build the perfect best-of-breed combination rather than seek the ultimate pre-packaged suite, you're sure to find a top choice among these products. ■



PANDA CLOUD ANTIVIRUS FREE EDITION 1.0 offers free malware protection in a lightweight package with a very clean user interface.



**Editors' Choices
in Key Categories**
For the complete
reviews of these
products and more
Editors' Choices check out
go.pcmag.com/editorschoice

TheBe

DESKTOPS

MAINSTREAM

HP Pavilion Elite m9400t
\$843 list

BUDGET/VALUE

HP Compaq Presario CQ5110f
\$699 list

Dell Inspiron 545 \$899 list

GAMING/MULTIMEDIA

NEW Maingear Shift
\$6,399 direct

**Falcon Northwest Mach V
(Core i7-975)** \$8,240 direct

HP Pavilion 6267c-b \$999.99 list

ALL-IN-ONE

**Apple iMac 21.5-inch
(Core 2 Duo)** \$1,199 direct

Lenovo IdeaCentre A600
\$799 direct

BUSINESS

Dell Inspiron i570-6939PBK
\$599.98 list

NETTOP

Lenovo C300 \$549 list

LAPTOPS & NETBOOKS

MAINSTREAM

Dell Inspiron i1464-4382OBK
\$749.98 list

ULTRAPORTABLE

NEW Sony VAIO VPC-Z116GXS
\$1,800 direct

GAMING

Alienware M17x \$4,850 direct

MULTIMEDIA

Acer Aspire AS8940-6865
\$1,400 street

DESKTOP REPLACEMENT

Acer Aspire 6930G-6723
\$1,020 street

NETBOOK

Toshiba mini NB205 \$400 street

BUSINESS

Lenovo ThinkPad T410 \$1,484 direct

BUDGET

Asus UL80Vt-A1 \$823 street

TABLET

NEW Apple iPad (Wi-Fi)
64GB, \$699 direct

STORAGE

PORTABLE

**Lenovo ThinkPad USB Portable
Secure Drive** \$319 list

DESKTOP

**Western Digital MyBook
Studio Edition II** \$430 list

NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE

**Western Digital WD
ShareSpace 4TB**, \$799.99 list

LCD MONITORS

Asus VW266H \$309 list

HP LP2275w \$349 direct

Dell UltraSharp 2408WFP
\$689 direct

PRINTERS

MONOCHROME LASER

**Konica Minolta magicolor
1600W** \$180 street

COLOR LASER

Xerox Phaser 7500/DN
\$3,299.99 direct

STANDARD INKJET

Epson Stylus NX515 \$149 direct

PHOTO PRINTER

Epson PictureMate Charm
\$149.99 direct

ALL-IN-ONE

**Canon Color ImageClass
MF8350Cdn** \$699 direct

PROJECTORS

Canon Realis X700 \$2,500 list

NEC VT800 \$1,000 street

SCANNERS

Epson Perfection V300 Photo
\$99.99 direct

DOCUMENT SCANNER

NEW Visioneer Strobe 500
\$399.99 direct

NETWORKING

**D-Link Xtreme N Storage Router
(DIR-685)** \$299 direct

Netgear XAVB101 \$130 street

SMC SMCGS8P \$300 street

Spiceworks 4.5 Free

CloudEngines Pogoplug
\$99 direct

**Cisco Network Magic
Pro 5.5** \$39.99 direct

HDTVS

PLASMA

Vizio VP505XVT \$1,499.99 list

LCD

Sharp Aquos LC-52D85U
\$2,099.99 direct

Sony Bravia KDL-46XBR8
\$3,999.99 list

Samsung LN52A750
\$3,999 list

OLED

Sony XEL-1 OLED Digital TV
\$2,499.99 list

DIGITAL CAMERAS

COMPACT

Samsung DualView TL225
\$349.99 list

D-SLR

Nikon D300 \$1,800 street

Canon EOS Rebel T1i
\$899.99 list

SUPERZOOM

Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ18
\$399.95 list

DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERAS

Kodak Zi8 Pocket Video Camera
\$299.99 direct

Sony HDR-SR11 \$1,099.99 direct

DIGITAL PHOTO & VIDEO

MULTIMEDIA SUITE

Adobe CS 3 \$999 direct

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

CyberLink DVD Suite 7 Ultra
\$129.95 direct

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 8
\$99.99 direct

Picasa 3.5 Free

DIGITAL PHOTO FRAME

Toshiba DMF82XKU
8" Digital Media Frame
\$179.99 list

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYERS

Microsoft Zune 120GB \$249 list

Apple iPod touch
(3rd generation) 8GB,
\$199 direct

Apple iPod nano
(5th generation) 16GB,
\$179 direct

SPEAKERS/DOCKS

Altec Lansing Mix IMT800
\$299.95 direct

Hercules XPS 2.1 Lounge
\$60 street

Logitech Pure-Fi Dream
\$200 direct

MEDIA EXTENDERS

Sonos Bundle 150 \$999 direct

Slingbox PRO-HD \$299 list

GAMING CONSOLES

Sony PlayStation 3 120GB
(PS3 Slim) \$299.99 direct

GPS DEVICES

TomTom One 140-S \$199.95 list

GADGETS

Amazon Kindle 2 \$359 direct

HEADPHONES

Sennheiser CX 680 Sports
\$119.95 list

CELL PHONES

ALLTEL

RIM BlackBerry Curve 8330
From \$229.99 with contract

AT&T

Samsung Mythic SGH-A897
From \$199.99 with contract

Apple iPhone 3GS \$199 list

SPRINT

BlackBerry Tour 9630
\$199.99 with contract

T-MOBILE

Motorola CLIQ \$199 list

VERIZON WIRELESS

Droid by Motorola
\$199.99 direct

METROPCS

Samsung Freeform SCH-r350
\$79 direct

HEADSETS

Aliph Jawbone Icon
\$99 list

3G NETWORK ADAPTERS

SPRINT

Sierra Wireless 598U
\$249.99 list

OFFICE & PRODUCTIVITY

NEW Paragon Hard Disk
Manager 2010 Suite

QuickBase
\$250 direct per month

ACT! by Sage 2010
\$299 list

Citrix GoToAssist Express
\$69 direct per month

IPHONE APPS

NEW Navigon MobileNavigator
1.4.0 \$79.99 direct

Air Sharing \$6.99 direct

Photogene \$2.99 direct

doubleTwist 2.6 Free

Pandora (for iPhone) Free

GAMES

NEW God of War III \$59.99 list

MLB 09: The Show \$59.99 list

MULTIMEDIA

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Ultra \$129.95 list

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