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### NEWS AND VIEWS

By Chuck Hajdú

Happy New Year!! And what a year it promises to be!

Since this is a techie newsletter, I'm not going to address the political or military issues that the world faces, just the issues that affect our digital lives. Although I must admit there is little difference between how tech companies and sovereign nations treat each other. Treaties, back stabbing, alliances that mean nothing, economic warfare, etc. It seems like *The Art of War* really is must reading for everyone, no matter what your line of work.

January looks like it will be a blockbuster month. CES 2007 will take up most of our time for the first week and half of the year. With pre-show arrangements to make, the show itself, the evening events each day and the post show follow ups, we'll all be very busy.

Another series of big events taking place in January will be the unveiling of MSFT's new OS and office products. I'm sure we'll all be buried in a PR blitz with MSFT executives touting their "ground breaking" new products. Pardon me if I snicker in disbelief. Am I panting in anticipation as I wait for Vista and Office something-or-other? No I'm not. We will, of course, report on the new products for you, that's our responsibility.

The other interesting change that seems to be flying under the radar of most publications is the passport changes that go into affect for international travelers. I am as dedicated to maintaining our national security as anyone. As a US Marine from 1965-69, with a son in the 101st Airborne and a son-in-law in the Marines today, I care about our security every day of my life.

*(Continued on page 8)*

### THE DEALS GUY

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click,  
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

My wife and I decided to treat ourselves to another cruise and this time we were not disappointed. We chose Holland America's MS Volendam for a ten day southern Caribbean cruise and, unlike our experience on HA's Zaandam, we were happy with the way the Volendam did things. Actually, we chose it mostly for the price, but also because it was Holland America

since Carnival had some slightly lower prices for that date. Our only complaint might have been poor table service at our dinner seating, although they improved toward the end of the cruise. While we've had better food on cruise ships, the food on the Volendam was not bad.

I liked the ice cream bar that was open at certain times each day offering four different flavors of hard ice

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## TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT

### DIGITAL FOCI PICTURE PORTER ELITE

By Linda Webb

As much as I enjoy my digital camera, the screen is small, and the limited menu structure is inadequate for moving and manipulating images. On some trips, I lug my laptop simply to manage my photos.

The Picture Porter Elite solves these challenges. With a 3.6" color LCD display and an 80 gigabyte hard drive, this boxy yet compact device is aimed primarily at camera users, while also providing audio and video recording and data capabilities that can appeal to other users.

You can copy photos from your camera using either of the two memory card slots that support eleven different formats, most without a special adapter.

I liked the small thumb-operated joystick for navigating around the menu options. A button click lets you zoom, and then you can pan or rotate each picture with the joystick. You can run a slide show with timed transition effects, handy for showing photos to someone on the fly. And it was convenient to print a favorite photo through the Pictbridge port -- without having to boot my computer.

The Picture Porter Elite plays and records audio from a stereo, from the built-in FM radio, or from a nearby conversation in MP3, WMA, AAC, or WAV format. I got the best results, however, recording directly from a stereo receiver. The included earbuds -- which seem to double as the radio antenna -- didn't fit me well and weren't too comfortable.



Linda Webb, M.Ed.  
Emerging Technology Editor

On the video side, after you connect the included video cable to your own 3-wire RCA or phono cables, you can record directly from a TV, VCR, or DVD player using high-compression MPEG-4 encoding. My three-minute test recording of the film *Supersize Me* used 15 gigabytes of space. Playback quality, including audio, was de-



cent. You can show your video or pictures on a TV or a projector using the handy credit-card sized remote.

The Picture Porter Elite is also a data transfer device for exchanging files or folders with a computer through the Windows Explorer, making it convenient in a business setting, or as a backup repository when traveling. And because the unit supports a USB connection, you can use it with a MAC.

The lithium battery is removable. Three timer features allow you to manage battery conservation. Packaged accessories include a leather carrying case that doubles as a stand.

The printed reference guide allowed me to easily explore every nook and cranny of the Picture Porter Elite, and I received a same-day email response from the company when I had a question about recording video.

On the wish list side, a flat, wall hugging power plug, wireless capability, and a slimmer profile would be attractive enhancements. But even so, this device packs a lot of punch -- in a relatively small space.

Picture Porter Elite  
Maker: Digital Foci  
Price: \$ 469.00  
Information: [www.digitalfoci.com](http://www.digitalfoci.com)

# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF MULTIMEDIA

## CRIME STORIES

By George Harding

This is another game from The Adventure Company, continuing the saga of detective Martin Mystère. This time, he has been called on to investigate the murder of Professor Eulemberg.

He starts out at his house where he gets a telephone call to meet Travis, who advises Martin that the Professor is dead. Martin has to fiddle around to get a couple of things he needs. To do this he has to deal with Java, his prehistoric assistant. Java is completely incomprehensible, but he will do things you want. Of the many things Martin must do before he can meet Travis are find the cell phone and his car keys. Once these are found, he can proceed to the villa.

At the villa, Martin talks with Travis and explores the villa for clues. A policeman stands guard, so there are some areas he cannot explore. Well, go back home to get the ID and then back to the villa.



George Harding

The cop accepts the ID and Martin can now explore the Professor's bedroom. A sealed envelope identifies an address in Mexico, where Professor Uben's home is located. Martin goes to Mexico with Java

Martin has to solve a few problems to find a key to Prof. Uben's house. When he does, he explores there and finds a map, showing a dig site in Mex-

ico. Next stop – an Aztec archeological site. Professor Uben is there, but does not let Martin look around, so back to New York and the Professor's villa. He finds an unfinished letter to a curator at the Donovan Museum. He goes there and talks with the curator, who has a medallion given to her by Professor Eulemberg.



She gives Martin the medallion, but only Professor Uben in Mexico can explain its significance. So, back to the Aztec ruins. Martin solves a riddle of opening the door in a wall covered with hieroglyphs and he and Uben enter the room. The door closes, trapping them inside!

Martin's wife figures out that Martin needs help, goes to Mexico and finds the secret exit from the room. They go back to New York. A parcel has arrived.

Martin goes to the villa and finds another parcel. He uses the medallion and the parcels to create an Aztec scepter. This is the key to the safe room in Eulemberg's villa.

From here, the plot gets really complicated! Suffice it to say that Martin encounters more difficulty but is able to solve his problems and prevent Professor Eulemberg's discovery from falling into the wrong hands.

The art work in the game is really quite good, with vivid colors and detailed drawings. The sound is also excellent, varying in theme by location, It sounds as if a full orchestra was used to record the sound track.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

*(Continued from page 3)*

The character movement, while better than in other games, still suffers from a lack of reality. Walking is a sort of gliding and mouth movements do not coordinate with spoken sounds. These are minor quibbles, though.



The plot is complicated, involving several locations, many people and the solution of many logistical steps. There are few of the types of puzzles usual in games of this sort.



Crime Stories by The Adventure Company  
[www.adventurecompanygames.com](http://www.adventurecompanygames.com)

About \$20

Requires WIN XP, 1.8 GHz P4, 512 MB RAM, 32 MB video card, 1 GB hard disk space

ESRB rating T (Teen) for blood, mild language, mild violence, sexual themes, alcohol

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## REVIEWS

### PANDA INTERNET SECURITY 2007

By Dave Fleisher

GONE!!! Panda Internet Security 2007 is ONE fantastic program! It is the most comprehensive security program that I've seen. It will do all you will ever need and more.

As a little background, I contacted our Editor recently and described some problems I was having with both my desktop and laptop computers. He told me that we had just received Panda Internet Security 2007 and asked if I'd like to review the program. Naturally, I agreed. And I'm glad I did.

My main problem was that when I tried to close a program I often received a message that the program was not responding and the only way to get out is to use "end now" which left me thinking that I might be screwing up the program when I use "end now". I contacted tech support for the program that kept hanging up and they offered me a couple of possible fixes, none of which worked. I'd noticed that the longer I was in a program the more likely it was to lock up.

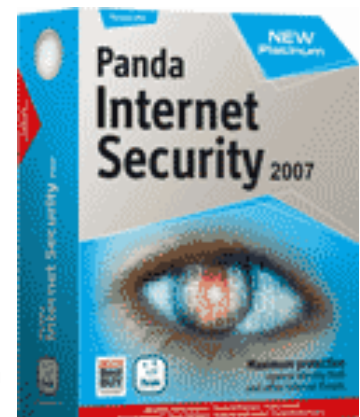
I had run Spybot Search & Destroy just before loading Panda and Panda found thirteen (13!!!) more spyware items while it was loading. Chalk up one for Panda Security.

Thanks to Panda I've dumped the garbage I had been using and now both computers are running like brand new.

Panda Internet Security 2007 includes all of these products:

- Panda Antivirus
- Panda AntiSpyware
- Panda Firewall
- Panda TruPrevent
- Panda IdentityProtect
- Panda Antispam
- Panda Parental Control
- Email Tech Support
- Automatic daily updates

MSRP is only \$69.95  
[www.pandasecurity.com](http://www.pandasecurity.com)



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## REVIEWS

### BELKIN WIRELESS G PLUS MIMO

By Chuck Hajdú

We were very excited to receive the Belkin Wireless G Plus MIMO products to review. Belkin products have always been extremely reliable and we've used them as the backbone of our testing lab and editorial offices network for many years.

What exactly is Wireless G Plus MIMO you ask. Belkin describes it this way: *"Belkin's Wireless G Plus MIMO (Multiple Input Multiple Output) products are based on a smart antenna technology that builds upon the widely deployed 802.11g standard by increasing speed, coverage, and reliability of wireless systems. Wireless G Plus MIMO is ideal for users looking for greater range and faster speeds for downloading music from the Internet, sharing photos, and gaming online."*

Naturally, the first item to hook up on a wireless system is the Router. All of the products we received have documentation that stresses this to the extreme. If you don't know that hooking up components in order is important, then you shouldn't be allowed to touch a computer!

The Belkin ISP Reference Guide was an excellent document. We were very impressed with how much research Belkin did to gather ISP settings data for potential users. Kudos to Belkin.

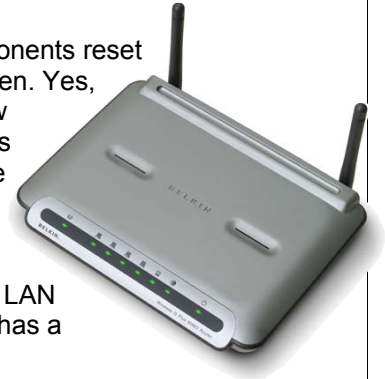
One of the things we have always appreciated with Belkin products is their efforts to protect us from ourselves. The box cover information, Start Here guide, inserts, and labels on the Wireless G Plus MIMO

Router are all VERY specific, "Do not connect your Router until instructed to do so. Please read the instructions first." If you do not have an existing wireless network installed, or have any doubts whatsoever, then please follow their directions. After reading the Start Here guide we realized what instructions meant for us: unplug the IIIb wireless router we had in place and plug in the new



The Chuck Hajdú  
Action Figure

one. After all of the components reset themselves we were golden. Yes, we had to identify the new router to all of our wireless clients, but that's a couple of mouse clicks process. It was a simple and very quick installation. The router supports up to 253 LAN and 32 WLAN users and has a range of up to 1,000 feet.



Next we installed the Notebook Card and USB Network Adapters in client computers. Both products require Win2K or WinXP. We were disappointed to see there was no support for any version of Linux. What a shame.

Installation was standard and, once again, Belkin protects you from your self. There is a bright yellow tape on the anti-static bag that shouts - STOP: Run the Installation CD-ROM first. The installation software loads the Belkin Wireless Network Utility, a very user friendly utility for setting up your wireless network.



Belkin claims a 10X speed increase over IIIb and a 2X speed increase over IIIg products. From our testing those numbers appear to be about right. When combined with Firefox 2.0 we had truly impressive web browsing speed.

If you're in the market for a wireless network, or want to update your existing IIIb network, then look no farther. The Belkin Wireless G Plus MIMO is exactly what you're looking for.

These three products have our highest possible recommendation!

MSRP for the Wireless G Plus MIMO line is: F5D9230-4 Router \$79.99, F5D9050 USB Network Adapter \$69.99 and F5D9010 Notebook Card \$59.99.

[www.belkin.com](http://www.belkin.com)

## E-MAIL: BE LESS ANNOYING

**EVERYONE - INCLUDING BILL GATES - CAN USE E-MAIL MORE EFFICIENTLY.  
AND LEARN HOW NOT TO DO REALLY DUMB THINGS.**

by Steve Bass, PC World; Author, PC Annoyances.

I've come to the conclusion that everyone needs to take a test before being able to use e-mail. No, I'm serious. You have to take an e-mail test. If you pass, you get an e-mail license. Proudly hang it on the wall. Screw up--send lots of messages with blank subject lines, say--and your license is pulled. You go on probation and attend mandatory remedial e-mail training.

Why am I being so hardnosed? I have a laundry list of ways people drive me wild with e-mail. I wrote about a few in "Get Relief From Annoying E-Mail," my July, 2006 "Hassle-Free PC" column:  
[http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,125767,tk,nl\\_sbxhow,00.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,125767,tk,nl_sbxhow,00.asp)

But I ran out of room in the print column, so here are some more tips, including how to stop being obnoxious with your e-mail.

### To Whom Am I Speaking?

Sometimes I have absolutely no idea who's sending me an e-mail, and this is a problem. I mean, I'll say something to another guy that I wouldn't dream of uttering to a lady my mother's age. *[Sorry, Mom.]*

\* **Don't share.** If you and your live-in (spouse, significant other, whatever) use the same e-mail address, stop it. Extra e-mail addresses are free and consolidating e-mails into one mailbox is confusing the dickens out of me because I never know who I'm writing to.

\* **Use a sig line.** Make life easier for me: Add a signature line with your name and e-mail address using the hot-linked [mailto:steve\\_bass@pcworld.com](mailto:steve_bass@pcworld.com) format. It's easier to reply just to you if your e-mail was sent to many people; it's also great for when I forward your e-mail--the new recipient doesn't have to cut and paste your address.

\* **Use your real name.** Don't get me wrong, I love your [beerbelly49832@yourisp.com](mailto:beerbelly49832@yourisp.com). The problem is, I haven't a clue who you are. Be a champ and add your real name in the signature line. And a favor? Don't use initials.

### Do I Need to Read This Right Now?

Look, I'm a very busy man (or so I tell my wife and editor), and I get tons of e-mail every day. I need to do e-mail triage--you know, scanning the inbox for the hottest messages and reading them first. But honestly, I can't do this with most e-mail I get. So here's what I recommend:

\* **The subject is...** Tell me, clearly and briefly, what your message is about in the subject line. I delete all messages with vague subjects--Hi, Hello, or worse, an empty subject line (oh, do I hate that!). And make sure you don't trigger my spam filter by using all capital letters, exclamation points, and words you typically see in junk e-mail, like "free," "spam," "mortgage," or "Viagra."

\* **Exec summary.** Give me a one- or a two-sentence overview at the start of your e-mail. "I have a complicated issue," you might start out, "involving a Dell, memory cards, and SP2. If you have time to help, I've provided details below."

\* **Save time.** Use [NM] or [EOM] (they stand for "no message" or "end of message") in the subject line as a shorthand way of responding with a simple "thank you" or an acknowledgement. This helps reduce the number of e-mails I need to open; many of the people at PC World use the trick and it's increased everyone's productivity.

### And Your Point Is?

Once I actually open an e-mail, I need to get the point quickly so I can reply to the sender if necessary, then move on to the next one. But lots of the missives I get are, how to say it?, a mess.

- \* **Use paragraphs.** Obvious, right? Nope. I get e-mails with one long paragraph the length of the Gettysburg Address. Break it up into three or four smaller ones. By the way, my limit is three or four paragraphs; after that I start dozing. *[Editor's note: I noticed.]* And send a test message to a buddy to make sure your e-mail program isn't removing paragraph returns.

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## REVIEWS

### Amphony H2500 5.8GHz Digital Wireless Headphones

By Razz Hajdú

I have used Amphony wireless headphones since 2002 and have always been very happy with them. When Amphony first announced the H2500 model in January of 2004, we immediately requested a review unit because we were so pleased with the quality of the 2.4GHz Model 1000 we had tested. We are happy to say that just 2 years, 9 months and 17 days later the H2500 arrived for testing.

Like any wireless headphones, the H2500 has two components, the base station/transmitter and the headphones. Setup is fairly simple: plug in the audio cables and find a channel that gives you static free listening.

The headphones are very comfortable and can be worn for extended periods of time. We didn't have any problems with interference and loved the sound quality

Prior to receiving our eval unit, Amphony warned us about the battery requirements for the H2500s. I always had problems with my old Amphony headphones until I found one specific brand of AA batteries that it liked. The warning we received from Amphony was: *If using regular AA batteries, please use same voltage as the ones included in the unit. If using higher voltage, please note you may experience static.*



Razz Hajdú

The rechargeable batteries that came with the H2500 worked just fine. One feature I liked a lot was having a battery charger built into the transmitter. That is very convenient. There's nothing worse than having your batteries die and you can't find the charger.

MSRP is \$269.  
[www.amphony.com](http://www.amphony.com)



## E-MAIL

(Continued from page 6)

\* **By the numbers.** If you have more than one question or point, number them. It makes replying a whole lot easier if I can refer to the numbers.

\* **Subject shorthand.** When you reply or forward an e-mail, it's helpful if you stick one or two descriptive words in front of the original subject so the recipient has an idea of what's in store. For instance, I use tags such as "Update," "Confirmation," or "Really Dumb."

### Miscellaneous Gripes

Think I'm done kvetching? Nope, no such luck.

\* **Attachment don'ts.** Don't attach anything executable--period. If on the off chance I've asked you to send a program, stick it into a zipped file.

\* **Keep it private.** Don't reply to a mailing list with "great idea" or "I agree." Reply privately instead. Select a small part of the original message for context's sake.

\* **Stay plain, Jane.** Avoid fancy formatting, gaudy colors, and flowery backgrounds. Two reasons: first, what's cool on your monitor looks like hell on mine; and second, that extra coding increases the download time for folks with slower connections.

\* **Dear [InsertName].** Private note to PR flacks: If you can't use mail merge properly, don't.

*Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon at dirt cheap prices. <http://snurl.com/annoyances>*

## NEWS & VIEWS

(Continued from page 1)

However, the RFID passports we're all going to be required to carry worry me. I honestly believe that RFID may be the greatest threat to our privacy in history.

Passports are going to be required for travel to and from ALL foreign countries including Canada, Mexico and the Bahamas. Right now you just need a driver's license and birth certificate to travel to some nearby foreign countries. Very soon you'll need a passport.

Credit card companies are already issuing cards with RFID tags and it won't be long before every credit and debit card is RFID enabled. What does that mean to you? A recent test done by University of Massachusetts researchers found that even the most heavily encrypted cards can be read using \$150 of equipment that is the size of a couple of paper back books. That scares me a LOT!

The Department of Homeland Security is pushing the Real ID Act and states will comply with Federal law the easiest way possible and that will be RFID drivers licenses. That means that everyone will have a national ID card that has information that can be read without the persons knowledge.

Your passport, drivers license/national ID card and all of your credit/debit card information will be readily available to unscrupulous thieves. The person sitting next to you in Starbucks or standing in line with you at the airport could easily be reading all of the names, credit card numbers and social security numbers of everyone within 15 feet of him. That is a serious threat both to our security and to our economy.

I highly recommend two web sites to everyone who cares about the dangers of RFID.

[prisms.cs.umass.edu/~kevinfu/papers/RFID-CC-manuscript.pdf](http://prisms.cs.umass.edu/~kevinfu/papers/RFID-CC-manuscript.pdf) is the study done by UMass on the security risks of RFID.

[www.dhs.gov/xinfo/share/committees/editorial\\_0512.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xinfo/share/committees/editorial_0512.shtm) is the site for the Department of Homeland Security's Data Privacy and Integrity Advisory Committee.

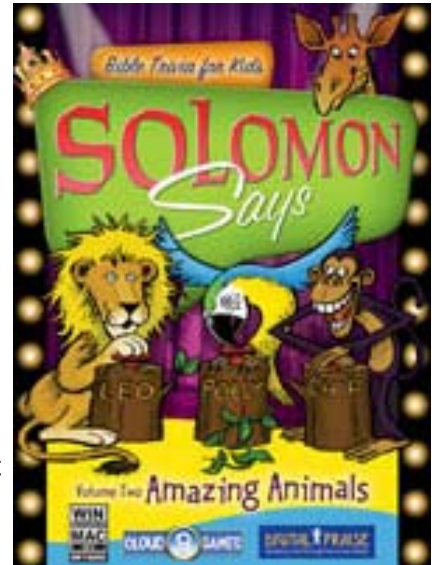
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## REVIEWS

### Solomon Says Volume 2 Amazing Animals

By: Kate Meade

As the mother of two young boys, I am always looking for ways to keep them entertained. However, I seem to have an unhealthy fear of most video games. The boys love them, so trying to find a middle ground can be frustrating. At only four and six years old, I try to limit not only their playing time, but what the games expose them to. Cloud 9 Games has developed a bible trivia PC game for kids called *Solomon Says, volume 2: Amazing Animals*. It keeps them entertained by playing to their competitive natures, their love of animals and reinforces the biblical values we have tried to instill in them.



Cloud 9 games can be played on Windows and Macintosh computers and are easy to install. *Amazing Animals* is designed for one to three players, ages seven and up, though my four year old was able to play with a little help from Mommy, and the six year old did just fine. You can choose from three different levels of difficulty, and set the number of rounds and questions in each round per game. Our family really enjoys this game and it's a fun way to learn more about God's creation.



Kate Meade

MSRP \$24.95

*Solomon Says, volume Two: Amazing Animals* can be ordered online at [www.digitalpraise.com](http://www.digitalpraise.com) or [www.cloud9games.com](http://www.cloud9games.com), and can be found at most Christian retailers.

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## REVIEWS

Bt Tim Ehrhard, Technical Editor

### SanDisk Sansa c150

It's the night before race day and I'm finally getting nervous. I haven't been training like I should, eating like I should, or getting enough rest to recover properly. It's not my fault; I've been in the academic homestretch in my hardest semester ever. But no matter, the Tucson Marathon is coming in the morning, whether I'm ready or not.

As I lay awake, trying to figure out my game plan...it dawns on me; MUSIC SOOTHES THE SAVAGE BEAST! Ok, but how to pipe the tunes into my skull in order to take my mind off the pain in my legs and the lack of air in my lungs? I stopped running with a portable CD player years ago when I found that there isn't an anti-skip mechanism with enough guts to take on 190 pounds of foot-pounding runner for 10+ miles. If you think AC/DC is hard to follow, imagine it when all you hear for a mile is "he's got big balls...he's got big balls..." Once was enough for me, I switched back to tape from then on out. However, I realized how far behind the times I was while sitting in a final, being admonished to remove all electronic devices, one mentioned being a "Walkman"; when the kid next to me says "what's a 'Walkman'?" Damn... even I'm getting old.

But there is a light at the end of the tunnel folks... SanDisk™ was kind enough to send us a very compact Sansa® c150 MP3 player/radio receiver for evaluation. Until now, I've only used it to listen to Turkish and German language tutorials and tune in radio stations in Istanbul. It handled all those tasks

with aplomb owing to its extremely fine tuning range and immense 2GB storage capacity. It had a very small form factor which was ideal for my purposes abroad since I wanted to travel light and without conspicuously tempting electronics sticking out all over the place. It also served pretty well as an in-dorm music hub when coupled with Logitech's™ mm28® portable speakers (reviewed elsewhere).



Tim Ehrhard



So I dig out my suitcase and tear into the mess to find the USB 2.0 transfer cable and the Sansa® c150 unit. Trouble with small things is that they are awful hard to find sometimes. Luckily, this was to be my most difficult moment from then on; the rest was pure simplicity. I got everything together and plugged the unit in on one end and my lap top in on the other. WinDOZ immediately recognized the unit, and asked me if I wanted to 'sync' music from my library. I clicked 'OK' and built the playlist up from scratch. One needs to pick one's music carefully for an event like this. Pick "The Wind Cries Marry" instead of "All Along the Watchtower" and you have just added 30 seconds per mile to your time! Total time was maybe 30 minutes, most of which was spent finding the unit and building a super-cool playlist to run by.

As they say, the morning always comes and I was up before the dawn to great it. I checked the battery; 2/3<sup>rd</sup> down from the summer's use, but plenty to get me through the day. It makes efficient use of its single AAA battery, providing hours upon hours of music and media storage. When the USB is plugged in it takes power from there, rather than burning up the alkaline; a good thing since I'm pretty indecisive when it comes to picking music.

All in all, this little unit is awesome! I'm looking forward to running in the PF Chang marathon coming up this month and maybe the Marine Corps Marathon next October. When the time comes, I know the Sansa® c150 will be up to the task, no question about it.

MSRP is \$109.99  
www.sandisk.com

### Logitech mm28 Speakers

Over the last year I've had the chance to review a lot of products for our publication, with a few notable standouts. One of these was the Logitech® mm28™ speaker module designed for MP3 players, laptops, portable devices of all kinds, or pretty much anything with a standard 3.5mm stereo input jack.

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## REVIEWS

*(Continued from page 9)*

It is rare when a product so completely meets the design objective so well and yet manages to sacrifice nothing to style or quality. The mm28™ is an amplified speaker unit that has a forward facing bass and rear facing tweeter setup that provide realistic and rich sound image quality well out of proportion to its extremely compact and lightweight form factor. The transparent polycarbonate base folds forward to cover the bass driver for transport, making it only about 1 ¼ inch thick and something over a pound when loaded with its 4 AA batteries. There is an input for an AC adaptor though with over 45 hours of usable battery life, I rarely had occasion to use it. The stereo input cable is tucked away in the back of the unit when not in use making for a streamlined and compact unit in transport.

My first experience was while hosting a little in-dorm get-together. We had all been in Istanbul for a week or so and were pretty well tapped out on culture. There's only one cure...cheesy 80's action movies! 2000 round bursts with Jesse "the body" Ventura's mini-gun, Arny's witty one-liners, multiple diesel assisted explosions, and the true depth and meaning of Carl Whethers' deceitful betrayal of the team in Predator© were brought to glorious life by the mm28™ system! I was impressed and so was everyone else. So much so that I found myself without the speakers, frequently until the batteries went dead while others in our group tried them out. I have no doubt that they bought a set of their own when they got home.

Next up was the combination of the SanDisk™ Sansa® 150 MP3 player with the speaker unit. Despite the low power output of the portable MP3 player and radio receiver, the amplifier and audio circuitry of the mm28™ was more than enough to make for another great dorm room experience. We listened in boisterous anticipation as the US team was eliminated from the 2006 World Cup...jeering every single unfair call the ref's made. Despite our best efforts to be unruly, the speakers never failed to outdo us. It was a sore day for the US soccer team, but a great day for Logitech.

Last but not least, the unit accompanied me paired with an XM2go™ portable XM radio receiver. My



wife and I took a camping trip in the desert outside Tucson as a reward for our academic success of the last semester, and this combination came with us. As before, the unit functioned reliably and performed exceptionally. Not a single coyote that did not appreciate the musical styling of The Rolling Stones stayed near our campsite that night!

Everyone I've displayed this little gem to has remarked at its portability and impressive sound quality. For me, it is probably one of the single most useful electronic accessories for the person who likes to take their music and media with them. Logitech would do well to market this unit to college students who have to live in austere surrounds (like dorm rooms), and at \$59.00 retail it's affordable to the Ramen set. I cannot wait to see what Logitech™ does next to improve on this product.

MSRP is \$59.00  
www.logitech.com



# DUDE, YOU CAN DO IT!

## HOW TO BUILD A SWEET PC

By Bayle Emlein  
Accidental Techie and sometime screwdriver jockey

When I first looked at the title of this book I hummed. As it happens, none of my current projects is taxing my (computer) system. It wouldn't be maxed out, even if I've started acting like 'rest' is a four-letter word. And I'm too busy getting things done with it to think of building or rebuilding my system right now.

But then I let the book fall open, and thumbed through a few pages. Clear diagrams; screen shots so sharp I can read them; supportive marginal notes with real information; headings clearly mark each topic; concise, literate paragraphs; lots of humor which doesn't get patronizing. This is how I wish all manuals were written. In the meantime, this is the book I want to hand to each person who tells me they 'want to learn all about my computer' and also to the folks who are having a hard time keeping RAM distinguished from ROM.

In the course of telling the reader what s/he needs in order to build a computer, Creacy and Vicencio define each component. They explain how it functions in the system as a whole, the advantages and disadvantages of various options. They name names, suggesting brands and vendors. This part is likely to make the book obsolete quickly. Alternately, it could result in a second edition shortly after Vista makes

starting over more sensible than upgrading for many of us.

The one thing that this book doesn't have that it cries out for is a web site of its very own. It would be so much more logical than many book-related web sites that I have seen.

There's [www.dudecomputers.com](http://www.dudecomputers.com),

which is mostly about Darrel and Carlito's business building systems for others. Their site includes the book, but if it has a forum, I didn't find it. Readers, or the authors, could add newly released products or newly discovered uh-oh's. New web sites with great prices for components could be noted, and defunct sites could be eliminated.

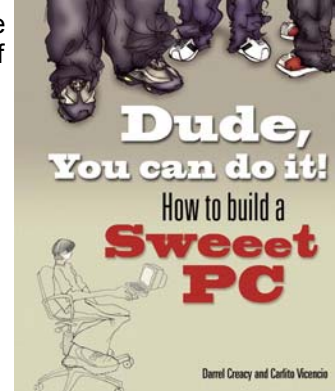
The second edition would practically write itself. And maybe it will come with a title that speaks to the wider audience that could benefit from taking a peek. This book could easily turn into a text for computer repair programs just as well as being a useful library reference tool. Like the dictionary, you don't need to read the whole thing. Just look up what you need to know now. The modular organization reduces the level of intimidation for newbies. The large number of clear photos help, too.

I wish I had had this book when I was teaching Beginning Computers. The clear pictures alone of all those places where you shouldn't, or can't, put your fingers are worth it. A total rebuild is still in my fuzzy future, but when the fog lifts and it's time to match chipsets to motherboards, the first thing I'll do after pulling Dude off the shelf will be to check to see if there's a newer edition or a blog with comments on the components and vendors I've already seen here in print.

PS: You don't have to be a Dude to read and use this book.

Dude, You can do it! How to build a Sweet PC  
By David Creacy and Carlito Vicencio  
ISBN: 978-0-321-33416-9  
\$24.99

[www.peachpit.com](http://www.peachpit.com)



**The Little Dude . . .**

- ▶ Believes that smaller is better
- ▶ Wants to build a powerful PC fast
- ▶ Is a regular attendee at your local LAN party
- ▶ Does not leave home without it—the PC, that is

**Sweet!**

The best place to view any of the products mentioned in this book and learn more about their specifications is at the respective manufacturers' Web sites. Keep in mind, however, that most manufacturers do not sell directly to the public, and if they do, they usually don't have the best price.

Where's the best place to buy parts? Well, if you're just buying individual parts, we've had good luck with [www.newegg.com](http://www.newegg.com), [www.tigerdirect.com](http://www.tigerdirect.com), and [www.zipzoomfly.com](http://www.zipzoomfly.com). Of course, you can always just get one of our preconfigured Dude Kits at [www.dudecomputers.com](http://www.dudecomputers.com) and not worry about piecing your computer together or trying to match up parts. If you choose this route, you'll see that we do it all for you—we take the guess work and the headaches out of choosing all the right components—all you have to do is build the thing!

COMPONENT	RECOMMENDED PRODUCT
Processor	AMD Athlon 64 3400+ (socket 754)
Small Form Factor bare-bones system	Shuttle XPC SN85G4 (socket 754)
Memory	1 GB High Performance OCZ PC3200 DDR
Video card	PowerColor Radeon 9800 Pro
Hard drive	Maxtor 80 GB SATA
Optical drive	Optorite 16x dual layer DVD burner
Sound card	Integrated
Modem	Not recommended
Operating system	Windows XP Home Edition
Monitor	Shuttle XP17 17-inch portable LCD
Input devices	Logitech Cordless MX Duo
Speakers	Altec Lansing VS2120

Product listings and prices were accurate at the time this book was published. For the most up-to-date products and prices, please see our Web site at [www.dudecomputers.com](http://www.dudecomputers.com).

## THE DEALS GUY

*(Continued from page 1)*

cream, one sherbet and one soft ice cream daily with all the trimmings, and plenty of other deserts. All over the ship were stands holding sterilization cream for your hands. Most of them were used voluntarily, but when you entered the dining room, an attendant squirted it into your hand as you entered. I was impressed with their efforts to prevent sickness, and I washed my hands quite frequently.

The entertainment was top notch each evening, always something to look forward to. There was only one evening without entertainment, but that was the big barbecue party by the pool, complete with the ice sculpturing, and the food was great. Even our cabin was a nice size and had a king sized bed, a nice sofa and chair. That ship had the largest library I have seen, although it was not a really large ship. The captain said the Volendam had been refurbished nine months ago.

I signed up for time at the Internet Café, but working with their machines was a challenge considering the mouse usually didn't work well and the small curser was hard to follow on any computer I tried. They occasionally had discounts on the service. I bought 100 minutes for \$55. I asked if the Internet service would be a freebie when I took enough cruises, using Princess lines as a comparison. I was told no, and that the free Internet service would soon be ending on Princess Lines since this ISP was taking over as their service provider. Some folks found free Internet service at a couple of ports, but I only found out about it on the ship that night.

Something of interest was that Sprint (our Cell phone provider) had told us we would be able to use our cell phone in the Bahamas and the US Virgin Islands if we set it to roam, but we were surprised when our phones found the Sprint Network when we turned

them on in St. Thomas (a US Virgin Island). We didn't have to worry about any roaming charges and had a full signal. A friend had asked us to bring him back some duty-free liquor. Since we knew nothing about prices for it, we were able to call our friend while inside the store in St. Thomas to confirm the best prices. Carrying the heavy bottles around while shopping was another story though.



Bob Click  
The Deals Guy

### \*Deal Reminder

The Medistick deal should still be good this month so don't wait any longer. Click on <http://www.medistick.ch/en/contact/> and mention the DealsGuy column in the 'comments' area.

Dave Whittle's discount on the Lenova Laptops may still be good. Simply call Lenovo's user group inside sales rep, Isaac Williams, directly for help in configuring your system, or to get answers to your questions. Call 1-877-338-4465, Option 1, Extension 6322.

I read an interesting article in Information Week magazine about a sophisticated attack on E-Trade and TD Ameritrade that resulted from identity theft. You might find it interesting. <http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml;jsessionid=QHSZ4AFSOS4R4QSNDLPCKHSCJUNN2JVN?articleID=193402954&queryText=Larry+Greenemeier>

I haven't tried the items below and descriptions are in their own words, so do your homework if anything interests you.

\*Another Tool For Restoring Your MS Office Files Smart PC Solutions Inc. announces the release of Smart Data Recovery, the newest freeware utility to restore MS Office documents, photos, music and many other types of files. You just type a path, and Smart Data Recovery will search for deleted files and folders automatically. Once Smart Data Recovery finds erased files, it shows their name, date, time and attributes.

Smart Data Recovery works with different data storage devices, such as hard disk drives (IDE, ATA, SATA and SCSI), flash cards, multimedia cards, USB drives, PC cards, memory sticks, secure digital cards and floppy disks. It handles zip files and files on your digital camera. It also restores all files and folders on a disk drive that, according to the Windows notifications, can't be accessed. The utility supports FAT, FAT16, FAT32 and NTFS, and is compatible with Microsoft Windows NT/2000/XP/2003. The program can also remove the data related to deleted files by just clicking the "Wipe" button. Therefore, nobody will be able to recover

*(Continued on page 13)*

## THE DEALS GUY

*(Continued from page 12)*

your personal information and use it in their own interests. The program has a multilingual interface that supports English, German, Spanish, French and Italian.

Smart Data Recovery is free at [http://www.smartpctools.com/data\\_recovery/](http://www.smartpctools.com/data_recovery/), but here is a special offer! Smart PC Solutions, Inc. offers user group members a 50% discount on their other software products. It says FACUG there, but all UG members can order. Check out the other utilities by Smart PC Solutions, Inc. at the company's web site.

<http://www.smartpctools.com/products>

<http://www.smartpctools.com>

50% discount URL: <http://www.smartpctools.com/FACUG.html>

Mailing Address: Smart PC Solutions, Inc., 901 N. Pitt Str., Suite 325, Alexandria, VA 22314, USA

### \*Help For Your PIM

Copy2calendar minimizes the time and effort to create a calendar entry in a personal information manager such as Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes or Palm Desktop. When you receive an email with the date and time of an upcoming event, you just highlight the text, press Ctrl+C twice, and that's it! A new calendar entry is created. Copy2calendar recognizes all the myriad of formats of date and time that a human reader understands. It accommodates European (day/month/year) and American (month/day/year) conventions. Copy2calendar is able to find date and time specifications in 13 languages including English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch and Swedish.

You can easily extract date and time from a wide variety of sources: mail software, web browser, office applications, and with Copy2calendar, you will never forget or confuse time of an event. Copy2calendar runs under Windows 2000/Windows XP. It is free for noncommercial use, but Registration on LoquiSoft is required. Licenses for commercial use are available at \$24.95 (USD). A fully functional 30-day free evaluation version of Copy2calendar is available from [http://LoquiSoft.com/copy2calendar\\_setup.exe](http://LoquiSoft.com/copy2calendar_setup.exe) (1.6Mb)

Product page link: <http://loquisoft.com/copy2calendar/>

E-mail: [werner.noska@loquisoft.com](mailto:werner.noska@loquisoft.com)

Company website: <http://loquisoft.com/index.php?lang=en&page=&sec>

### \*How About A FREE Plugin For PhotoShop!

SibCode has released the newest version of Icon Plugin for Photoshop. This plug-in enhances Adobe Photoshop with an ability to export and import Windows icons (.ico). The use of the plug-in eliminates the need for intermediate files and additional icon editors. In addition to Adobe Photoshop, the plug-in can work with Elements (? Maybe Photoshop Elements), AfterEffects, Premiere, PhotoDeluxe, Corel PhotoPaint, PaintShop Pro, Painter.

Icon Plugin for Photoshop supports multi-format icons, transparency and semi-transparency, and allows making icons that are compatible with Microsoft Windows XP and Vista. The plug-in also supports non-standard icons of different sizes and color resolutions, including monochrome, 16 colors, 256 colors, 24-bit True Color, and 32-bit True Color with semi-transparency.

Icon Plugin for Photoshop is compatible with all versions of Microsoft Windows and all versions of Adobe Photoshop, including 3.0-7.0, CS, and CS2. The product is absolutely free.

Product page link: <http://sibcode.com/icon-plugin/index.htm>

Screenshot: <http://sibcode.com/icon-plugin/scr.png>

Download link: <http://www.sibcode.com/downloads/icon-plugin.zip>

E-mail: [pr@sibcode.com](mailto:pr@sibcode.com)

Web: <http://www.sibcode.com>

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com). Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>.

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I call that bold talk from a four-eyed fat man.

LS MFT

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