

April -
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ROM is issued
six-times
a year to
members of the
Guildford PC
User Group
All Contributions
to the Editor
Tony Hawes
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ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

Time again for the Annual General Meeting of the Group

In accordance with the rules, individual committee members will explain their past years' activities and the treasurer will present the accounts. Committee members of the Guildford PC User Group will stand down and an election of a new committee will take place.

If you have any points that you think should be raised at the AGM, please let the Chairman know before the meeting (his contact details on page 2).

This is the opportunity to help guide the group in the months ahead. Please let your requirements or wishes be known to the Chairman or a member of the committee. Remember, if you don't volunteer, things will remain the same and some work may not even get done.

Macro Express

Following the AGM Paul Kuzmin will be talking about and demonstrating the capabilities of Macro Express, software that does your macro writing for you.

Magix

...and finally to celebrate 15-years in the computer business Magix have presented the Group with a selection of their software that can

be won in an easy to enter competition. Only available to paid-up members present at the AGM — see page 4 for details of what you can win.

Review of the Year 2009— 2010

We started 2009 with the news that the charity "Disability Challengers" who had taken over management of the hall where we meet from Surrey County Council had raised the rent quite substantially. As a result it was agreed at the AGM held in May 2009 that we would restrict our meetings to nine a year — missing out the holiday months of July and August as they tended to be sparsely attended anyway and the January meeting. Take your mind back to this January and had we held a meeting on the second Monday of January, we would have been well and truly snowed in!

As in previous years we've had a good selection of soft and hardware reviews and my thanks to members who've carried them out either by writing about them for ROM or demonstrating them at our meetings.

Monday 20th April 2009 - Crazy Talk 5

Laurence Fenn gave a demonstration of Reallusion's Crazy Talk 5. This program can take a photo and turn it into a talking animation. He showed how you mark the defining features on a face and then import a sound file to animate to. You can add background music and move the features on the face as well as add effects and objects like glasses, hats or a moustache. As the

(Continued on page 2)

ROM is now only available as a full-colour .pdf download from the Group web page at:
www.guildfordpcusergroup.co.uk

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
12th April 2010 at 7.45 p.m.**

**Annual General Meeting
Followed by a Demo of
Macro Express and Competition
for Magix Prizes**

Committee members will present their annual reports, will stand-down and a new committee needs to be elected.

Following the AGM Paul Kuzmin will demonstrate some of the features of Macro Express. The evening will finish with a competition to win some software donated by Magix — see page 4 for details.

Spread the word and please bring a friend — coffee, tea & chocolate biscuits are free.

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday
of each month at 7.45pm at the
Stoughton Youth Club and Community
Centre (opposite "The Royal" — Pub)
Worplesdon Road (A322), Guildford.**

Forthcoming Meetings

Monday 10th May 2010.

Touch-screen computers. We will have an Acer touch-screen laptop on show which you can try out for yourself followed by a talk by Bryce McCrerrick, former director of engineering at the BBC, about the government's proposal to replace FM Radio with DAB in 2015.

Monday 14th June 2010.

In arrangement, but possibly a demo of Corel PaintShop Pro X3.

Monday 12th July 2010.

Summer break — no meeting.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries or questions about the Guildford PC User Group and its activities please contact the following members of the committee:

Chairman (and Editor)

Tony Hawes

For Contact details see the entry under Editor (below).

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(this site contains many of the reviews that have appeared in ROM)

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Meeting Room Key Holder

Tony Hawes

Details below

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whole process can take a while to create, he played some files he created earlier, like a gorilla singing Phil Collin's "In The Air Tonight" and also his niece's dog Ozzy singing "Take Me Out" (by Franz Ferdinand). YouTube has quite a few videos created with this software, and you can create video files in a variety of formats, included mobile phone files and flash video files.

Monday 11th May 2009 - AGM and Epson Scanner

We held our annual general meeting and Francis Jacques was re-elected treasurer, Paul Kuzmin secretary and Tony Hawes the chairman and editor of ROM magazine. The treasurer said that the subscription to the club would remain at £20 but this would not quite sustain us in through the next year. The membership had fallen quite drastically and as the landlords insisted that the charge for our hire of the hall for the night could not be reduced below the existing £36, it was decided that we would miss the January and July meetings as well as the August meeting so that we meet nine times a year. This was proposed by Kevin Kibbey and was seconded by general agreement and a show of hands. With just nine meetings we should be able to cope without raising the subscription. There was also discussion about whether a different venue could be found but this might be more a longer term objective. The University of Surrey was one considered location.

Tony then went on to demonstrate an Epson scanner - not the one that he had hoped to be lent by Epson, but his own Epson Perfection 4990 photo instead. He demonstrated the various masks for transparencies and negatives as well as the very good OCR capability of Abby Fine Reader. His laptop was running the first release candidate for Windows 7 and seemed to function perfectly well. We all admired the photo restoration qualities of Epson's software that comes with the scanner, in particular the restoration of badly faded colour transparencies with a pronounced pink cast to near true colours, and all at the click of a mouse, without the intervention of Photoshop or PaintShop Pro was quite amazing.

Monday 8th June 2009 - Improve Your Photo Taking

John Childs presented an interesting evening discussing his photography hobby using Canon cameras and various lenses which he manages to wield without a tripod. All these lenses are zoom lenses apart from a 50 mm traditional fixed lens and he mentioned that fixed lenses are actually more expensive than zoom lenses. He discussed the difference between JPEG for every day use and RAW images for special pictures that can have a lot more processing done in Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro. He also gave a number of useful tips for our summer holidays such as avoiding putting the subject in the middle of the picture and much better to put in one of the outer 1/3 sections. This tends to make the picture look more dynamic. Also if the subject is moving in

especially sporting pictures it is a good idea to leave a space in front of the subject to move into which looks much more natural than the subject heading out of frame. In animal shots he generally aimed for the eyes and blurred the background and often crops the picture to focus especially on the animal. He said the blurring the background was very difficult for small cameras to achieve.

Another mistake in photos was not to include a focal point in many landscapes that draws the eye. The timing of pictures was also thought to be essential in landscape pictures with dawn and dusk being the best times. It is also good to give an object of sense of scale in the case of statues and monuments especially. In wildlife scenes it is best to go in as close as possible. He also favoured the use of diagonals such as in a picture of motorbike racing and he showed as some successful panning where the motorbike was in focus and the background was blurred with the motion. He then brought out his spectacular prints which looked incredibly lifelike, my favourite being the otter. I was really impressed with the quality and it is good to see such enthusiasm.

No Meetings in July and August

Monday 14th September 2009

Paul Kuzmin showed his 1-TByte Linux Ripservers NAS (Network storage System), Linn Akurate DS (Digital Streamer) and speakers showing how the whole system worked together. Paul explained how this kit has enabled him to archive his entire CD collection, some DVD movies and his pictures.

Monday 12th October 2009

This month's meeting consisted of three items:

1. A short practical introduction to some of the new and interesting features of Windows 7 which went on sale 10-days later.
2. We then saw three short introductory videos from Corel showing what's new in Corel's new, cheap and easy-to-use Digital Studio 2010 suite of programs.
3. Laurence Fenn then gave a practical demonstration of Corel Digital Studio 2010 in action.

Monday 9th November 2009

Two items on show this evening:

1. Tony Hawes brought along his laptop with Windows 7 64-bit installed and demonstrated and commented on the features in Windows 7 which appealed to him most: Aero snap to pin items to the sides of your desktop. Aero Peek for temporarily minimising (clearing) the icons on the desktop and Libraries for quick access to documents, pictures, music and videos.
2. He then moved on to a demonstration of Nuance PDF Converter Professional 6 in action with his Epson Perfection V700 Photo scanner doing the scanning. He demonstrated the main features of the program which included how to create, convert, edit and share PDF files. At a fraction of the cost of Adobe Acrobat, PDF Converter 6 was shown to be a worthy and cost effective alternative.

Monday 14th December 2009 - Christmas Quiz

Our Christmas Festive meeting on 14th December 2009 consisted as usual of our annual Christmas Quiz. A splendid selection of donated "goodies" was up for grabs (the most expensive being worth over £200

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retail). We had joint highest score winners in the shape of Paul Kuzmin and Mike Bray who both managed to score 14 questions right out of 20. Being Christmas we ensured everyone attending the meeting had a warm mince pies and went away with a present!

Monday 8th February 2010 - Gizmos and Gadgets

At the meeting on Monday 8th February of Gizmos and Gadgets we had a demonstration of a variety of items.

1. This included the Cygnett FM Transmitter, ideal for streaming your iPod or MP3 music to your in-car stereo to a vacant spot in the FM band. Also ideal if you have a mini-DAB radio and want to listen to DAB stations on your in-car FM stereo.
2. Also shown were two Hard-disk enclosures from Sandberg:
3. Multi hard Disk Box 3.5" for IDE or SATA 3.5" hard disks c/w PSU.
4. Multi Hard Disk Box 2.5" lets you use a 2.5" IDE or SATA hard disk as a portable external hard disk. The box connects to a computer either via USB 2.0 or eSATA, giving transfer speeds of up to 3 GB per second (IDE hard disks cannot, however, be connected with eSATA). Both Boxes come with an adapter bracket to convert an internal SATA port on a desktop's motherboard to an eSATA port. As an added bonus an eSATA cable is supplied with both boxes.
5. Doro MemoryPlus was demonstrated to show how a bleeping receiver with key-ring can be attached to hard to find keys or whatever. One press of the transmitter and the key-ring receiver beeps to show its whereabouts — ideal for older folk with short-term memories who may have forgotten where they've put essential items, like keys for example.
6. We saw introductory videos from Corel showing the features of their just released latest versions of their popular photo and video editing programs: Corel PaintShop Pro X3 and Video Studio Plus X3.
7. We also had a peek as some instructional videos of some other newly released programs.

Overall the February meeting was an interesting and informative evening with a variety of new and fascinating items on show.

Monday 8th March 2010 - Laurence Fenn — Graphical Adventures

First Tony showed us a Ricoh CX2 with built in video. Power DVD 10 out soon 3D compatible - need glasses 3D and a special 3D graphics card.

Laurence's talk followed giving the history of graphical adventure games,

including:

- 1982 Philosopher's Quest on BBC micro and was text based.
- 1980 Mystery House on Apple 2.
- 1978 Atari console Adventure - 2D with Easter egg required 4k of memory 128 bytes.
- King's Quest interactive game series from Sierra 1984 - 1998 each improving in graphics eventually 3D we saw a video about the making of KQ6.
- Prince of Persia 1989 - 2003 Sands of time ongoing realistic movement 3D eventually - Disney releasing a film based on the game in May 2010.
- 1990 Secret of Monkey Island (Lucas Film games) - pick up objects from one side to move to the other side was re-released in 2009 with speech. Involved character who undergoes trials to become a pirate.
- Another World Delphin software 1991 & 2006 versions on many consoles and DOS - difficult game to win without cheat codes.
- Alone in the Dark 1992-2001 about a detective up to Win 95 - had a movie made that was a flop.
- LucasArts games 1992-93 include Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, Day of the Tentacle & Sam & Max. We saw a Fate of Atlantis demonstration.
- 1993 Myst - Apple Mac 3D background different endings. Riven and further Myst versions.
- The 7th Guest - 1st game for PC CD ROM and Mac and Phillips CD-i. Sequel 11th hour 1995 all puzzle games with videos in between, the latter on 4 CDs.
- 1993 Return to Zork - a couple of famous actors involved was combining real motion pictures with cartoon animation.
- Under a Killing Moon - a Tex Murphy adventure with two sequels, 1994-1998 with famous actors. On up to 6 CDs!
- 1995 Phantasmagoria - By Sierra on 7 CDs based on The Shining - banned in Australia! Uses objects picked up to progress through the adventure.
- 1995 Full Throttle by LucasArts - cartoon-like game with Mark Hamill
- 1997 The Curse of Monkey Island - improved sound interactive cartoon.
- 1998 1st 3D graphics Grim Fandango (I loved that game for its humour and super graphics) was a commercial flop so LucasArts people all left to join different companies.
- 2001 Runaway A Road Adventure. Spanish version detailed 3D graphics.
- 2006 Scratches. Very dark imagery and spooky music very well done but disturbing.
- 2008 A Vampire Story. Ex-LucasArts people as well - quite humorous - sequel

awaited.

- 2009 Tales of Monkey Island - more from Guybrush the hero made for Windows & Wii. It is released in sequels that form episodes.
- 2009 Machinarium - large Czech Flash game with a little robot and thought bubbles.
- 2010 The Whispered World - about a clown and a pet worm.

He then explained how to play the games on a modern PC. Four ways, firstly, check for Windows updates for games. Some like The 7th Guest, Under a Killing Moon, and 11th Hour have updates that will run the game in Windows instead of DOS. Some games have been released on Great Old Games which have been tweaked to run in Windows and are cheap. Myst: Masterpiece Edition \$5.99, Simon the Sorcerer \$5.99, Phantasmagoria \$9.99.

Secondly, Microsoft offer a free download of Virtual PC, which allows you to set up an environment to run the game. MS-DOS 6.2 is currently free from Microsoft as well, or you can use FreeDOS.

Thirdly, If it is a LucasArts game, Simon the Sorcerer 1 & 2, Return to Zork, The 7th Guest, King's Quest 1-4, Goblins 1-3, Disc World, Space Quest 1-3, Flight of the Amazon Queen, Beneath a Steel Sky then ScummVM is a program that will run the game using its own code, so it can run a game. Versions for Mac and Pocket PC available as well.

Lastly, Any other game can be run using DOSBox 0.73. A free download that sets up an environment with virtual drives that can be mapped to any folder. If ISO images are made of the CDs needed, these can be mount so you don't need any of them when you play the game. The CD can be changed with a keystroke. It can be quite complex to set up, so there are front ends to DOS Box that help you set up the game.

If you want to search for old games, here are some sites:

<http://www.dosgames.com/gameindex.php>

<http://www.dosgamesarchive.com>

<http://www.classicdosgames.com>

<http://www.abandonia.com>

<http://hotud.org>

As a final note, if anyone saw the video files Laurence played before the demo, "The Hero" and the "Jazz Hamster" they can be seen online.

We Want Your Input!

Don't forget we want your input! If you have particular expertise that you want to write about or demonstrate, please get in touch with the Editor — thanks.

Win! — Magix Titles up for Grabs!

15 Magix titles up for grabs!

Magix has been making music, video and photo software for the past 15 years. Many a DJ must have cut their teeth on its easy-to-use PC-based sampling and knob-twiddling packages, such as Music Maker Rock Edition, Dance Edition and Hip Hop Edition.

Other notable Magix programs let you make playlists from your music collection, while programs such as Rescue Your Vinyl & Tapes and Rescue Your Videotapes have become firm favourites with those wanting to digitise old video footage or the soundtrack of their youth.

Xtreme PhotoStory, meanwhile, lets you make digital slideshows you can share on CD or DVD, while Magix Web Designer and Magix Video Easy help you to show



off your creativity.

To celebrate 15 years of multimedia magic, Magix has presented us with a collection of its top-selling titles to be used in a competition which will be held at our

April Meeting on 12th April.

To be in with a chance of winning you have to be present at April's meeting and be a fully 2010-2011 paid-up member of the Group.

Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3

Corel's Press Release for the latest version of Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 is dated 26th January, but for reasons unknown the review copy didn't arrive until over two months later on 31st March, so a full review will have to wait to the next issue of ROM. Meanwhile here's what Corel's Press Release tells us about the program.

Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 Delivers New Organisation, Editing and Creative Projects for Today's Digital Photographer

Latest Version of Powerful Photo Editor Meets the Evolving Needs of Photo Enthusiasts

Corel Corporation has announced Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3, the latest version of its renowned photo editing program, that brings advanced photo management, editing and creative tools together to deliver everything the photo enthusiast needs in one package. Combining professional quality tools for organisation and photo editing along with burning, sharing, and for the first time, high definition (HD) video capabilities, Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 has been developed to meet the evolving workflow needs of today's digital photographer.

Complements DSLR Cameras, Provides New Creative Possibilities for Photographers

As high-performance DSLR cameras have become mainstream, hobbyists have a wealth of creative options to explore their passion for photography. But the power of these cameras also presents challenges: amateur photographers are shooting more



images than ever and image file sizes continue to grow, making organisation and management a critical part of the digital photographer's process. With these large collections of images, users need new ways to speed and simplify the selection and enhancement process. They also want to work with the HD video that's now popular in their media mix. Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 stands apart from other applications by combining editing, photo management and creative projects in a unique way.

"Photo enthusiasts are taking advantage of the amazing quality and power of today's DSLR cameras and as a result, they need workflow and editing tools that were previously only available in professional photo applications," said Petter Nordwall, director of product management for Corel PaintShop Photo Pro. "Now with Corel PaintShop

Photo Pro X3, organisation, editing and creative projects have come together in a single, affordable package. Whether you're quickly sorting and rating your favourites out of hundreds of photos or sharing using Facebook or Flickr, it's never been faster to create professional-looking results."

Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 Highlights

- All-new Organizer: The new integrated Organizer includes tools for rating, tagging, locating and quickly touching up image files. The Organizer also makes it easy to select images and view them in multiple ways. In just a few clicks, RAW images can be converted to another format for posting, photo sharing or printing.
- Multi-photo Adjustments: Editing and enhancing is faster than ever now that changes made to an image can be captured and easily applied to multiple photos, removing the tedium of making the same changes over and over again.
- Smart Carver: Quickly achieve impressive results by seamlessly and realistically removing objects and scaling without distorting the image.
- Express Lab: Bringing the most used tools together in one place, the Express lab now adds Colour Balance, Local Tone Mapping, Contrast/Brightness, Sharpen and One Step Noise Removal.
- Camera RAW Lab: Supporting more than 350 RAW formats, the new RAW Lab makes it easy to adjust a variety of settings, such as white balance, exposure, brightness and saturation before processing. Adjustments made to any RAW image can be copied and applied to other

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RAW images in the Organizer.

- **Object Extractor:** It's quick and easy to precisely mask fine image details that are otherwise difficult to preserve – even challenging cases such as fly-away hair, wisps of smoke and tree branches.
- **Project Creator:** This one-stop tool makes it easy to create, edit and share projects. Produce photo books, collages, cards, calendars and photo slide-shows including HD video in a few clicks. Share to YouTube, Facebook or Flickr. Photo projects can also be printed through Corel's online print service.

Familiar Favourites plus New Photo-Painting Features

In addition to a number of new and enhanced features, Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 continues to offer the advanced photo editing power of favourite features including HDR Photo Merge, Local Tone Mapping, Curves and Levels adjustments, Perspective Correction, plus tools including the Learning Center that help new photo enthusiasts get familiar with the application and create great results fast. Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 also includes Corel Painter Photo Essentials 4 to get started with digital art. Offering the unique Auto-Painting palette, Corel Painter Photo Essentials 4 enables users to create a stunningly realistic work of art from a photo in just three easy steps.

Pricing and Availability

Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 is now available. Amazon.co.uk have it listed at £58.97 inc VAT and free delivery.

To download a free, fully featured 30-day trial, please visit www.corel.com/paintshop

COREL VIDEOSTUDIO PRO X3

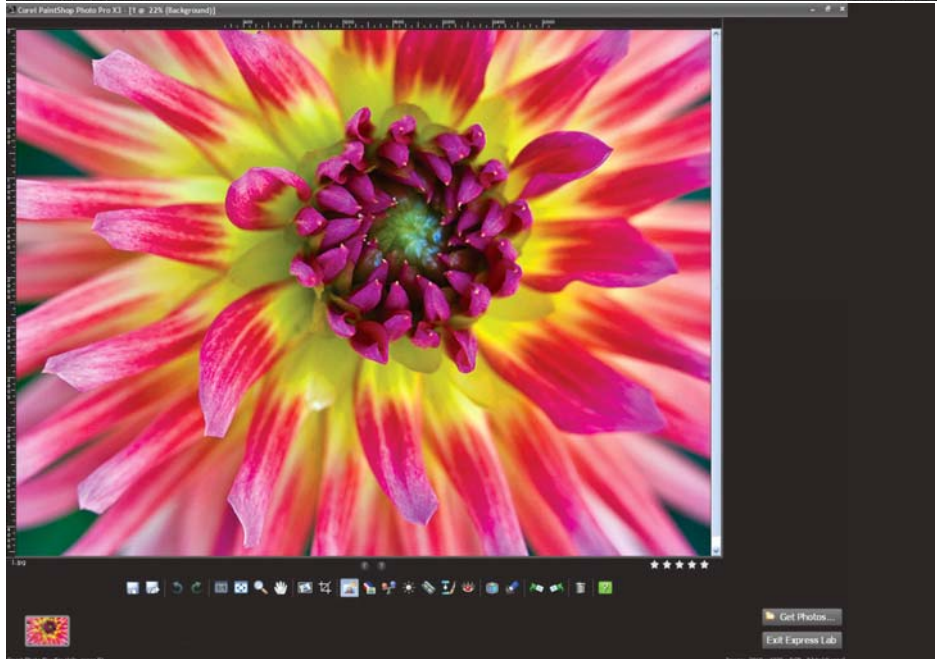
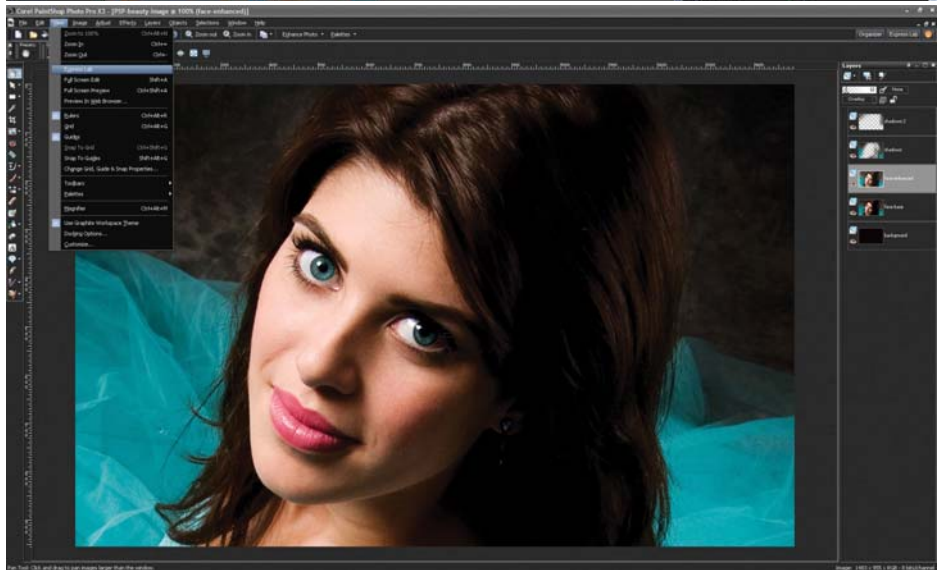
New Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 Offers Exceptional Tools for Video and Media Enthusiasts

Corel also introduced Corel VideoStudio Pro X3. The latest version of Corel's powerful consumer video editing software enables video enthusiasts to easily create professional-looking productions in a simplified and streamlined environment that's driven by maximum speed and performance. Available at a new SRP of £79 for full or £59 for upgrade, Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 can be purchased as an ESD from www.corel.com.

Amazon.co.uk price £58.97.

Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 Highlights

- **Enhanced Support for Multi-core processors:** Users can now experience a significant suite-wide performance



Corel PaintShop Photo Pro X3 Screen Shots: Top to Bottom—Organiser, Editor & Smart Photo Fix

boost as Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 takes advantage of new multi-core processors including the Intel Core i7.

- **General Purpose GPU Acceleration:** New

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GPU acceleration adds speed improvements across the application, delivering new Corel FX effects, 3D transitions, Trim and Multi-trim in real time. Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 dramatically accelerates render times for video editing, transcoding and effects.

- **Enhanced Smart Proxy editing:** Now leveraging both GPU and CPU acceleration, HD content can be edited as easily and smoothly as standard definition — even on midrange PCs.
- **Attribute and media copying:** Now, modifications made to one video clip, photo, title, transition or effect can be copied to another, reducing the time it takes to create a custom, uniform look and feel in movie project elements. Users can also copy media in the Project Timeline and intuitively paste it to a new spot.
- **Online sharing:** In a couple of clicks, video productions can be uploaded to Facebook, Flickr, Vimeo and YouTube.
- **Stunning new visual effects:** Unique visual effects make it possible to turn a video segment or image into a simulated drawing, giving a realistic animated appearance to photo or videos. Users can also choose new multi-track overlay effects and enhanced title effects using new multi-layered graphics compositing tools.
- **Great Audio and Custom Soundtracks:** The new Mood Mapping music generator from SmartSound gives video editors the ability to experiment and con-



trol individual instruments in the available music tracks, creating a unique sound for their production. Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 also now includes two additional audio tracks.

- **Exceptional Content and Third-party Tools:** In addition to the enhancements made throughout the application, Corel VideoStudio Pro X3 offers valuable content and features from third-parties such as NewBlue FX Filters including Detail Enhancer, Active Camera and Picture-in-Picture Animator, high-quality project templates from RevoStock, and Quicktracks from SmartSound

To purchase online or download a free, fully featured 30-day trial, please visit www.corel.com/videostudio.



Corel Video Studio X3 — Screen Shots

Reviews to follow.

Cyberlink PowerDVD 10

[OVERVIEW](#)
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PowerDVD 10

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<input checked="" type="radio"/> Download (122.71 MB)	
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Following on from my limited briefing at the last meeting that Cyberlink was introducing PowerDVD 10. I now have more information about PowerDVD 10's capability that allows you to view videos in 3D on your computer.

CyberLink's most advanced movie and

media player to date, PowerDVD 10 delivers 3D and HD movies on the PC. PowerDVD 10 is a unique universal player that offers the best playback quality available. Whether it is 3D movie content, captured home videos, or your digital music files, PowerDVD 10 lets you access them all

from the same convenient player software, enhancing your experience in all kinds of new ways

Experience Blu-ray movies the way that only PowerDVD 10 can offer: simply unbeat-

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Brilliant Blu-ray



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able quality. Optimized for the latest hardware acceleration technologies from Intel, NVIDIA and AMD, PowerDVD ensures smoother movie performance. PowerDVD 10 launches your Blu-ray movies up to 4X faster too

Blu-ray 3D*



Seeing is believing the kind of life-like imagery that Blu-ray 3D* can deliver, and PowerDVD 10 brings it to life on your PC. Offering the best quality 3D movie experience possible, PowerDVD is compatible with the full range of 3D hardware on the market, including glasses, graphics cards, and monitors

Upscale DVDs and Videos to HD



Enjoy better movie playback quality for both your DVDs and video files with **TrueTheater™ HD** upscaling technology. DVD and media player PowerDVD 10 lets you output to an HDTV in a quality that looks noticeably sharper and clearer. Optimization for hardware acceleration ensures even smoother results.

Play DVDs in 3D



3D movie player PowerDVD 10 takes

you to new heights of visual excellence for standard DVD content. Featuring advanced **TrueTheater™ 3D** technology, PowerDVD converts 2D movies into a spectacular 3D experience. Optimize playback quality for your movie content and hardware.

Better Video Playback



With PowerDVD 10 home videos can be enhanced using **TrueTheater™ Stabilizer** and **TrueTheater™ Noise Reduction** to improve quality as you play. As a universal player, PowerDVD now plays even more formats, gives you access to online movie trailers via MoovieLive, and lets you upload files to YouTube.

Home Theater Music



Supporting the latest music library features of Windows 7, PowerDVD 10 makes it even easier to listen to music from the player you use to enjoy your movies. Create playlists of favourite tunes. Use **TrueTheater™ Surround** technology to optimize your audio for home theatre and PC hardware. Sounds great!

High-Definition Audio



3D and HD movie player PowerDVD 10 lets your ears enjoy the ultimate movie experience too, with support for high-definition audio formats from Dolby Digital and DTS. Support for HDMI 1.3a delivers the purity of lossless HD audio via a single convenient cable to your home theatre system.

Create movie reviews that other users can read and play using PowerDVD 10. MovieMarks combine bookmarks and review comments and can be shared online via

Movie Reviews & Live Comments



MoovieLive.com. Meanwhile, Live Comments let you post your opinions to Facebook, Twitter and MoovieLive while your movie is playing.

3D TV is Coming!

By Geoff Arnold

Panasonic, Samsung, Sony and Toshiba are preparing to launch by the summer to coincide with the release of more 3D films and the release of Sky 3D broadcasts. Its rumoured pricing will range between £2000 - £3000 depending on the technology used and all of the models will require special glasses.

What is 3DTV?

3DTV is a display technology which creates the illusion of a third dimension, allowing viewers to enjoy high quality, high definition three-dimensional movies, television programs and video games in the comfort of their own homes.

How does it work?

There are three different formats of 3DTV, however all formats basically work in the way. Two separate images are broadcast simultaneously of the same scene, with one image slightly to the side of the other. When viewed with special 3D glasses the viewer will perceive that these two images are one single 3D image.

3DTV FORMATS

Auto StereoScopic 3D

This form of 3DTV can be watched without special glasses, however you need to sit or stand directly opposite the TV. This type of TV is already available; however it is only really suitable for commercial use such as a shop display.

Passive 3D

Anaglyph (Colour filtered) glasses

Passive 3D TV is already in existence and can be viewed through a normal TV using a pair of anaglyph (colour filtered) glasses which are relatively cheap. Channel 4 showed a series of 3D films at Christmas 2009 that needed coloured filtered glasses (that were given out free by Sainsburys). Colour is generally very poor and image ghosting is a real

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problem.

Polarised (Angle filtered) glasses

The other type of Passive TV requires Polarised (Angle filtered) glasses. This technology is currently employed in cinemas showing films in 3D and will be used by Sky in TV broadcasts which will begin later this year. Image quality is a lot better, although some ghosting still exists.

Active 3D

Active 3DTV offers the best quality experience for the viewer, although the LCD Shutter Glasses required to view it are likely to be relatively expensive, especially if you buy each member of the family a pair. As this technology requires the glasses to be synchronized with the refresh rate of the screen, you will need a wireless dongle or wired glasses to sync with the TV.

When will 3DTVs be available to buy?

A number of big TV manufacturers including Samsung, Sony, LG and Panasonic will be launching 3DTV products into the UK market this year, with the first products

expected to hit the shops in April.

Will I be able to buy 3D Blu-ray and DVD discs?

The next development is **3D Blu-ray players which will play new 3D Blu-ray content**, and certain manufacturers will be launching Blu-ray players that can upscale standard 2D into 3D! It's expected that Panasonic, Samsung, Sony and Toshiba will launch their 3D Blu-ray players mid-late 2010, with Sony and Samsung also launching Home Cinema Systems complete with 3D Blu-ray players. Sony, Disney and Dreamworks all have plans to release 3D Blu-ray movies this year; however titles will be limited in the early days.

When will they start to broadcast 3D programmes?

Sky launched Europe's first 3D television channel with coverage of the Premier League match between Manchester United and Chelsea on 3rd April. Sky 3D will show at least five more Premier League games live in the UK before the end of the season, as well as the Football League play-off finals at the end of May.

Although relatively few members of the public have bought 3D TVs so far, BSkyB

revealed that more than 1,000 pubs and clubs across the UK and Ireland have signed up for the service.

"It's fitting that one of the biggest games of the season will be the launch pad for our pioneering Sky 3D service," said Brian Lenz of Sky. "With 3D, seeing really is believing, so it's great news that over 1,000 pubs across country will be able to show the magic of 3D to their customers."

Sky 3D plans to add other sports programming as well as films, documentaries, entertainment and arts programmes later in the year.

The channel will be introduced at no extra cost for subscribers to Sky's top channels and HD pack.

In January, Sky became the first broadcaster in Europe to air a 3D sporting event by carrying Manchester United's 3-1 win at Arsenal in nine pubs across London, Manchester, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Dublin.

Broadcasts to home will come later in the year and will require a Sky+HD box as well as a 3DTV.

Late PS. As BBC and ITV hold the UK rights to broadcast June 2010 World Cup matches in the UK, there will be no Sky 3D broadcasts of matches in 3D.



The advertisement features the Nero logo at the top left with the tagline 'simply enjoy'. On the left is an image of the Nero Multimedia Suite 10 software box. The main text reads: 'Introducing nero Multimedia Suite 10. Three Products - One Solution. Famous for burning, Built for backup, Created for video.' A green curved banner on the right says 'Available on April 12th'. At the bottom, there are two red buttons: 'Pre-order' and 'Upgrade Now'. Below the buttons, it states 'Only £59.99*' and 'Only £44.99**'. A small box on the left says 'Be the first to own Nero Multimedia Suite 10! Plus, Pre-order today and receive a special gift: Nero MediaHome 4 (£24.99)! £144.96 Value if bought separately.'

Nero Multimedia Suite 10 is the next generation of in integrated digital media software. It features new cutting-edge functionality that makes creating and enjoying digital media content simple.

Nero MediaHub

The new all-in-one solution for quickly searching, organizing and easy-editing of photo, music and video files.

- Simplified importing, sorting, browsing and playback of your media
- Import from Windows 7 libraries
- Play back music or disc in Windows 7

Thumbnail Toolbar

- Favourite photo-tagging for easy sort and search
- Crop photos with one click
- Infinite undo options for specific layers in your edit history
- Burn from the same window, without having to open multiple applications
- Play instant slideshows from tagged photos or videos
- Create photo slideshows, video slideshows or mix photos and videos in a slideshow and enhance them with an

array of high quality, themed templates

- Arrange and edit photos and videos in a snap with the powerful automatic slideshow creator
- Easy transfer to advanced editing and authoring options in Nero Vision

Nero Vision

Completely updated for advanced editing and authoring to give the best creative control with true multi-track editing and pro effect key-frame handling.

- Advanced Multi-track Video Editor with

(Continued on page 9)

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full overlay control and full effect parameter control via key framing

- Superb new transition effects such as Gradient Mask, Paper Peel, Erosion, Melt
- Apply master effects to entire project for retro and vintage film colour grading effects and much more
- Advanced new video effects such as Pan & Zoom on photos and videos, Chroma Key, Image Matt, Creative Colour, Lens Distortion, Sharpen, Edge Feathering, Earthquake and more
- New audio waveform layout and rubber-banding control for smoothly adjusting sound levels and fades
- Remove background noise for improved audio quality
- Superb HD performance, as well as AVC NVIDIA CUDA support for GPU performance based AVCHD output
- Blu-ray Disc authoring, including 24 progressive frame high quality cinema format
- Use advanced authoring to individually create new graphical objects, new buttons and menus and freely link these with videos
- New and improved content templates - Movie ThemePacks, Superb Photo & Music Samples, and Menu ThemePacks
- Variety of more than 150 new Clipart-Packs to use as overlays in video editing and authoring

Nero StartSmart Knowledge Center

Integrated new tab within Nero StartSmart for manuals, tutorials and more.

- Access to online step-by-step tutorials and manuals



- Access to available add-ons and updates to increase productivity
- Network with My Nero community, sharing blogs and tips with other Nero users

Nero Burning ROM

The award-winning, best-of-breed burning technology with the longest-lasting burn results.

- Nero DiscSpan and Nero DiscMerge to burn oversized files to multiple discs and different disc types
- Windows context menu support for burning, copying and disc information
- Display burning progress in Windows 7 status bar
- Now supports AVCHD and BDMV compilation
- New "Burn Now" button for quick one-step burning

SecurDisc 2.0 Technology

Ensures that burned content is readable regardless of scratches, age or deteriora-

tion.

- Improved life and reliability of data burned to CDs, DVDs, and Blu-ray Discs
- Redesigned user interface
- No longer requires special recorder hardware
- Included support for Blu-ray Disc media
- Nero SecurDisc Viewer works without installation or drivers
- Nero SecurDisc Viewer is automatically included with every burn

Nero BackItUp & Burn

Easily back up photos, music, videos, and documents with state-of-the-art technology that can secure files and protect entire systems from the effects of hard drive crashes, system failures and virus attacks.

- Back up and restore files, folders, drives and your entire system in a few easy steps without having to reconfigure computer settings
- Schedule backups with various methods, compression and protection levels
- One-click Auto backup functions offer advanced storage features that with maximum data security while requiring minimum space and time consumption
- Search within a backup and collect files to restore in one step
- Rest assured that any lost, damaged or deleted data can be effectively recovered and restored.
- Directly sync entire folders between your PC and laptop, to a USB flash drive and to all popular storage media to access files from anywhere.

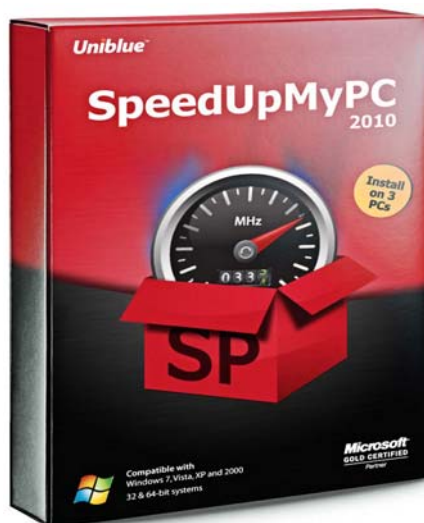
Laurence Fenn's review of Nero 10 arrived just in time and can be seen on page 15 below.

Uniblue SpeedUpMyPC 2010

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

SpeedUpMyPC by Uniblue

First launched in 2003, SpeedUpMyPC has provided a lifeline to countless PC users who have been frustrated by slow start-up and program opening times, frequent freezes and crashes and a general deterioration in computer performance. The software optimizes system settings, deletes junk files and improves RAM and CPU function, injecting a new lease of life into a PC therefore reducing the need for expensive hardware updates. After a system scan to identify files, processes and settings that cause data bottlenecks and slowdowns, SpeedUpMyPC undertakes a series of targeted tweaks to boost system resource management, to optimize system and network settings and to remove junk files that can



bloat a hard drive. <http://www.uniblue.com/>

New features include:

- Compatibility with 32 and 64-bit versions of Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7
- New GUI design reflecting the updated Uniblue brand
- Tweak management console to implement or undo individual tweaks as required
- Enhanced system resource management and advanced speed tools for maximizing power
- New tweaks to optimize system and network settings
- Available in 12 languages: English,

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French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Russian and Japanese

In Use

My review copy was supplied as a downloadable copy with an activation serial number. Download was 5Mb in size and all that was necessary was to save the download, run the .exe file, key in the serial number and that was it.

The initial screen has four self explanatory tabs: Overview, Speed Scan, Manage and Settings (see below)..

Clicking the Start Scan button in the Overview screen, it scans and suggests possible improvements (see Fig. 4 below).

Having implemented the fixes suggested by SpeedUpMyPC 2010, my PC appeared to run that much quicker, but this is my subjective impression because I have a newish and powerful computer, which means I'm not likely to notice any measurable slow-down in my PC's processes. However, if you have a computer that hasn't had a spring clean for a while, SpeedUpMyPC simply and easily removes accumulated detritus that can slow down your PC.

Free Trial

If you are not sure you whether you really need want to purchase SpeedUpMyPC 2010 a free downloadable trial version is available. If you've had your computer for a while it's almost certainly running slower

than it should, in which case Uniblue SpeedUpMyPC 2010 will clean up your PC, optimise its performance and have it operating like new once again, which isn't too bad an idea.

Conclusions

Simple and easy to use, cheap, and if you are worried about security Uniblue is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. It includes a 3-PC, 1-Year licence.

Pricing and Availability

Online (do a Google search) from the usual places for about £14.99. Currently (over Easter) it's available for free as part of a magazine promotion from here:

<http://www.v3.co.uk/downloads/>

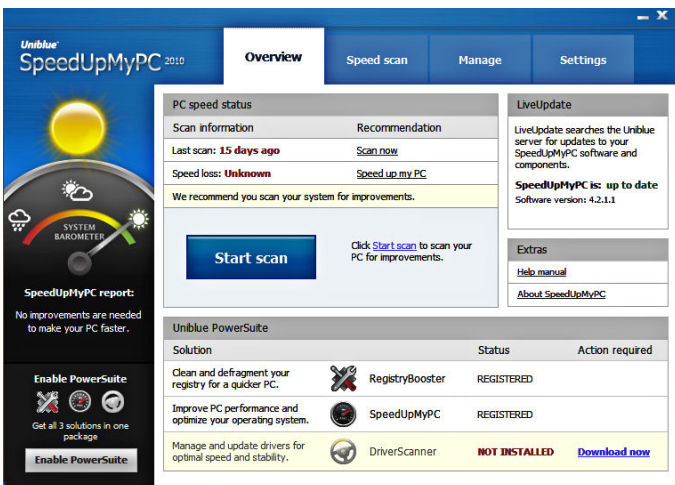


Figure 1: Clicking the Start Scan button, it scans and suggests what could be optimised to improve your PC's performance (see below).

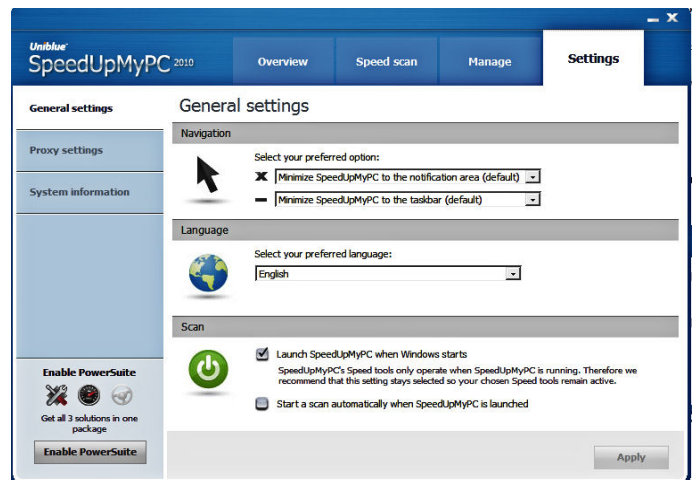


Figure 2: General Settings selection screen.

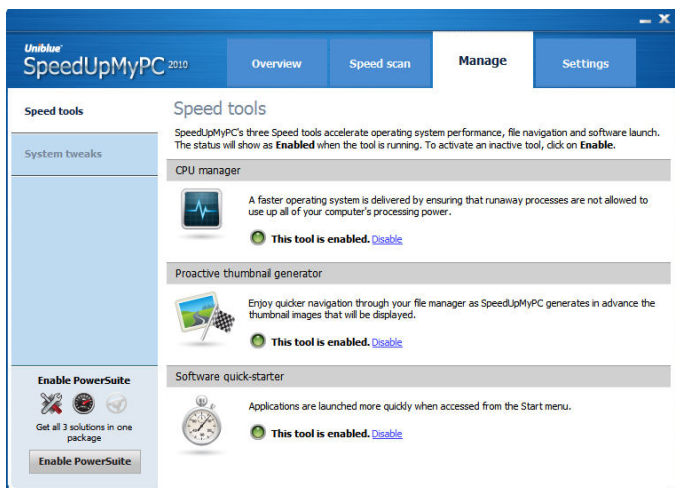


Figure 3: The Manage screen shows selected options.

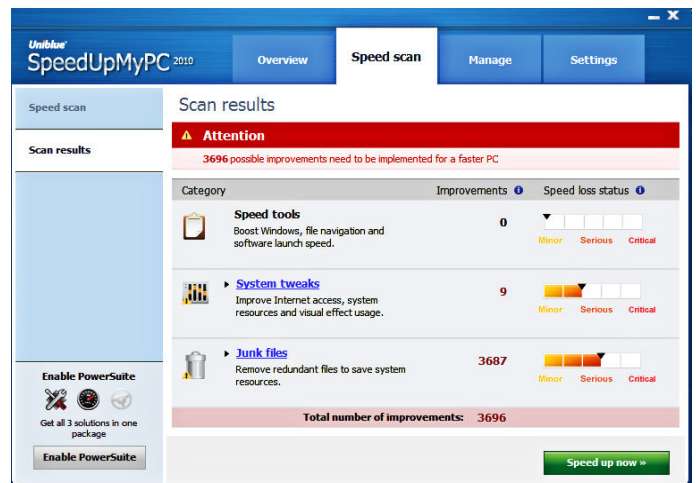


Figure 4: Having done a scan from the Overview screen SpeedUpMyPC shows suggested improvements. In my case 9 System Tweaks (Fig. 5) and removal of 3687 redundant files. (Fig. 6) below.

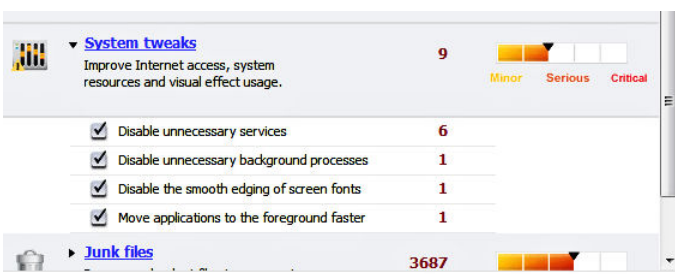


Figure 5: Suggested Tweaks.

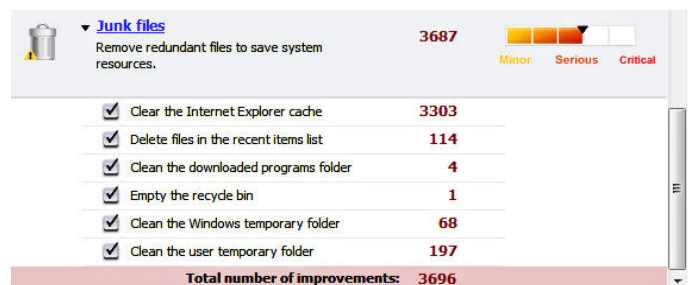


Figure 6: ScanMyPC 2010 recommends removing 3687 files hogging my PC's system resources.

Ricoh CX2 Digital Compact Camera

Reviewed by John Childs ARPS, CPAGB.

Introduction

This is a compact camera with some interesting aspects. It is not as compact as some I have handled but it is still compact enough to slip into a pocket. It comes in black, silver or a fetching two-tone effect and it feels sturdy, well made and is fairly heavy. Alas, it has no optical viewfinder and so the rear screen must be used instead. I personally regret the passing of optical viewfinders and can never get used to holding a camera at arms length in order to view a scene. The screen is 3 inches in size across the diagonal and is of very good quality. The sensor contains just over 9 million pixels. The zoom lens is the equivalent of 28mm to 300 mm on a 35mm camera. This is a very wide range and should cover almost any shooting situation. The max. aperture is F3.5 at the wide angle end and F5.6 at the telephoto end of the lens. I once reviewed a Kodak compact camera which had an extended range to its zoom lens and at the extreme telephoto range I was unable to obtain a sharp image as the camera could not be held steady enough. In the case of the Ricoh camera it has image stabilization built in and this is a great help in keeping the sensor steady whilst taking a picture.

The rate at which the camera can shoot pictures in quick succession is very good indeed at 5 frames per second at the full 9 meg. resolution for up to 15 shots.

This is not a camera for the enthusiast, as neither the aperture nor the shutter speed can be set manually. However, this is made up for slightly by the camera having loads of modes which can be engaged for various types of photography. There are many, many more things that can be tweaked or selected, so much so that the handbook runs to 244 pages! However, I suspect that the sort of person who would buy this camera would not be too concerned about using more than a fraction of the facilities provided.

The review sample takes SD and SDHC memory cards. As my own cameras take Compact Flash cards, I have no SD cards and none were provided with the camera. However, there is an 88MB internal memory and that was sufficient for me to take enough pictures (not all at the same time!) to see what the camera could do.

As well as the facility to take still images, the camera has the ability to take video sequences.

The predecessor of the CX2, the CX1, was released only about six months ago, and the specification of the CX2 is slightly superior. Those who bought a CX1 so recently have every reason to be aggrieved!



In Practice

The camera came with a suite of programs for both Windows and Apple Mac computers. However, the camera produces only JPEGs (in the sRGB colour space) so I was able to load them directly into my copy of Photoshop CS2 and I used this throughout and I did not investigate how well the provided programs performed.

An interesting feature is the ability of the camera to take two images in quick succession at different exposures and then combine them in-camera using the correctly exposed parts of both images. This sort of thing can be done with other cameras by taking two or more images at different exposures in quick succession and then merging the correctly exposed parts of them in an image editing program. The way the Ricoh does it is much more convenient. However, it must be said that

because two images are taken one after the other, it is quite possible to end up with blurred images if the subject is moving quickly enough. The dynamic range of digital camera sensors is not as great as is often necessary and it is so easy to burn out the highlights of a picture so that no detail remains. For example, one of the problems encountered by wedding photographers is the huge contrast between the white of the bride's dress and the black of the groom's suit. Many professional photographers do not get the exposure right and I have seen the results when they try to obtain an RPS distinction and fail because there is no detail in the brides dresses in the images they submit. I can therefore see a need for this facil-

ity, as provided in the Ricoh camera, to spread to high end DSLR cameras in the fullness of time.

Another interesting feature is the ability of the camera to shoot while the shutter button is pressed, but only the last 15 frames are recorded to create a single multi-picture file.

I could go on and on about all the facilities this camera has, but the important thing is the



quality of the images it takes.

These are two pictures I took with the Ricoh (above). I am very impressed with the colour fidelity if not with the overall sharpness of the images when printed at the full pixel count at A4 size. The pictures as shown in this review do not do justice to the actual images as taken with the camera because I have had to reduce the pixel count when importing them since this review will form part of ROM which will appear on the Web.

Conclusion

As I finished this review the CX 2 was replaced by the CX3. The CX1 and the CX2

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(Continued from page 11)

only appear to have been on the market for around six months each. This seems a phenomenal rate of obsolescence and I wonder how long the CX3 will last. Whilst, of course, each version does not stop taking pictures when it is replaced it must be galling for owners to think that their camera is no longer current so soon after purchase.

This is not a camera I could live with, as there is no optical viewfinder. The images suffer, in my view, from having been produced at a high pixel count from a very small sensor. So long as you do not enlarge

them too much, then they will pass muster. I do think that too many facilities have been shoehorned into the camera: an instruction book of 244 pages seems rather excessive, but is needed to cover all the facilities the camera has to offer.

Pricing and Availability

The CX2 is in stock online at Simply Electronics for £209.95 inc VAT and free delivery, whilst its successor, the Ricoh CX3, is available from a variety of dealers for around £299 or thereabouts.

The range of compact cameras to choose

from is vast and I sometimes wonder how people make a rational choice from the extensive range available. Obvious competitors are:-

Canon Powershot SX200 IS
Casio EX-H10
Fujifilm FinePix F70EXR
Olympus mju 9000
Samsung WB500
etc. etc.

Free Nuance PDF Reader

The Free Nuance PDF Reader - Smaller, More Secure and First to Link PDF Desktop with Cloud-Based PDF Conversion Service.

From Nuance's PR.

A streamlined, Innovative Alternative to Adobe Reader; that is more tightly coupled to Microsoft Office and SharePoint

Nuance Communications, Inc., a leading provider of speech and imaging solutions, has introduced the free Nuance PDF Reader, an alternative to Adobe Reader that is smaller, more secure, and for the first time connects desktop PDF with cloud-based PDF-to-Microsoft Office conversion services. The free Nuance PDF Reader also enables PDF form save, annotations and Microsoft SharePoint features not available in alternatives.

PDF (Portable Document Format)

PDF, or the portable document format, was invented by Adobe and is now an official International Standards Organization specification (ISO 32000-1), allowing Nuance to develop solutions and innovations that go beyond traditional PDF products – and provide features not tied to proprietary Adobe technology. For example, the Nuance PDF Reader is fully compatible with Adobe Reader, but it does not include proprietary Adobe “extras,” such as Adobe AIR, which can add to download and installation size. The Nuance PDF Reader is just 18MB to download and requires just 20 percent of installed disk space when com-

pared to the Adobe Reader.

The Nuance PDF Reader provides unique interoperability with Microsoft Office, providing the first-ever ability to turn PDF files being viewed in the reader into fully-formatted Microsoft Word, Excel and Office XML documents through a cloud-based service hosted on NuancePDF.com. Reader also provides a built-in SharePoint Connector that allows users to open and save PDF files directly into Microsoft SharePoint repositories.

“The Nuance PDF Reader provides a simple, but elegant, approach for converting PDFs to Microsoft Office documents, bringing cloud-based PDF conversion capabilities to the masses,” said Michael Orasin, research manager with International Data Corp. (IDC). “For organizations that use Microsoft Office and Windows 7, the software can deliver a big productivity boost by making it easier to work with and share PDF-based content across an organization.”

PDF files being viewed within the free Nuance PDF Reader can be encrypted and sent to the Nuance PDF Document Conversion Service, where the user can select a format and have the converted Microsoft Office document returned as a secure email attachment. The NuancePDF.com cloud service showcases the highly accurate PDF-to-Office conversion technology invented by Nuance in 2003 in collaboration with Microsoft.

Nuance PDF Reader also addresses a

troubling PDF security issue found within some readers by giving users the option to prevent JavaScript installation – something the Adobe PDF viewer does not do. Preventing JavaScript installation creates a safer PDF environment for the end user and adds an additional safety net for IT professionals looking to safeguard their organizations. Hackers have used the PDF JavaScript vulnerability to gain control of a user's computer – exposing users to system attacks and the transfer of personal information simply by viewing infected PDF files.

“Nuance PDF Converter Professional has become the number one alternative to Adobe Acrobat because it delivers all the rich features users need in PDF, and implements useful features not available from alternatives,” said Robert Weideman, general manager and senior vice president of the Nuance Document Imaging Division. “Nuance is proud to be the first to deliver a free PDF reader that connects to cloud-based productivity software, in a reader that is smaller, safer and feature rich.”

About the Free Nuance PDF Reader

The free Nuance PDF Reader supports Microsoft Windows XP/Vista/7 and is available at:

www.nuance.co.uk/pdf-reader

Until further notice, users of the Nuance PDF Reader will have free and unlimited access to the www.NuancePDF.com cloud conversion service from directly within the Reader.

Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010—a First Look by Tony Hawes

Paragon Software Group has announced the release of Hard Disk Manager 2010 for home users. Hard Disk Manager 2010 is available in two editions: Suite and Professional.

The software provides all the tools you need to manage today's hard drives, including partitioning, backup & restore, migration, optimization & defragmentation, hard drive disposal, boot management and sys-



tem recovery.

This comprehensive package of functionality is accessible from one easy-to-use interface, so you don't need to buy and install each package individually saving you time and money. Hard Disk Manager 2010 allows you to easily migrate an existing drive or partition to a new one - even to different hardware. It is even possible to maintain not only physical

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

environments and drives, but also all variety of well-known virtual environments and type of virtual drives with the same successful results. In addition, Hard Disk Manager 2010 is the only disk management tool which provides Windows 7 full support.

In Use

Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010 follows on from its predecessor the 2009 version, but with improvements, in particular it's now certified for use with Windows 7.

I installed the Professional version which has all the tools that the lower priced (and lower specified) 'Suite' version has. The Professional differs from the basic Suite version in that it adds the ability to work with Dynamic Disks, a feature that is likely be of more interest to high-end corporate and business Windows users than the personal consumer at home and SOHO users.

Although my screen grabs alongside show "Professional;" the versions are otherwise identical.

There's not too much to say about the program apart from the fact that I'm very impressed with its tools and capabilities, so prefer to show what it can do with the screen-grabs alongside.

Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010 copes with tasks I asked it to do such as when I want to copy a disk partition from one physical disk to another, resize partitions, or prepare disks for otherwise difficult multiboot Windows installations. As a bonus it also backs up and restores anything from complete hard disks to the contents of any set of files you specify; and can wipe data from partitions or whole drives, and copies hard disks to disk images that can boot in VMware Workstation or Microsoft Virtual PC. Its like a computer version of a very essential Swiss Army Penknife, except it won't remove stones from horses hooves!

Conclusions

Although Windows has its own hard drive management tools, they are relatively basic, but if you are a computer enthusiast who wants more or higher quality partitioning, defragmenting and disaster recovery tools, Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010 Suite could be the tool you want — recommended.

Price & Availability:

Paragon Hard Disk Manager 2010 Suite is available from: www.paragon-software.com for £29.95, the Pro edition costs £69.95 inc.

A 30-trial version is available here:

<http://www.paragon-software.com/home/hdm-personal/>

For more Information go to:

Hard Disk Manager Suite website: <http://www.paragon-software.com/home/hdm->



Paragon Hard Disk Manager's Express menu leads to icons on the left that perform most of the program's functions. They can also be accessed separately via the Full-Scale Launcher link in the lower left.



Copy & Migration options.



Boot Management lets you manage several operating systems on one computer.

personal/

Hard Disk Manager Pro website: <http://www.paragon-software.com/home/hdm-professional/>



A wizard lets you backup e-mail and documents with a few clicks, or customise your backups according to your personal preferences.



Security & Optimisation options including the option to securely wipe free space, partitions or entire disks.



Recovery Media Builder creates the Recovery Media (an ISO bootable CD or flash drive) in case your OS cannot boot anymore. The CD or Flash drive contains the main components and allows you to perform most recovery operations.



Left. Having booted my PC with the Recovery CD the screen shows the various options available from the boot disc.

New From Acer — Timeline X Notebooks

Acer Launched a new and updated range of notebooks on 31st March — Here's what I saw at the launch

Pursuing the Extreme: Aspire Timeline X Generation

Building on the achievements of the previous generation of Timeline laptops, Acer has created the Aspire TimelineX series with its sights firmly set on excellent performance, extreme battery life, complete connectivity and extremely thin designs. With the new Aspire TimelineX series, "compromise" has finally been defeated: you can have it all.

The original Aspire Timeline series was the first to break the 8-hour battery life barrier. The original Timeline concept has evolved and expanded into 'Battery life, Performance, Thin and Light': the Aspire TimelineX series offers up to 12 hours battery life and excellent computing power in an ultra-slim design.

Energy efficiency is the key concept that underpins the system architecture and technological design of the TimelineX series. This is why these laptops feature low power fans and hard disk drives, state-of-the-art components that dramatically reduce power dissipation, LED backlight displays that save up to 33% energy compared to standard laptop panels and also harness Intel Display Power Savings Technology (iDPST) that reduces display backlight with minimal visual impact. To top it off, one push of the PowerSmart button and the Aspire TimelineX transforms into a true all-day companion or a supremely powerful entertainment device.

Intel i3, i5 & i7 Processors

The Acer Timeline X Series is based on the all-new 2010 Intel Core family of processors, delivering smart performance for music, gaming, videos, movies, photos, social networking and other demanding mainstream applications. The new Intel Core i7 and Core i5 processors also feature the exclusive Intel Turbo Boost Technology that automatically accelerates performance and adjusts to the workload to give users an immediate performance boost when needed.

"These smart processors adapt to an individual's needs, automatically providing a 'boost' of performance for everyday applications. They become energy efficient to the point of shutting down processing cores or reducing power consumption to provide performance when people need it, and energy efficient when they don't." said Maurizio Riva, Acer Group Account Manager, Intel Europe, Middle East and Africa Region.

Ranging from the ultra-compact 25.9 (11.6"cm) and 34 cm (13.3") models up to



the super sleek 35.5 cm (14.0") and 39.5 cm (15.6") versions, the TimelineX family features slim Acer CineCrystal displays with a 16:9 aspect ratio and 1366X768 HD resolution for razor sharp images and breathtaking visuals in high definition for the ultimate go-anywhere cinematic entertainment experience. And with Dolby Home Theatre v3 audio enhancement your ears will be treated to an extremely realistic and vibrant surround sound.

To complement the superior sound quality and high definition screens, the TimelineX series has been equipped with next-generation dedicated or integrated graphics solutions, supporting Microsoft DirectX 11 for incredible HD video and gaming and a feast for all your senses. And you can easily browse, organise, play and share your media with Acer Arcade Deluxe, the perfect mobile media centre that provide fast access to your photos, videos and music, enabling you to create slideshows or playlists, convert files, or upload images and videos to your favourite social networks.

All this in an extremely thin and light design. At less than 25mm thick and with weight ranging from 1.4 kg of the 11.6" model to 2.4 kg of the 15.6" version, these laptops are the perfect companions for all-day activity. And to make sure they are more comfortable to use all day long, even on your lap, they have been designed to stay cooler for longer with screens that open up to 165° for easy use anywhere.

An ultra-slim brushed aluminium cover reflects quality and style, while giving the laptops toughness and durability as well as lightness. Opening the cover reveals a discrete icon power button and the extremely responsive Acer FineTip keyboard, with

wider keys for an entirely new typing experience. The 15.6" model can even accommodate a numeric keypad for maximum computing convenience. The touchpad is slightly concave and sits in a silver frame for easy fingertip feel of the boundaries, and it is a multi-gesture device, offering circular-motion scrolling, pinch-action zoom and page flip possibilities. Navigation has never been so intuitive.

Stay tuned at all times when you are on the road. The TimelineX family integrates state-of-the-art wireless and wired technologies: 3G (optional), Wi-Fi Certified network connection supporting Acer SignalUp with Nplify wireless technology, Bluetooth 2.1+ (optional) and Gigabit LAN. The Acer Video Conference solution, including the Acer Crystal Eye 1.3 MB high-def webcam and built-in microphone let you keep in touch and set up high quality video conferences with your friends or business contacts.

The Timeline X series offers up to 8 GB of DDR3 memory for ultra-fast system response and seamless handling of multitasking demands. As for storage, large capacity hard disks provide space to easily accommodate your growing digital archive, while a multi-in-1 card reader supporting the most used card formats allows easy and speedy data transfer.

Pricing

£599.99 for the 13.3" model. More for the larger screen models. Deliveries start in May.

Aspire Ethos 8943G and 5943G

A taste for technology

The new Acer Aspire Ethos notebooks were created to deliver the kind of exclusive quality and innovation that only users with strong personality can interpret yet everyone can use.



That's why they offer a theatre-like show with CineCrystalH displays and are equipped with ATI Mobility Radeon HD 5000 Series Graphics supporting HDR Texture Compression, Shader Model 5.0 and Microsoft DirectX 11.

Full DirectX 11 support enables incredible gaming performance and superior image qual-

(Continued on page 15)

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ity with stunning 3D visual effects, realistic lighting and life-like imagery.

Microsoft DirectX 11 (Direct3D 11) supports full Tessellation functionality, accelerated multi-threading, and DirectCompute 11 resulting in better performance, better-defined graphics and a superior viewing experience for multimedia and game play- ing.

Furthermore, Share Model 5.0 provides a new set of directions to enhance data access flexibility with a remarkable time saving, superior image quality and reduced GPU processing time.

Thanks to the 48 cm (18.4") or 39.5 cm (15.6") format and Full HD (1920x1080) o HD (1366x768) resolutions, the ultra- stylish 16:9 frameless displays offer an edge-to-edge view and ensure attractive natural shades thanks to intense colour saturation and superior contrast ratios. The panels employ mercury-free LED backlight



technology that not only improves image quality and increases readability in low light conditions but also reduces power consumption.

To make the experience even more unfor- gettable, the new Aspire Ethos design com- bines third generation Dolby Home Theatre

technology with powerful audio technologies – CineSurround, True 5.1 output and a special subwoofer – that set a new standard for laptop sound capability.

The 18.4-inch model is the world's first laptop to feature actual, built-in multi-speaker True 5.1 surround sound through five inte- grated speakers, making it the ideal choice for Full HD movies and gaming.

These Aspire Ethos machines come with a Blu-ray drive, 4GB RAM, an Intel Core i5 processor and 320GB HDD as a minimum, however, if you want to impress your friends up the spec to Intel Core i7, 16GB RAM and 1.2TB of HD space (2x640GB). Both Ethos models can be equipped with either a Blu-Ray Disc player or a DVD-Super Multi double- layer optical drive.

The minimum spec Ethos will retail around £1100, but expect to pay very much more for the higher spec machine. Both will be avail- able later in the summer.

Nero Multimedia Suite 10 Reviewed by Laurence Fenn

I was a bit wary of installing Nero 10 on my laptop as its predecessor Nero 9 took several hours to install and had many bugs. The complete suite certainly installed quicker but with a few quirks. To start with, two required additions to my up-to-date Windows 7 system were needed, Microsoft VC Redist 2005 KB973544 (Microsoft Visual C++ 2005 Service Pack 1 Redistributable Package ATL Security Update) and Microsoft VC Redist 2008 KB973552 (Microsoft Visual C++ 2008 Service Pack 1 Redistributable Package ATL Security Update). It also installs a Reboot Validator whatever that is and gives you an option to install a Nero Ask Bar. I then had to reboot my PC for these to take effect. I found this a bit annoying as I haven't installed any of the Nero software and I'm rebooting my PC.

Features Available

After the restart and entering the serial number, I got the choice of what elements to install. These include:

- Nero Burning ROM - 156MB,
- Nero Update - 1402KB,
- Nero BurnRights - 6442KB,
- Nero BackItUp - 107MB,
- Nero CoverDesigner - 75MB,
- Nero DiscCopyGadget - 33MB,
- Nero DiscSpeed - 7526KB,
- Nero Express - 157MB,
- Nero InfoTool - 8426KB,
- Nero MediaHub - 157MB,
- Nero RescueAgent - 6886KB,
- Nero StartSmart - 109MB,
- Nero Vision - 213MB,
- Nero SoundTrax - 94MB,



- Nero WaveEditor - 75MB,
- Nero Recode - 79MB,
- Nero ThemePacks (8 totalling 911MB)
- Help Files CHM (totalling 23MB).

That's a total of 2219.5MB but the instal- lation won't tell you that. You then have two tick boxes, one for shortcuts and one for the Multimedia Suite to manage the files. If you don't want the icons to change for your existing files and control to be taken away from your existing programs, you should tick yes for the shortcuts but no to the second. The installation then runs each of the installs for the elements you selected. If you chose all of them then that is 39 separate installations, which took about 20 minutes. You don't get any prompts but surely they could have had just one progress bar and one installation rather than dividing it into 39 chunks.

Right after it finishes the program runs Nero ControlCenter to check for updates. The guide recommends this, but when you click on check for updates, you get a mes- sage "ERROR IN YOUR INSTALATION. An Error occurred. Please restart Nero Control Center and try again." After an email to technical support I found out that as the software hadn't been officially re-

leased yet, the update server was not reporting the right message. I hope this is corrected as it is not good to have an error message when updating the software and you haven't even used it yet. The ControlCenter does not link to any help files; instead when you click on help you get a message that manuals and help files are not included in this version. This is despite the 211 help files installed, including 14 dif- ferent languages for each application. Nero has always had this policy of not including help in their programs to reduce the size of the download. Every other software manufacturer includes help files when you install the soft- ware. Is there going to be a situation where you want to update the help without fixing a bug in the program? I doubt it, but as this suite did include the help files (48MB of them) it would be nice that all the programs had them or linked to them. I'm sure installers can check what language the operating system is using so there is no need to install 14 different lan- guage help files.

Nero MediaHub

The new MediaHub component is a com- bined media organizer, media player, photo editor and slideshow creator. Once the direc- tories to watch are set you can import music, video and photos. When viewing photos you can use an inbuilt editor to correct red eye, colour, etc. and some other effects. You have a large variety of controls to tweak your pho- tos, with an undo for each action. Not as good as a dedicated photo editor, but certainly use- able. You can also create a slideshow using one of several themes, which are saved for later viewing. There are no editors for the music and video clips even though Nero Vi- sion and Nero WaveEditor are included in the suite.

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You can publish your media by burning it to CD, DVD or Blu-ray. You can upload your media directly to My Nero, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr or Facebook. Just enter your login details and approve Nero as a client and the program will upload your video, pictures or music.

Nero Vision

Nero Vision has been updated with more tracks and easier tools. Video can be imported from many different formats including vob files, which can be scanned for separate segments and divided accordingly. Smart encoding is now included which saves time if the files were rendered in the DVD format beforehand. Smart Rendering has been available in Corel's VideoStudio and DVD MovieFactory for some time and it helps reduce the time it takes to produce your discs, so it is a welcome addition. The themes for the menus are very good, but parts of the program interface still look like the old version which does not seem to be in line with the rest of the redesign.

Nero Burning ROM has a new DiscSpan job which lets you use different disc types. The last disc burnt will include an application to restore the archive so you don't need to have Nero installed. There is a new Burn Now button which bypasses the options dialog you usually get when opening a project. There's now support for AVCHD, a new high definition video format used in camcorders and SecurDisc 2.0 technology helps to prevent scratches and disc deterioration from rendering your data unreadable. In Windows 7 the application can be minimised and a progress update viewed by hovering your cursor over the toolbar icon.

Nero BackItUp & Burn

Nero BackItUp & Burn asks for a destination drive with enough space to perform the backups, and then automatically sets up everything else to ensure your data is regularly saved. Automatic back up is performed every two hours by default, but this can be changed to when the computer is idle or boots up. You can also schedule a backup on a particular date and time.

Conclusions

Overall there are plenty of applications, but it still feels like a mismatch of designs as some applications have not been given the complete makeover.

The MediaHub is a convenient program that seems to duplicate Windows 7 MediaCentre with a few extra features but is the best addition to the suite.

Pricing & Availability

Nero Multimedia Suite 10 goes on sale on 12th April and is available from Amazon.co.uk for £46.99 inc. VAT.

Nero Vision Xtra including MediaHub is available separately at £50, Nero Burning ROM at £40 and Nero BackItUp & Burn at £30.

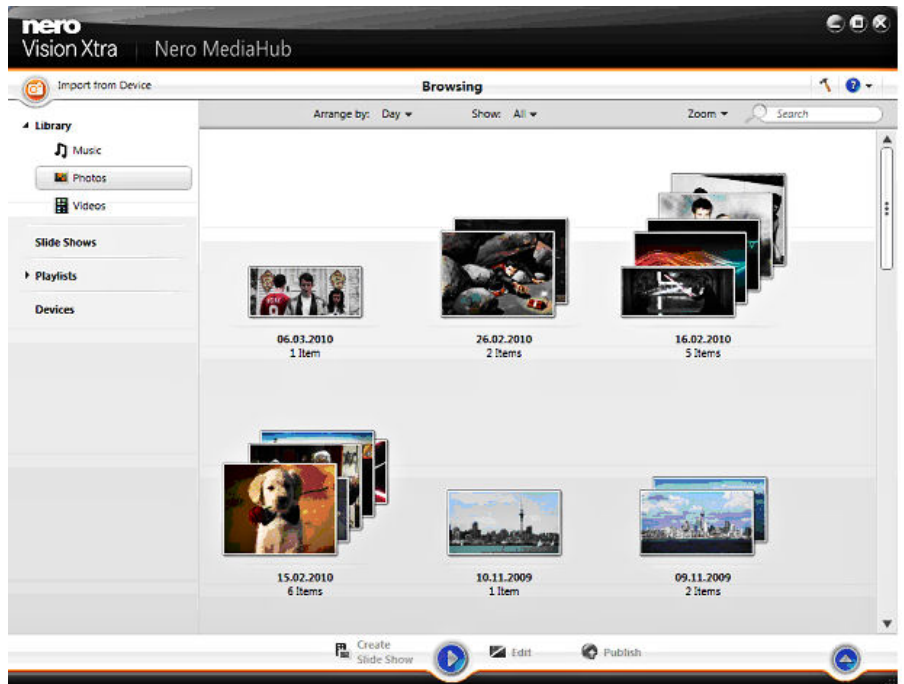


Figure 1 - Nero MediaHub

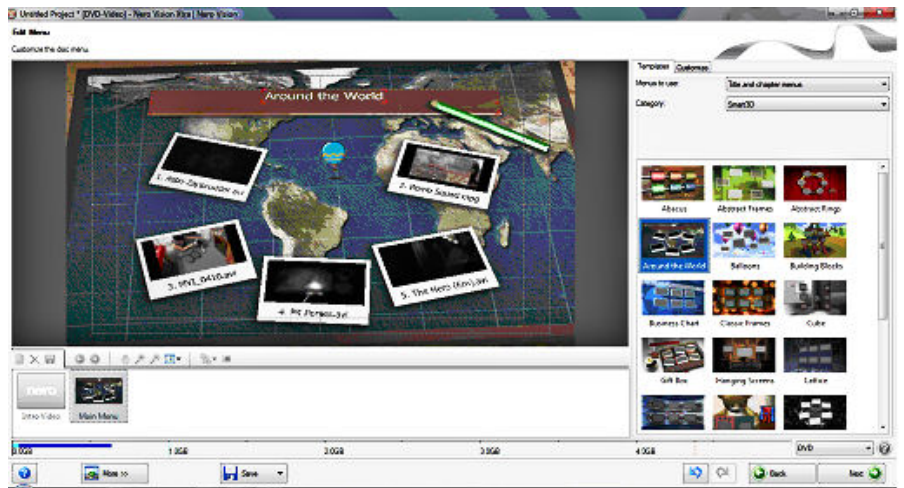


Figure 2 - Nero Vision

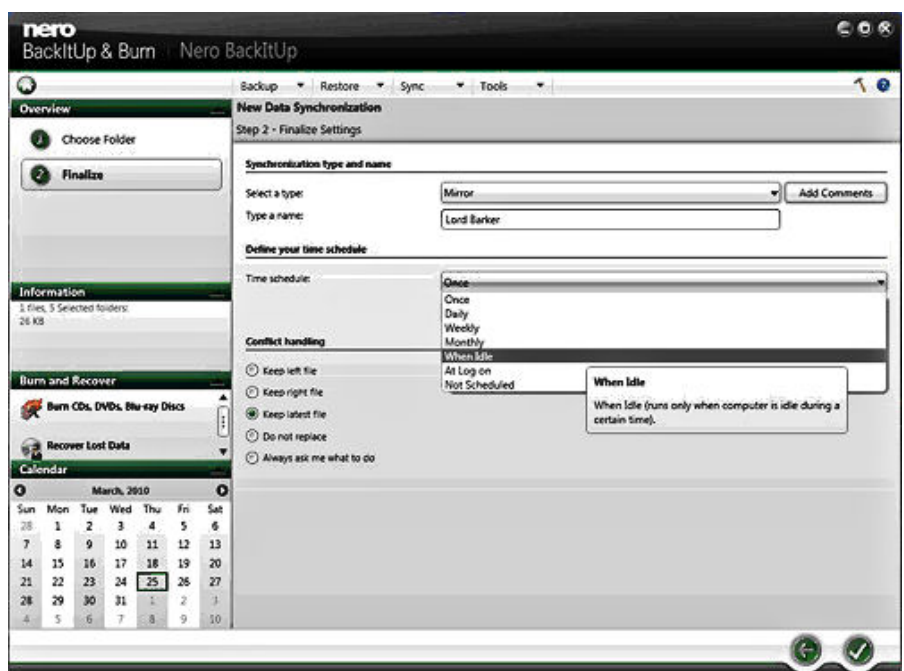


Figure 3 - Nero BackItUp & Burn