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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

Our Very Own 21st Anniversary

As mentioned in the last ROM we seem recently to have had a variety of anniversaries of one sort or another — I mentioned anniversaries such as the Falklands conflict, the Queen's Silver Jubilee, death of Diana etc.

However in January 2008 we (the Guildford PC User Group) celebrate our very own 21st anniversary since the foundation of the Group way back in 1987, and if you are old enough to remember what computing was about in those days it was when Windows was in its infancy as Windows 2 and DOS 3.3 ruled supreme (both were introduced in April 1987).

So take time out to raise a glass to celebrate 21 years of Group activities!



Secretary's Meetings Notes

Monday 8th October 2007 - Excel/Access. On Monday 8th October Francis Jacques, our treasurer, enjoys cycle racing in his spare time and combines this with his computer knowledge to organise cycle races of various lengths with up to 120 participants. On Monday 8th October he demonstrated how the documentation is prepared using Access 2000 and Excel 2000. All the potential competitors have to enter with a form giving name, address, club, date of birth, past best time for this length of race, etc. From this information he sets up an Access database with additional fields for handicap, start time, likely finishing time and

order of start. From this database he produces a Query to extract the additional information from the tables in accordance with criteria such as the formula for determining handicaps, the likely finishing time and order of start. The data is then transferred to Excel in order to produce the start sheets to be

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

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
10th December 2007 at 7.45 p.m.**

Christmas Quiz

With the start of the festive season it's time again for our annual Christmas Quiz with some very attractive and valuable prizes to be won. The Two top prizes have a street value of over £150 each! Companies donating prizes this year include Microsoft, Logitech, Corel and others. **A small charge for entry to the quiz will be made on the night (one entry per person). To allow for latecomers the Quiz will start at 8.35pm.**

Before the quiz we'll have a demo of Microsoft's new "Acceleration Pack" add-on for Microsoft Flight Simulator X.

Please bring a friend — and being Christmas, in place of chocolate biscuits we'll have free warm mince pies.

Don't like mince pies? Chocolate biscuits, coffee & tea 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 14th January 2008 at 7.45 pm
Movie making using Microsoft's Movie Maker software.
Monday 11th February 2008 at 7.45pm
In preparation
Monday 10th March 2008
To be announced

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:

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distributed to the competitors prior to the race and the result sheets afterwards. An Access report is used to print the competitors name, address and competition number on envelopes which are fed directly into a printer.

A very interesting evening.

Monday 12th November 2007 - Lexmark X4550 All-in-One. On Monday 12 November Tony Hawes demonstrated the Lexmark X4550 All-in-One, this is a combined printer, scanner, copier and fax machine which also has a built-in 802.11g Wi-Fi for wireless printing. With multi-function devices fast gaining popularity among home users most printer manufacturers have a range of similar All-in-One Multi Function Devices (MFDs).

The Lexmark X4550, first available about April 2007 at over £120 can now be purchased for slightly less than £70. This was demonstrated using a USB connection rather than with the use of the Wi-Fi facility as Tony had found difficulty in establishing a reliable Wi-Fi link between his notebook and printer. First he showed the capability of the flatbed scanner including a simple Copy using the X4550's front panel button; this was particularly quick with an accurate copy of the original emerging within seconds. He

then showed how well the optical character recognition (OCR) software (Abbyy FineReader 6 which is bundled and installed by default from the installation CD) worked, this impressively scanned and converted a magazine article into a Microsoft Word document in very short order — ideal if one wants to copy an article and extract content for later editing in Word. Other features demonstrated included the normal scan of a photo for saving to one's hard disk; using the Import function for importing files from a memory card and how to use the quite comprehensive editing features of the installed Lexmark editing suite.

In normal use the printer uses two cartridges, one colour and one black. For higher quality colour photo printing it's possible to install a separate Colour Photo cartridge. Colour printing using only the basic cartridges was demonstrated and the quality was considered to be more than satisfactory. Digital media memory card slots (SD and CF) let one print direct from the card without a computer being connected. The provision of a PictBridge socket alongside the memory card slots allows the connection of a digital camera with a PictBridge connection, in this way photos can be printed directly from the camera. The fax facility, of course, requires a fax modem in the computer.

The basic cartridges cost about £15 each.

The Lexmark X4550 "All-in-One" is a versatile all-rounder for the price.

New from Steganos

Steganos launches Steganos Internet Security 2008 and Steganos AntiVirus 2008: comprehensive protection against viruses, hackers, spyware and spam

Launch discount offer cuts the cost of PC protection for the first 5,000 new customers for each application.

November 2007 — Steganos, leader in providing security and privacy software for consumers and SMEs, has launched Steganos Internet Security 2008 and Steganos AntiVirus 2008, the latest generations of its software for complete protection from online threats.

Steganos Internet Security 2008 offers comprehensive, fast and value-for-money protection against spam, spyware, hackers and computer viruses. The integrated AntiSpyware application recognises spyware and adware. Potentially unwanted programs, adware, Trojans, worms and keyloggers are all detected using the latest analysis techniques. The integrated firewall controls the network connections and blocks attacks from hackers or Trojans. Steganos Internet Security 2008 also includes Steganos AntiVirus 2008.

Steganos AntiVirus 2008, available separately as well as forming part of the Steganos Internet Security 2008 suite, protects the computer from script, macro, file and boot sector viruses in real time. It offers several layers of protection:

The resident protection deactivates viruses by supervising the copying, opening and storage of files. As soon as a virus is discovered, Steganos AntiVirus 2008 stops the current process and stops the virus from activating.

The automatic virus removal eliminates or disinfects virus-infected files and other threats such as Trojans or worms.

The email scanner examines incoming and outgoing emails and is compatible with all SMTP/POP3 based email clients, including Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express and Eudora. The email scanner is compatible with encrypted connections that use SSL.

The automatic spam and phishing filter keeps the inbox clean by ensuring that such emails are marked as spam.

Individual and scheduled virus tests enable additional user-defined scanning alongside the automatic checks.

Steganos's technology uses a combination of virus scan, heuristic matching and generic detection to ensure that no virus goes undiscovered. Suspicious files are quarantined to prevent an infection and the virus data bank is regularly updated to ensure that the software can always detect the latest threats.

There are two user modes: the basic mode offers maximum protection for minimal work and the professional mode provides maximum flexibility for more advanced users who would like to configure as much

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as they can themselves. The intelligent scan function in Steganos AntiVirus 2008 can be used to determine which data should be permitted or blocked, so that users can compile their own black list and white list.

Both Steganos AntiVirus 2008 and Steganos Internet Security 2008 include a year of automatic updates to ensure that the software is always up to date. If a new version of the software is released within that year, users can update to the next version of the software for free.

Aston Fallen, CEO, Steganos, said: "A world without the internet and email would be unthinkable today. But the price we pay for near-instant communication and constant connectivity is the onslaught of viruses, hackers, spam and phishing attacks. We've seen a change in recent years. Whereas early viruses were a nuisance that slowed the PC or broke the operating system, today's viruses are much more likely to attempt to steal e-commerce or shopping data. There is a criminal motive now, which means nobody can afford to be complacent. With the latest releases of Steganos AntiVirus and Steganos Internet Security, we are providing the peace of mind that people need to safely exploit the full potential of the internet."

Editor's Note: Steganos AntiVirus 2007 (the previous version) was based on the well-regarded Kaspersky Personal Edition AntiVirus. Whether Steganos AntiVirus 2008 continues to use Kaspersky's AV engine remains to be seen.

Pricing

Steganos Internet Security 2008

- Special offer for the first 5,000 users: £19.95
- Normal price: £29.95
- Upgrade: £17.95

Steganos AntiVirus 2008

- Special offer for the first 5,000 users:

£14.95

- Normal price: £19.95
- Upgrade: £11.95

System Requirements

Windows XP Home Edition (from Service Pack 2), Windows XP Professional (from Service Pack 2), Windows XP 64 bit, Windows Vista 32/64 bit

Screen resolution of at least 800x600, at least high colour (16 bit)

At least Pentium or comparable CPU

Mouse or other pointing device

70MB free hard disk space for installation

At least 256MB RAM

Internet access

Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher

Steganos Launches Free Desktop Encryption Software

With the new Steganos Safe One, users can protect up to 2GB of important or sensitive data from prying eyes – absolutely free.

19th November 2007 - Steganos, leader in providing security and privacy software for consumers and SMEs, has launched Steganos Safe One, a freeware version of its leading encryption product Steganos Safe. The new release will allow users to enjoy Steganos's world famous encryption and protection, and it won't cost them a penny.

Steganos Safe One is flexible and easy to use, giving people a simple and stress-free way to protect their data. Users can create two large virtual drives of a gigabyte each, in which to store documents, music, images, or any other data they wish to be kept secure. These fully encrypted Steganos Safes are independent of each other and offer a wide range of flexible features and options, designed to maximise security and ensure the safety of the data.

The application features a fully integrated password generator, capable of producing truly secure passwords, appropriate to indi-

vidual users' requirements. If users wish to create their own passwords, a multilingual built-in dictionary will recognise unsafe passwords and warn against them.

Portable devices, such as the iPod, USB sticks, digital cameras or PDAs, can be used as keys to open the safe.

Other features include Steganos PicPass, an innovative way to use images as a password. By using PicPass, users can memorise a sequence of images in order to open their Safe. Steganos Safe One fully supports Microsoft Windows XP for the x64 processor architecture, and encrypts data with 256 bit AES, a highly secure encryption algorithm.

Aston Fallen, CEO of Steganos, said: "Almost everybody has private or personal data on their computers, and it is becoming increasingly important to find ways to protect that information from other users. Whether it is encrypting data on a laptop in case of theft or loss, or protecting sensitive or personal information from co-users on a desktop computer, Steganos is there to help. Steganos Safe One allows users to experience real peace of mind, secure in the knowledge that their privacy is protected, and without them having to spend anything to do so."

For users who have larger data volumes, there is an upgrade path to Steganos Safe 2008, which offers an unlimited number of safes with a capacity of up to 256GB each. USB sticks can be used as mobile Safes, and encrypted data can be burned onto CD, DVD, and the 8.5GB capacity DVD-DL disks. Steganos Safe 2008 also includes Steganos Shredder, meaning that any unwanted data can be completely destroyed, leaving no data on the disk's free space that can be reconstituted. Steganos Safe 2008 can be downloaded and purchased from Steganos's website (www.steganos.com) for £24.99.

Steganos Safe One is completely free, and is available now for download at www.steganos.com.

McAfee Total Protection 2008

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

We has a preview of McAfee's Total Protection 2008 in the last issue of ROM and commented that a review copy was due. The review copy arrived and I had a chance to put it through its paces. But first an overview of what McAfee claims.

Overview

- McAfee Total Protection offers 12-in-1 prevention and protection for your identity, children online, PC, and online experience.
- Advises you about unsafe websites
- Advises you about unsafe websites
- Stays securely up-to-date on the latest enhancements and threat updates with

McAfee's Security as a Service (SaS).

- Easily add and manage security for multiple PCs in your home.
- Protects your online experience so you can surf the web, shop, bank, email and instant message safely and securely.
- Intercepts prohibited websites, unwanted activity and offensive pictures to keep your family safe.
- Backs Up & Restores Files. Automated back-up and one-click restore to protect your photos, music and important files.
- Enhanced and streamlined security performs faster and requires less of your computer's resources than previous versions.

- Home Network Protection monitors your entire network for security weaknesses and lets you easily share files and printers.

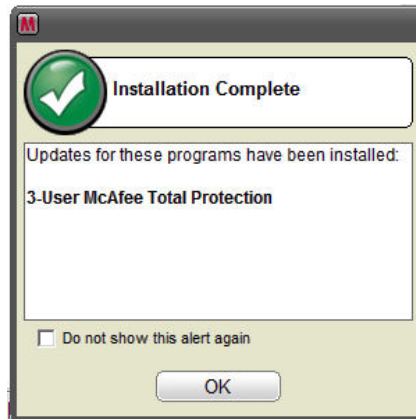
McAfee Total Protection provides comprehensive, proactive 12-in-1 security that guards what you value and with McAfee SiteAdvisor Plus actively shields your PC from interaction with dangerous websites. Continuously and automatically updating, McAfee service helps prevent online hacker attacks with the latest protection. Also, it features a back-up and restore capability for computer crashes and environmental mishaps.

McAfee Total Protection includes multi-user "Parental Controls," protection from identity

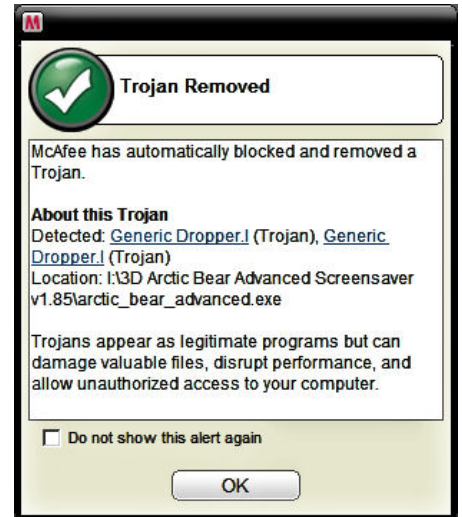
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The Am I Protected? Box



Updates Installed Box:



My test "Genetic Dropper" Trojan has been detected, blocked and removed before it can cause damage — full marks.

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theft, spam and scams. With McAfee's security service you always have the latest enhancements and threat updates that blocks viruses and spyware. Also, it includes a firewall to deter hacking.

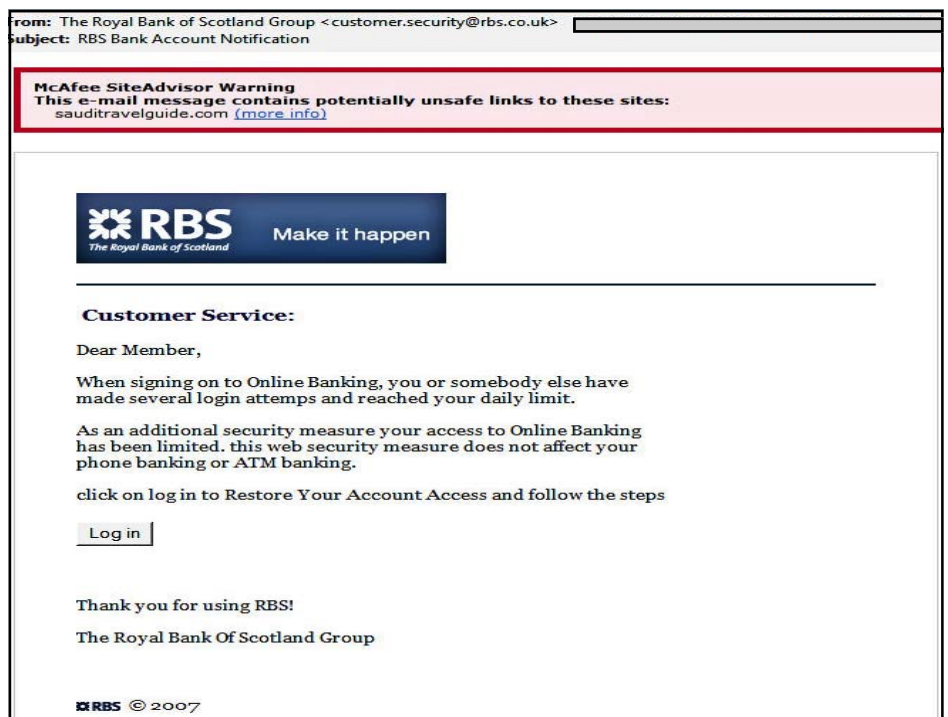
12-in-1 Prevention & Protection Features

1. Safe Search, Safe Surf. McAfee SiteAdvisor adds ratings to websites to help you avoid online dangers.
2. Home License Subscription Service. Automatically delivers the latest software features and threat updates and lets you easily manage security subscriptions for all your PCs.
3. Stops Viruses. Blocks and removes viruses and even stops them before they even get to your PC.
4. Stops Hackers. Protects and conceals your computer from hackers.
5. Blocks Spyware. Blocks spyware before it installs on your computer and removes existing spyware.
6. Improves PC Health. Cleans clutter off your computer so it stays healthy and secure.
7. Secures Your Identity. Guards your identity from online fraud scams and identity thieves.
8. Prevents Spam & Email Scams. Shields you from junk email.
9. Protects Children Online. Filters offensive content, pictures, and websites.
10. Backs Up & Restores Files. Automated back-up and one-click restore to protect your photos, music and important files.
11. Home Network Protection. Monitors your entire network for security weaknesses, and lets you easily share files and printers.
12. SiteAdvisor Plus. Extends safety ratings to links in emails and instant messages, and actively shields your PC from dangerous websites.

Additional Benefits

- **Redesigned for You.** Scan your computer, check for updates and configure your security settings using the new McAfee Security Center. This essential,

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Phishing e-mail: I don't have a Royal Bank of Scotland account so am immediately suspicious. To confirm my suspicions McAfee Total Protection highlights it as suspect. Which means you Log in here at your peril! Clicking (more info) in the Warning Box provides the following — see below.



Having clicked for (more info) — see above — McAfee Site Advisor informs you (right) more about this dodgy site that will try to steal your personal details.

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easy-to-use program gives you one-click access to your computer's security information.

- **Always On, Always Protecting.** 24/7 virus and threat protection from McAfee Avert Labs continuously monitors worldwide virus activities and provides immediate anti-virus protection and removal solutions.
- **Always Upgrading, Always Updating.** Daily updates are installed automatically. When new versions are available, you get them automatically at no charge during your subscription, ensuring that you always have up-to-date protection.
- **Convenient, Ongoing Protection.** McAfee offers a variety of renewal options to keep your McAfee protection current.
- **Real People, Real Help.** Support from McAfee's computer security experts, via Internet chat, e-mail and phone. (www.mcafeehelp.com).

Installation

McAfee Total Protection 2008 comes with licences that allow installation on three computers, which is fine if you have a desktop and notebook and perhaps a kids computer too, so this a useful bonus, but not unusual because during the last 12-months or so most other AntiVirus and Security Suite software vendors have adopted a similar 3-computer licence policy.

Installation went well if a little slowly, taking 25-minutes before it was fully up and running, possibly because Total Security performs a basic virus scan prior to installing any of its many features which ensures your computer is virus-free before installation.

Click on the McAfee icon in the taskbar and you are presented with a box showing the four categories of computer protection:

1. Computer & Files
2. Internet & Network
3. E-mail & IM
4. Parental Controls

Click on the relevant box to see the current protection, with a further box that links to the appropriate configuration menu.

The most important features from my point of view are the Anti-Virus protection, Firewall, AntiPhishing advisor and SpyWare protection. In use all worked as expected. The automatic update feature worked well and in the background with no noticeable hit on resources. Updates are made known by a small animated (rotating) McAfee icon on the taskbar as anti-virus signatures and other updates are being downloaded and installed. At the conclusion of updates a larger box on your desktop notifies you that updates have been downloaded and installed.

The Antivirus tools are very effective and scans are carried out on files on access, when downloading an e-mail attachment, on demand, and on schedule.

I have a fairly full set of hard disks and a full 'on demand' virus and spyware scan took around 45-minutes.

As in previous versions McAfee refer to threats as Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUPs). At the conclusion of a scan its wise to check the results and decide if any of the found PUPs need removing (not an easy task for a novice). Although Virus files are deleted automatically there are some programs that McAfee has decided are potential threats. These are flagged with the option to "Trust" or "Remove."

As can be seen from the screen shots on the previous page and alongside, in use McAfee Total Protection 2008 appeared to cover most threats in a more than adequate manner in that Phishing e-mails were detected, Viruses and my pet test Trojan were identified with the warning box asking whether it should be deleted. I also trying installing known adware and spyware, both of which were detected.

Daily updates were done seamlessly in the background with a minimal effect on resources.

Conclusion

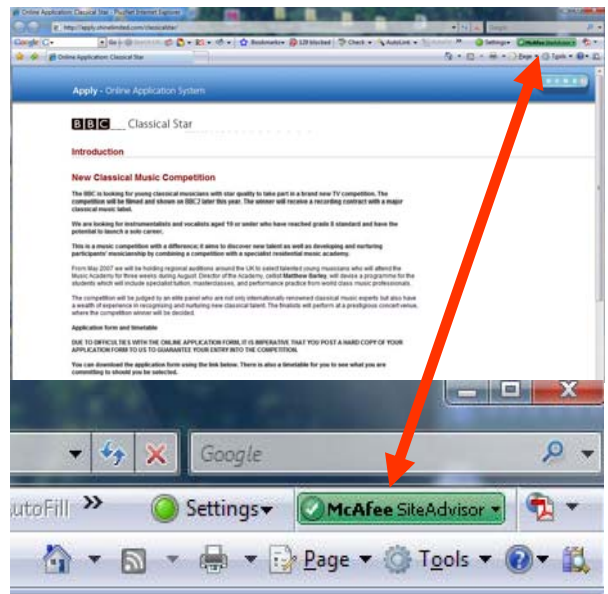
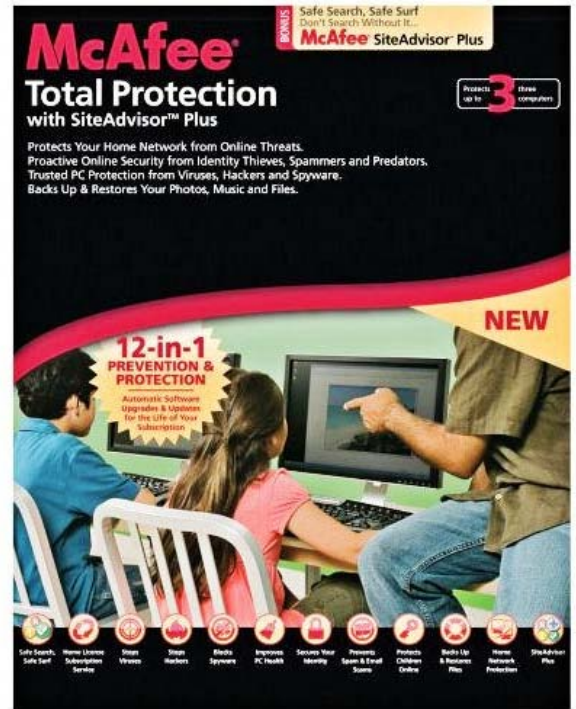
I wasn't too happy with last year's McAfee 2007 offering, it disagreed with some of Vista's features and interfered with and clashed with the anti-spam features of Windows Mail. However McAfee Total Protection 2008 has definitely rectified some the earlier version's foibles and is a well specified and comprehensive protection package.

For a novice it's simple and easy to use, offering all the none-intervention features required to keep your computer safe and free of nasties. For experts, once you start digging there are plenty of features to keep you happy and protected.

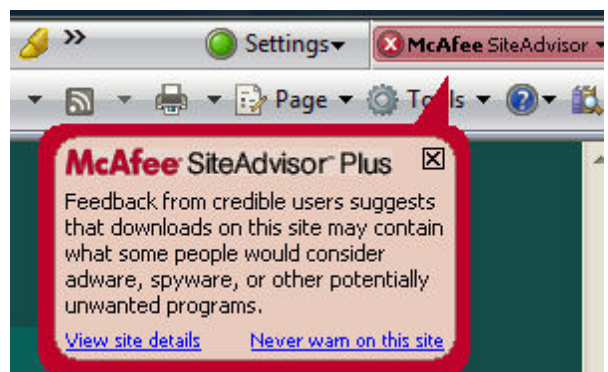
Have a look at the screen shots to see what it's capable of doing.

Pricing and Availability

Amazon.co.uk for £50.98 inc VAT and delivery.



Another useful tool for the paranoid is the Site Advisor. If the site you are visiting is deemed safe McAfee SiteAdvisor flags it with a green box as shown above....



...However a dubious site is flagged in red with an additional red-ringed pop-up box showing there may be trouble ahead if you proceed further.

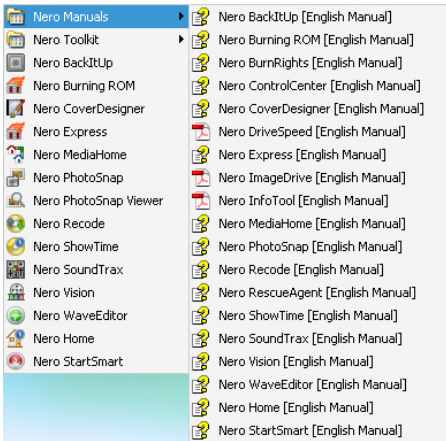
Nero 8

Reviewed by Laurence Fenn

The new version of Nero has grown in size and requirements from its predecessors. Whereas Nero 7 would only need Windows 98 or better running on a 800MHz Pentium III processor with 128MB of RAM, Nero 8 needs Windows 2000 SP4 or later. On top of this you will need a 1GHz Pentium III processor, 256MB of RAM (512MB for Vista), 1.5GB of available hard disk space and DirectX 9.0C or higher.

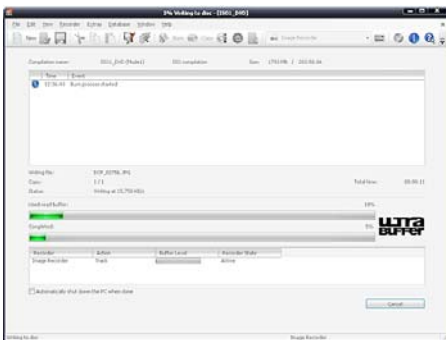
Installation

Installation still seems to take ages, even using the default settings. InCD, the packet writing software, is still not included by default, which has been the case for some time now. It can conflict with other software, and with the price of discs so cheap, the ability to drop files onto a CD/DVD like a hard disc seems a bit old fashioned.



Start Menu Shortcuts:

The Start Menu shortcuts have been changed to show just the applications in the program folder, then a sub menu for the toolkit apps (all eight of them, including the new Rescue Agent), and the manuals. All but three are help files and the remaining three out of the nineteen listed are PDFs.



Nero BurningROM:

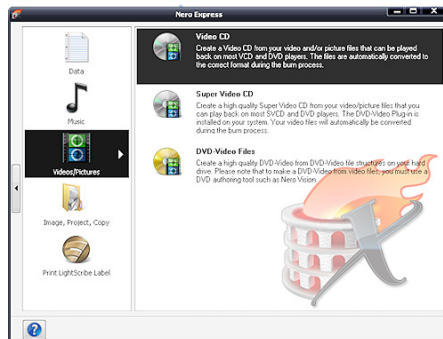
The main application, Nero BurningROM hasn't really changed at all. There's a new overlay animation when you start the program, and the icons have changed in the program itself, but it works pretty much the



same way. When using RW discs, Nero always checks if the disc is empty and offers to erase the data if it is not. There is a Quick or Full option, but when you are burning a disc, it uses the quick one. It makes the process very easy as it handles the disc for you, wiping it before burning the new data.

One of the many small niggles with the software is that creating a disc image still only gives you the option of using the Nero's NRG format. You can load and write standard ISO images to disc, but unlike many other CD programs you cannot create your own ISO images.

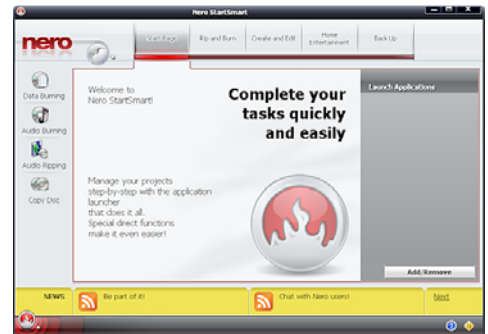
The log file after burning a disc doesn't say how long the process took. The progress window has an estimate, but it would be nice to know exactly how long it took. The log is shown in a window underneath the burning completed dialog, but I couldn't find a way of permanently switching it off. There is a detail button that will hide it, but as I tend to verify the discs I burn, I rarely need to see the log.



Nero Express

Some of the programs have had very little change. The Back Up program has a few more file filters and encryption algorithms but other than that there is no difference between this and previous versions. The Cover Designer has some new templates

but the bug of showing incorrect size of files and folders when creating a Standard data disc booklet with a template is still there. Nero Express looks different, but functions exactly the same, giving a simple way to access the main features of BurningROM application



Nero StartSmart

The program that has seen the most change is Nero StartSmart. Previous versions relied on the front-end interface to steer users to the appropriate component program. There were problems as you had to double back if you chose the wrong path. The redesigned SmartStart incorporates some common functions. You can now rip audio files, copy discs, and burn audio and data discs without having to leave the navigation aid. The options are better organized and easier to access. Shortcuts to the frequently used applications in the collection are helpful, but when you use SmartStart you have fewer options. If you want to use all the whole options available you should use the full programs.

Nero Home looks and functions like Windows Media Center, but does not require a Windows Media Center PC to run as the host. A wizard leads you through a set-up process that includes selecting your country, language, background appearance, font size and any television/radio tuner that is identified by the program. You will then need to let the software scan your system for various types of media files and channels detected by the tuner if you have one. This process is rather time consuming but does need to be carried out in order to gain the full benefit of this software that can manage home entertainment needs by playing, cataloguing media files and offering search capabilities.

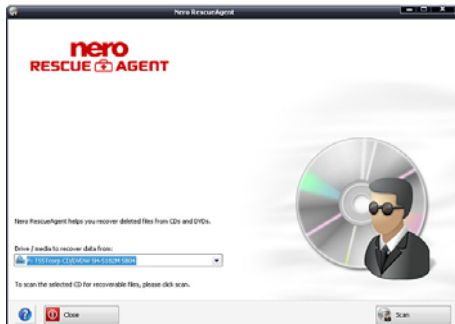
Additional tools available in Nero bundle give the user a chance to test the health of the disc drives with DiscSpeed, reduce noise of the drive with DriveSpeed, assign which users have burn rights with Nero BurnRights or learn the insides of your computer with Nero InfoTool.

Because the new data-recovery tool, Nero RescueAgent, is a toolkit utility, it is inaccessible from SmartStart, as are all the toolkit applications. The program can recover files

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that were incorrectly or incompletely written to a CD or DVD. Through a very simple interface, you select the drive with the damaged disc, choose the files you want to retrieve, and select the directory to which you want to save them. With multi-session discs formatted using a packet-writing UDF file system, you may also be able to recover older versions of the deleted data.



Nero Rescue Agent

DVD creation is available in Nero BurningROM and Nero Recode deals with manipulating them. All the options have remained the same so you can recode a DVD to DVD, recode only main movie (DVD movie ripping), compile a DVD with DVD files on your computer or recode DVD to MP4 format. Although Blu-ray and HD DVD playback isn't new to Nero (it was introduced as an upgrade to version 7), the company has broadened its support. If you have a Blu-ray recorder, you can create a BD-AV (Blu-ray Disc Audio/Visual) disc encoded with DV or MPEG-2 video files. You can then play the BD-AV disc either on your PC by using the included Nero

Showtime component or on a standalone Blu-ray player. Nero 8 can also burn Blu-ray data discs.



Nero Vision

The video editor in Nero Vision is fairly basic. You're limited to just one video and two audio tracks. This latest version of Nero Vision is also YouTube and MySpace friendly. Enter your log-in and password and you can easily import or export video files from within Nero Vision. It is no substitute for a full video editing program, however.

The 2D and 3D menu templates help you create and burn video CD and DVD projects. The 3D menus are impressive but you have to remember that they take up quite a bit of room on the disc, leaving less space for your video files. You can quickly preview how the 3D menus would interact with your video files by using Nero Vision's simulated remote control (which resembles the remote that ships with standalone DVD players).

Apart from the interface change and SmartStart, there only seems to be the odd

tweak here and there. The installation is still a mess, taking far too long to install. I had problems with file associations changing for video and graphic files, as Nero wants to handle everything. I'm happy with Media Player playing the videos and my graphics programs looking after my pictures. Media Player can also rip music from CDs, so that's another function Nero didn't need to include. With all the extra templates included, the installation disc is now a DVD rather than a CD (there's around 990MB of setup files). Printed documentation is sparse; you get a few pages of set-up instructions in the multi-language Quickstart Guide, but for more detailed information regarding the various applications, you need to access one of the many on-line manuals installed to your hard drive.

If you don't have any video, graphic or audio programs, and you don't have any of the previous versions, then Nero 8 can provide everything you need. However, if you have older versions of Nero, in particular version 7, there is little point in upgrading.

System Requirements

Windows XP (SP1 or later), Windows XP Media Center Edition, Windows Vista. Gadgets are not available for Windows Vista x64, Nero ImageDrive currently supports Windows 2000 and Windows XP (32 Bit only), Windows XP Professional x64, Windows Vista x64 (all applications except InCD, and Nero Scout work in the x86 emulator, which allows 32-bit applications to run).

Pricing and Availability

Amazon.co.uk for £46.98 inc VAT and delivery.

MS Flight Simulator X Acceleration Expansion Pack

Last month Microsoft released their first expansion pack for Flight Simulator in years, called Flight Simulator X — Acceleration Expansion Pack. The Acceleration Pack introduces new features, including multiplayer air racing, new missions, and three all-new aircraft, the F/A-18A Hornet, EH-101 helicopter and the P-51 Mustang.

New scenery enhancements cover Berlin, Istanbul, Cape Canaveral and the Edwards Air Force Base, providing high accuracy both in the underlying photo texture and in the detail given to the 3D objects.

Developed by ACES Studio, "Flight Simulator X: Acceleration" adds a wealth of new content and features, allowing gamers to race against each other in highly-detailed locations around the world. Aviators are able to test their skills and heroism in many new missions while enjoying three exciting new aircraft and the ability to share rewards, photos and videos with friends and the broader flight simulator community. Flight Simulator X — Acceleration takes advantage of Windows Vista



as well as DirectX 10.

"Flight Simulator X" is required to use "Flight Simulator X — Acceleration Expansion Pack". FSX was released in October 2006 and was the subject of a full review in the December 2006 issue of ROM.

So What's New?

Challenge friends in the new racing mode, or test your flight skills in the 20 new missions like being a NASA test pilot, performing search and rescue on an ocean liner, or navigating a whiteout blizzard in the backcountry. Also included are six new scenery maps including the well-known Red Bull Air Race courses, and three new planes: the F/A-18A Hornet, EH-101 Helicopter and WWII P-51D Mustang.

More Information

For more information about "Flight Simulator X" and "Flight Simulator X: Acceleration," please visit www.microsoft.com/games/flightsimulatorx and www.fsinsider.com.

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Shortly before this issue of ROM went to press your editor was sent a copy by Microsoft's Games Press PR agency. It wasn't a fully boxed product but appeared to be an in-house pre-release version on DVD. However, this did allow me to have a peek at what's new, let me make a few comments and observations and allow me to grab a few screen shots.

It's Hard

I must say that even my 4,000-hours of flying with the RAF wasn't much help when trying to land a F/A 18 Hornet on an aircraft carrier, for some reason I always manage to miss the arrestor cables, so conclude Navy life is not for me. I faced similar problems when it came to landing the EH-101 helicopter high-up in the snows of the mountains. I never seemed to get the descent right and wound-up by being wound-around as the main rotor bashed into the mountainside. The WWII P-51 Mustang was much better, I raced around the Reno aerial race circuit against com-

puter generated AI racers, but haven't as yet managed to be the winner, but I'm still practicing! Air racing pundits will say I am too high banking around the turns, but at least I survived.

Finally the Red Bull racing circuits are distinctly dangerous. Banking around inflated pylons is even harder than all the other missions in Acceleration Pack; I just crashed as regularly as clockwork each time as I tried to fly between the pylons and immediately banked to aim for the next set of pylons. Either the wings of the plane are too long or the pylons are too short, doing 90-degree banks at 150-knots whilst twenty-feet above ground left me wanting to go back to flying a nice slow Cessna or Mooney, where the ground comes up to meet you at a nice steady pace rather than the extremes demanded of Red Bull racing, where everything happens in split-second timing.

A Speedy F/A 18 Hornet

Mind you I was impressed by the speed

of the F/A 18 — take-off from RAF Northholt in northwest London, leave full power on and by the time you've reached Wembley stadium you are whizzing along at one and a half times the speed of sound — an unlikely real-life scenario, but it's an impressive illustration of what a modern toy for the boys can do. Its also worth mentioning that although the F/A 18 comes in authentic US Navy (and other countries liveries), its not possible to fire its guns or drop bombs on a potential enemy.

Cocked-up Textures

Disappointingly Microsoft's Acceleration Expansion Pack has re-introduced a problem that came with the original FSX program. When it was released and flying in and around London over the Thames there were a variety of false land-masses with the Thames blocked by dry land-bridges, bridges where bridges don't exist (for example there are two false bridges just to the west of the Dome) in reality of course there are no bridges at all between the M25 QEII Bridge at Dartford and Tower Bridge in the



The new EH-101 in US Coast Guard colours



The F/A-18 Hornet sits awaiting a catapulted carrier take-off



At least I managed a nice leisurely EH-101 sightseeing flight along the Thames without crashing!

city. Not too long after FSX was released Microsoft issued a FSX patch to resolve this glaring anomaly and later still a Service Pack (SP1), but installation of the Acceleration Pack has re-introduced this glitch. See the Tower Bridge picture on the next page for an illustration of the problem.

Demo

As a bonus and as we have a little time at the December Group meeting before the start of the Christmas Quiz, and assuming we can drag you away from scoffing the warm Christmas Mince Pies your editor will take Flight Simulator X — Acceleration Expansion Pack for a short flight to demonstrate its capabilities.

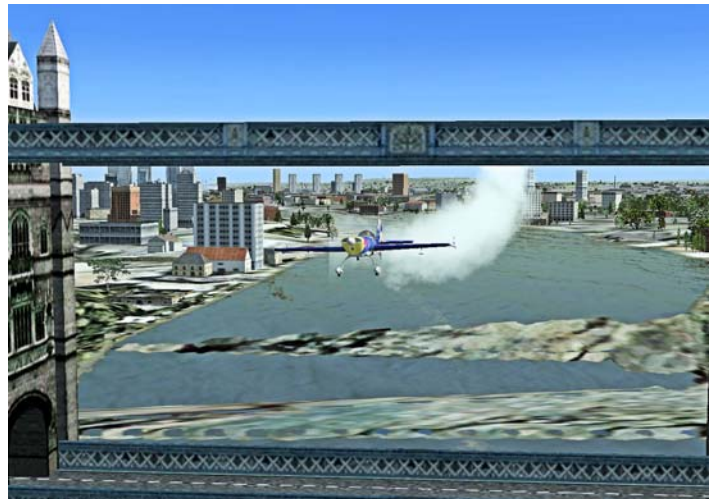
In the meantime here and on the next page are some screen shots to whet your appetite.

Pricing and Availability

£17.98 from Amazon.co.uk inc VAT and free delivery



Red Bull held one of their Air Races at the Dome last July. Here I am emulating the run-in to the Dome — observe the superb water texture.



Here I'm doing my 'show spectacular' flying between the uprights and under the top walkway of Tower Bridge, but note the false landmass in the river.



Following the Green "Follow-me" arrows en-route to a Winter Mountain rescue mission.



Success! — Winter mountain rescue with the help of the EH-101

Roxio Launches Easy Media Creator 10

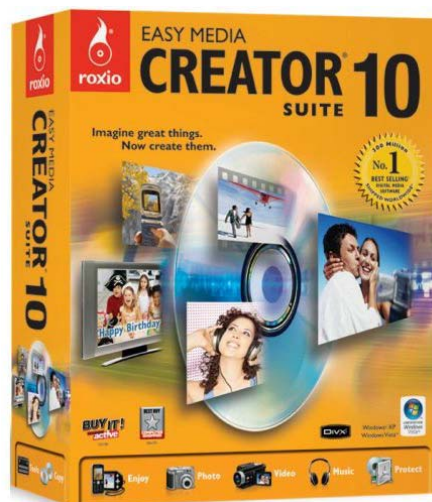
Easy Media Creator 10

The review copy of Easy Media Creator 10 arrived a little late for a review in this issue of ROM, however your editor's first look and impressions are positive and a full review will follow in the next issue of ROM.

In the meantime Roxio have issued an informative Press Release that covers the program's main features.

New Windows Vista-Tuned Software Suite Helps Consumers Get the Most Out of Their Digital Lifestyle.

Roxio, a division of Sonic Solutions, the leader in digital media software, has launched Easy Media Creator 10, a substantial upgrade to the company's flagship suite of digital media applications that enables consumers to quickly and easily turn their photos, video and music into impressive multi-media projects that can be shared on CD, DVD, the Web, or a range of mobile devices. The only complete digital



media suite Certified for Windows Vista, Easy Media Creator 10 provides all of the tools users need to express their digital lives. Roxio Easy Media Creator 10 is available now in retail stores and from Roxio direct at www.roxio.co.uk for £59.99 inc VAT.

The latest version of Easy Media Creator is the ideal complement to Windows Vista. With a stunning new Aero user interface, it is easier than ever for consumers to manage their digital content from one project to the next, whether it is burning a DVD or uploading videos to YouTube. Creator 10 also includes great new Gadgets for Windows Vista, which make it incredibly convenient for users to capture internet and PC audio streams and convert their media files into their preferred format for easy playback on popular mobile devices, like the iPhone or Microsoft Zune.

"We are pleased to have a working relationship with Roxio, a global provider of digital media software," said Dave Wascha, director of marketing for Windows Vista at Microsoft Corp. "Microsoft recognises Sonic's commitment to delivering quality solutions that enhance our users' experience with Windows Vista."

In conjunction with the launch of Easy Media Creator 10, Roxio is introducing Roxio MyMoments, a program designed to help educate consumers on how to make the most

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of their digital lives. More than just online video tutorials, the MyMoments program starts with informational articles covering a broad spectrum of topics such as tips on buying and using a digital camcorder and how to capture great indoor photographs, and then moves on to step-by-step guides that lead users through the process of completing a wide range of personal digital-media projects. MyMoments also incorporates project examples that are designed to inspire creative experimentation. The Roxio MyMoments program is available to all consumers at Roxio.com and will be delivered directly to Easy Media Creator users through Roxio Central, the suite's Web-aware "Home Page."

"Easy Media Creator has always provided digital media enthusiasts with the tools, features, and controls which users of any experience level need to easily create, manage, and enjoy photos, music, and videos," said Mark Ely, executive vice president of strategy, Sonic Solutions. "Understanding that the audience for digital media activities and devices is expanding, Roxio is going a step further with the launch of Creator 10 to provide not only the state-of-the-art digital media software tools designed for the broadest range of users, but also the training and creative inspiration consumers need to get the most out of their digital lives."

Feature Highlights:

Mobile Companion: Roxio Easy Media Creator 10 includes a range of features to

help users optimise their mobile enjoyment of personal digital media content. For example, Mobile Phone Doctor quickly and easily corrects problems common to photos taken with cell phone cameras, while Mobile PhotoFit optimises digital photos for mobile device displays. In addition, Creator 10's Media Manager enables users to synchronise media between the desktop and their portable devices such as iPods, BlackBerrys, PSPs, and other popular mobile devices.

Enhanced Audio Enjoyment

New in Easy Media Creator 10 is the Batch Audio Converter which saves users' time by automatically converting popular audio file types into a single desired format. Multi-CD Ripper enables consumers to use optical drives in parallel to quickly copy their entire CD collection to their PC. Creator's already impressive music capabilities are also enhanced with a new AutoMix feature. AutoMix dynamically generates a perfect playlist that can be saved on a CD, DVD, or sent to a mobile player for enjoyment during a long flight or a social gathering. Roxio Sound Editor now supports VST plug-ins for expanded audio effects and mixing capabilities, and with the DVD Music Album, consumers can create 50-hour music DVDs complete with on-screen navigation that now offers new professionally-designed menu templates.

Video Editing and Publishing

Beyond the unrivalled editing power offered in the 32-track timeline, complete

with batch video-segment removal, timeline markers, and automatic tools for correcting colour or removing background noise, users can now easily add the perfect sound track with SmartSound. Users simply select the music they like and it is automatically added and adjusted to fit the length of their production. Keeping pace with users' desire to share creations with the world, Easy Media Creator 10 also enables consumers to send their finished project to YouTube with one click. Additionally, the suite now provides new menu styles, menu navigation capabilities, and a "Fit-to-Disc" auto encoding option that automatically optimises video quality based on available disc space.

Data Protection

Easy Media Creator 10 supports the widest range of backup devices and media including single and dual-layer Blu-ray Discs and HD DVDs, and comes with a new feature that allows users to archive non-protected iPod music and video files to any PC. Easy Media Creator also enables consumers to protect only the files that have been changed since the last known backup and will even automatically prompt users to archive data when an external Hard Drive is connected.

Pricing and Availability

Roxio Easy Media Creator 10 is available in retail stores worldwide and directly from Roxio at www.roxio.co.uk for £59.99 inc VAT. Registered owners of Roxio and Sonic products may be eligible for special upgrade offers.

New Year's Resolution — Five Ways to Speed up Your PC

by Geoff Arnold

It's the time of year when one can and should make a New Year's Resolution. As computer users' one easy way to keep your PC running sweetly is to use some of Windows simple built in maintenance tools, so why not resolve to do a few simple tasks to make the most of your computers capabilities?

By following a few simple guidelines, you can maintain your computer and keep it healthy by using the simple tools that come with Windows XP (with Service Pack 2) or Windows Vista, you can efficiently maintain your computer and safeguard your privacy when you're online.

Free up Disk Space

By freeing disk space, you can improve the performance of your computer. The Disk Cleanup tool helps you free up space on your hard disk. The utility identifies files that you can safely delete, and then enables you to choose whether you want to delete some or all of the identified files.

Use Disk Cleanup to:

1. Remove temporary Internet files.

2. Remove downloaded program files (such as Microsoft ActiveX controls and Java applets).
3. Empty the Recycle Bin.
4. Remove Windows temporary files.
5. Remove optional Windows components that you don't use.
6. Remove installed programs that you no longer use.

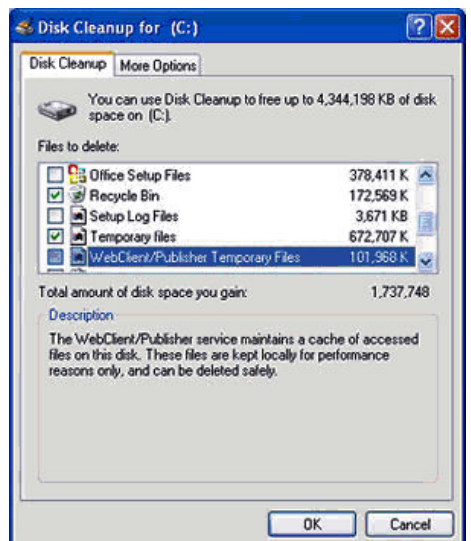
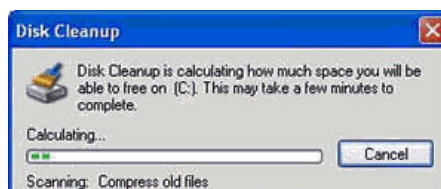
Tip: Typically, temporary Internet files take the most amount of space because the browser caches each page you visit for faster access later.

To use Disk Cleanup

1. Click Start, point to All Programs, point to Accessories, point to System Tools, and then click Disk Cleanup. If several drives are available, you might

be prompted to specify which drive you want to clean.

2. In the Disk Cleanup for dialog box, scroll through the content of the Files to delete list.
3. Choose the files that you want to delete.
4. Clear the check boxes for files that you



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don't want to delete, and then click OK.

5. When prompted to confirm that you want to delete the specified files, click Yes.

After a few minutes, the process completes and the Disk Cleanup dialog box closes, leaving your computer cleaner and performing better.

Speed up Access to Data

Disk fragmentation slows the overall performance of your system. When files are fragmented, the computer must search the hard disk when the file is opened to piece it back together. The response time can be significantly longer.

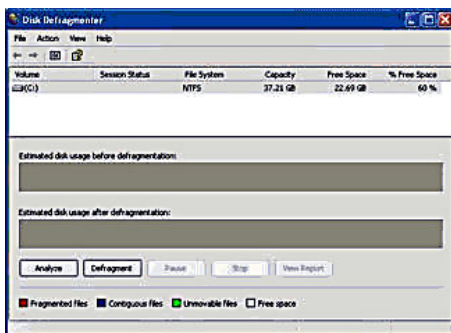
Disk Defragmenter is a Windows utility that consolidates fragmented files and folders on your computer's hard disk so that each occupies a single space on the disk. With your files stored neatly end-to-end, without fragmentation, reading and writing to the disk speeds up.

When to run Disk Defragmenter: In addition to running Disk Defragmenter at regular intervals — monthly is optimal — there are other times you should run it too, such as when:

- You've added a large number of files.
- Your free disk space totals 15 percent or less.
- You install new programs or a new version of Windows.

To Use Disk Defragmenter:

1. Click Start, point to All Programs, point to Accessories, point to System Tools, and then click Disk Defragmenter.



2. In the Disk Defragmenter dialog box, click the drives that you want to defragment, and then click the Analyze button. After the disk is analyzed, a dialog box appears, letting you know whether you should defragment the analyzed drives. *Tip: You should analyze a volume before defragmenting it to get an estimate of how long the defragmentation process will take. A badly fragmented disk can take hours.*

3. To defragment the selected drive or drives, click the Defragment button. *Note: In Windows Vista, there is no graphical user interface to demonstrate the progress — but your hard drive is still being defragmented.*

4. After the defragmentation is complete, Disk Defragmenter displays the results.
5. To display detailed information about the defragmented disk or partition, click View Report.
6. To close the View Report dialog box, click Close.
7. To close the Disk Defragmenter utility, click the Close button on the title bar of the window.

Detect and Repair Disk Errors

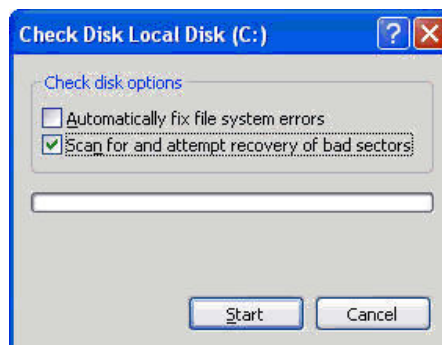
In addition to running Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter to optimize the performance of your computer, you can check the integrity of the files stored on your hard disk by running the Error Checking utility.

As you use your hard drive, it can develop bad sectors. Bad sectors slow down hard disk performance and sometimes make data writing (such as file saving) difficult, or even impossible. The Error Checking utility scans the hard drive for bad sectors, and scans for file system errors to see whether certain files or folders are misplaced.

If you use your computer daily, you should run this utility once a week to help prevent data loss.

To Run the Error Checking Utility:

1. Close all open files.
2. Click Start, and then click My Computer.
3. In the My Computer window, right-click the hard disk you want to search for bad sectors, and then click Properties.
4. In the Properties dialog box, click the Tools tab.
5. Click the Check Now button.
6. In the Check Disk dialog box, select the Scan for and attempt recovery of bad sectors check box, and then click Start.
7. If bad sectors are found, choose to fix them.



Tip: Only select the "Automatically fix file system errors" check box if you think that your disk contains bad sectors.

Protect Your Computer Against Spyware

Spyware collects personal information without letting you know and without asking for permission. From the Web sites you

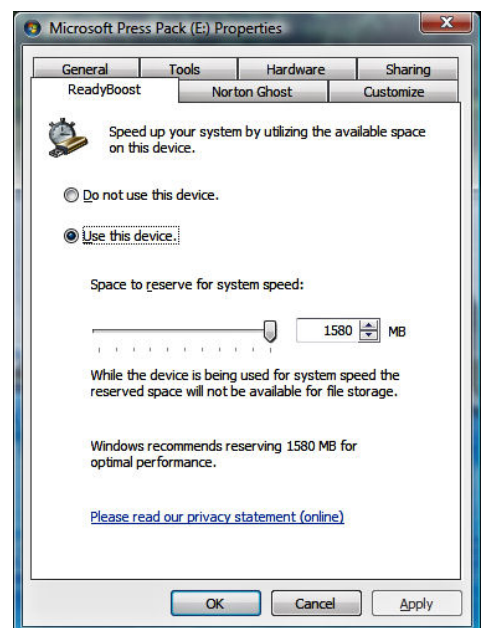
visit to usernames and passwords, spyware can put you and your confidential information at risk. In addition to privacy concerns, spyware can hamper your computer's performance.

To combat spyware, you might want to consider using Microsoft Windows Defender, which is included in Windows Vista, and is available as a free download for Microsoft XP SP2. Alternatively, there are other free anti-spyware software programs available.

Learn All About ReadyBoost

If you're using Windows Vista, you can use ReadyBoost to speed up your system. A new concept in adding memory to a system, it allows you to use non-volatile flash memory — like a USB flash drive or a memory card — to improve performance without having to add additional memory.

Windows ReadyBoost



Windows ReadyBoost improves system memory and boosts performance.

Adding system memory (typically referred to as RAM) is often the best way to improve a PC's performance, since more memory means more applications are ready to run without accessing the hard drive. However, upgrading memory can be difficult and costly, and some machines have limited memory expansion capabilities, making it impossible to add RAM.

So Windows Vista introduced Windows ReadyBoost, a new concept in adding memory to a system. You can use non-volatile flash memory, such as that on a universal serial bus (USB) flash drive, to improve performance without having to add additional memory "under the hood."

The flash memory device serves as an additional memory cache — that is, memory that the computer can access much more quickly than it can access data on the hard drive. Windows ReadyBoost relies on the intelligent

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memory management of Windows SuperFetch and can significantly improve system responsiveness.

It's easy to use Windows ReadyBoost. When a removable memory device such as a USB flash drive or a secure digital (SD)

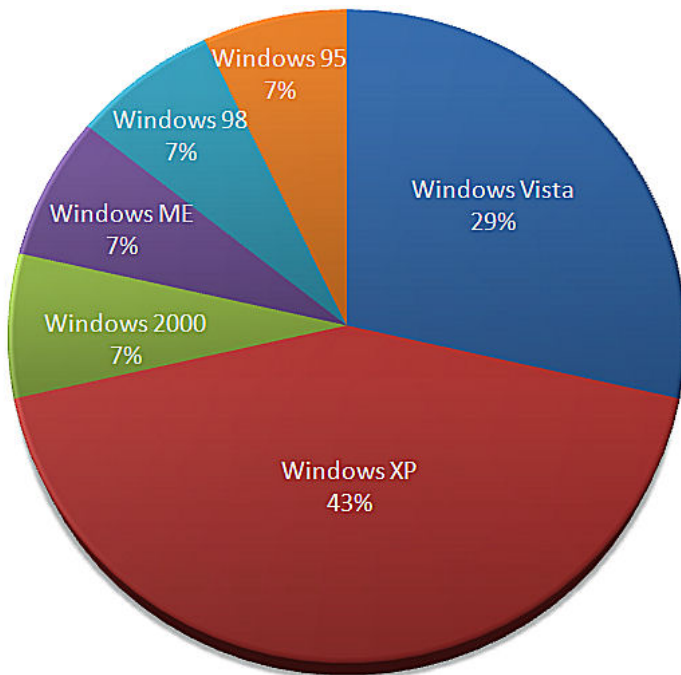
memory card is first inserted into a port, Windows Vista checks to see if its performance is fast enough to work with Windows ReadyBoost. If so, you are asked if you want to use this device to speed up system performance. You can choose to allocate part of a USB drive's memory to speed up performance and use the remainder to store

files.

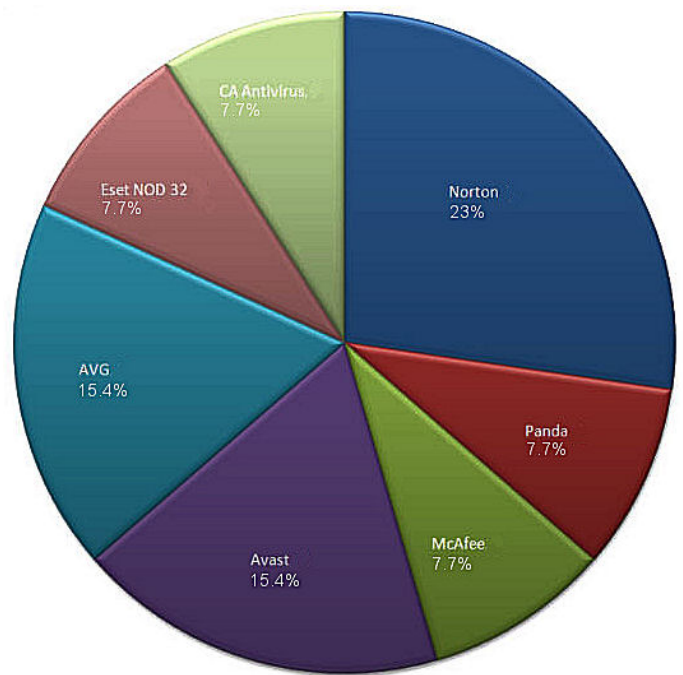
Editor's Tip: You've got three weeks to go until the New Year. The tips and the free tools in this article really can make a difference to the performance of your computer — so what are you waiting for, do it now before the 1st of January! — Ed.

Group Computer Survey

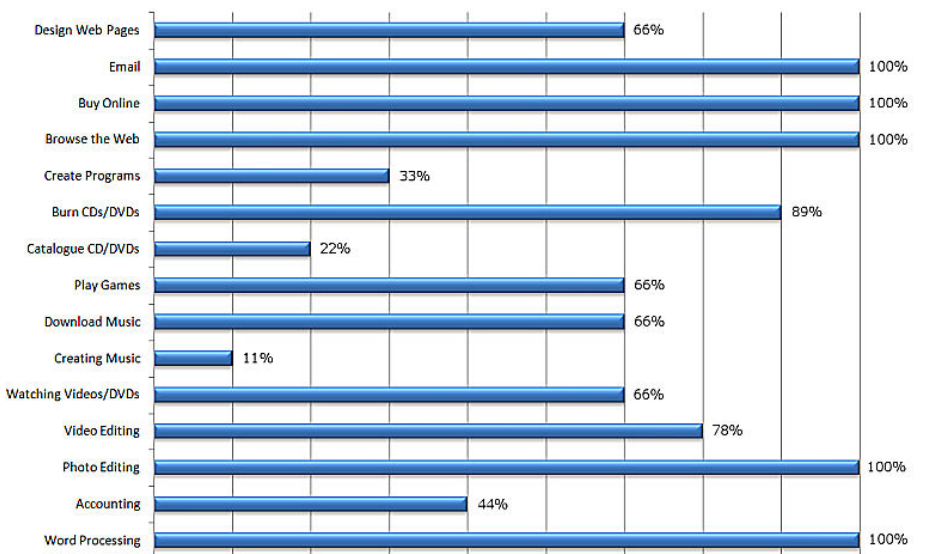
Last summer Laurence Fenn conducted a survey of the computer habits of members. We showed the results on screen at the time and promised to publish them in ROM, so here they are. Thanks Laurence for all you hard work in compiling and charting the results which are displayed here.



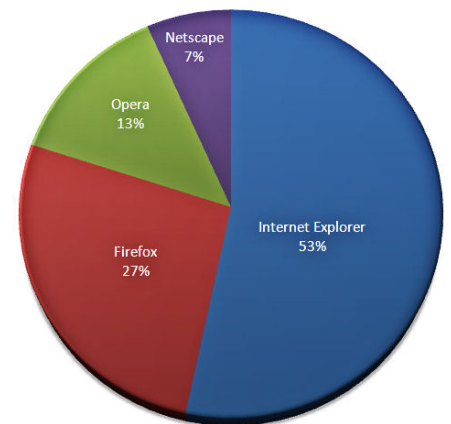
Operating Systems Used:



Anti-Virus Products Used



What's do you use your Computer for?



Web Browsers Used