ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

As you'll read in the Secretary's notes below as well as editing ROM I'm your new Chairman.

Except for Paul Kuzmin's coverage of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008, not too much in the way of reviews in this issue, but there have been a couple of exciting launches:

1. Acer's new "Aspire one" Netbook-sized computer. Lots of top features in a small package. Read more about it and my first impressions in this issue of ROM.
2. Epson's new A3 printer the Stylus Photo Pro R2880 which is aimed at the professional / enthusiastic amateur market segment. Having seen it in action at the launch I'm very impressed and will have a couple of prints to show you to display its print quality. An overview of its properties is in this issue of ROM.

Cheap Software. We are always keen to pick up a bargain, so I was very intrigued when I received a tip from someone who has obviously found a way to use the "official educational discounts" scheme as operated by Microsoft. Full details on page 2 after the Secretary's Notes.

Secretary's Notes

April Meeting — AGM. The evening started by holding the AGM. As the Chairman position is vacant the meeting was opened by Tony Hawes, the Editor of ROM. Tony emphasised the importance of ROM and but said it was still an uphill struggle to get articles. He thanked these who regularly provided contributions but asked for more members to give some thought to it.

The Secretary, Bryce McCrirrick, pointed out how important it was to increasing our numbers. It is only with a considerably larger audience that we can reasonably invite representatives of manufacturers to come and discuss their products. The last five or so months the talk has been given by Tony, and we are very grateful to him for this but he must be running out of subjects. The Treasurer, Francis Jacques, presented the accounts. Under the new management of the hall our rent expenditure over the last year has decreased and we are still in the black and showing an increase in our reserves. He recommended that the subscription for the next year should remain at £20. The committee then stood down.

Tony Hawes was proposed and seconded as Chairman and Editor of ROM which was agreed unanimously. The other positions of Secretary, Treasurer and Web Master remained with the incumbents who were elected unopposed by the members present. The first action of the new committee was to propose that the subscription remain at £20 as suggested by the Treasurer. This was agreed and the AGM closed.

April Talk. The evening talk was given by Paul Kuzmin and his subject was the new DVD Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008. He started by comparing Britannica

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

NEXT MEETING — Monday 9th June 2008 at 7.45 p.m.

Create Professional Looking Web Pages

Ross Carter will be demonstrating Vectrasoft web author. Vectrasoft Web author is a code-only editor for Windows that allows you to create professional looking Web pages using simple scripting commands instead of HTML. Ideal for both professional and beginners, small businesses, education, clubs and organisations

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 14th July 2008 at 7.45 pm
   Databases — What can you do with them?
Monday 11th August 2008. Summer holiday break — No Meeting.
Monday 8th September 2008 at 7.45 pm. The Acer Aspire 8920G (Gemstone) notebook with its 18.4-inch screen, Dolby sound and Blu-ray DVD. A high-end Multimedia laptop — see it in action.

with Encarta. He found that Britannica was considerably more academic than Encarta which was rather "theme park" but commented surprisingly, with examples, that Encarta gave more emphasis to British matters. Britannica was rather "Americanised".

Britannica includes over 100,000 articles, 20,000 photos and illustrations and over 2,000 maps and organises them in a logical way with a browser-style presentation with a clear row of icons at the top.

The user is introduced to three age categories: Britannia Elementary Library for ages 6 to 10, Britannica Student Library for ages 10 to 14 and Encyclopaedia Britannica Library for older students and adults. Each category had a further subdivision such as (for the main library) Brainstorm, Timelines, Workspace, Explore, Atlas and Dictionary with a A-Z Browse down the left side. The atlas division, however, Paul felt was disappointing in that it did not provide detail and was to a small scale. Paul will be writing an article for ROM giving more details and installation information. A most interesting DVD and so different from the early 90's with its Britannica Encyclopaedia in 32 volumes (which I once had a copy of). The DVD is priced at £40.

May Meeting — Microsoft Live OneCare version 2.0. Your editor showed Microsoft's Windows Live OneCare 2.0, which Microsoft describes as an all-in-one, self-updating PC care service.

Windows Live OneCare has had a shaky history, but as demonstrated the latest version, Windows Live OneCare 2.0, is vastly improved and fixes most of the problems of the earlier 1.6 version whilst at the same time adding a matching set of features that complements the built-in security and PC health features as found in Windows Vista.

Like previous versions, it combines antivirus, anti-spyware, and firewall security features with PC tune-up functionality and a first-class PC backup and restore service. But the latest version takes these features to the next level with centralised multiple-PC management, monthly progress reports, online photo backup, and other new features.

One particular feature that Tony enthused over was the Start-time Optimizer. While Windows users can turn to a number of places in the User Interface to control what applications run when Windows boots, there's never been a truly excellent and centralised control panel for this kind of functionality. OneCare 2.0 seeks to fill this need with a new Start-time Optimizer, which is available via the Tune-up tab of the OneCare Settings dialog. There, one sees a button labelled Change start-up settings, which unleashes one of OneCare's best, and most well-hidden, new features.

The resulting window, simply titled "Turn off unused programs," is fairly obvious: Here one saw an alphabetical list of the applications that have been configured to run when Windows boots up. Next to each

application is a set of On-Off toggle switches: Those marked On will run, those marked Off will not. What makes this feature special is that we saw some information about each application, which was accessed by clicking the little carat character that's found between the icon and name of each entry. This, along with suggestions found next to most but not all entries, will help the non-technical make better decisions about which applications to disable at boot-time: After all, it's not always clear which things are safe to disable.

As Tony explained going into a DOS session and using MS Config via Regedit allows you to do this but is not so easy to interpret or use as Live OneCare's Start-time Optimizer.

Among the other features the anti-virus trapped Tony's pet nasty virus in its tracks and the Firewall appeared safe whilst backup, as shown, backed up working files on a daily basis, with very little in the way of impact on resources.

Pricewise Windows OneCare 2.0 costs about £24 a year at Amazon.co.uk, but it can generally be found for much less (£11 as an OEM product) which is a bargain. In fact, it's turned the PC security industry on its head. Now, McAfee, Symantec, and other major players are all offering OneCare-like products too.

A fine set of tools with a demonstration that made for an interesting and informative evening.

Cheap Software

"I came across the website **www.software4students.co.u** the other day and thought I should let your readers know about it, as I like passing on good news and bargains. As the website name suggests, it's designed for students, so you'll need the name of the school or university that you or your children go to. If you find that yours isn't listed, just email the website and the details will be added."

Reply: "Thanks for the tip. A quick look at the website shows that there are some amazing bargains to be had for students, including Office Professional Plus 2007 for £46 and Windows Vista Ultimate Upgrade for £59. The site is supported by Microsoft and, *although no ID or student card is required, you or someone else in your house needs to be at a UK-registered school, college or university.*

For the rest of us looking for a bargain on Microsoft software there are a couple of alternatives. The Home and Student edition of Office 2007 costs around £75 and includes licences for three PCs, so it's great value. Windows operating systems can be bought cheaply if you go for the OEM versions, which have to be bought with a piece of hardware, such as a motherboard or hard disk. However, the OEM versions don't have the same level of support as the retail versions and you're effectively saying that you'll support yourself. If you're happy with this, though, you can find some good deals, such as Windows Vista Home Premium for around £60 including VAT."

Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Edition 2008 vs Microsoft Encarta 2008 Reviewed by Paul Kuzmin

It was with pleasure that I had a look at these old faithful programmes in an up-to-date guise. The setting was our third computer, a hand-me-down practice server that was replaced a year ago. This was a German battle tank made by Fujitsu Siemens in Germany and it showed. You may well see this device at my demonstration if I can manage to lift it in and out of the car! The specification is a Pentium IV 1.6 with 512 MB RAM with Windows occupying an IDE drive and the original 3 server SSCI drives (well only 2 as one has not been working for a while) occupied by a new install of Linux Ubuntu. The purpose was for my daughter to have a computer for homework, chat and the Sims for which it was perfectly adequate but never a gaming machine.

Installation

For safety I opted for a standard Windows XP install as really I did not find that Ubuntu was used very much owing to its massive incompatibility with normal programmes (and for that matter graphics cards and wireless network cards).

I was comfortable with my system requirements given the minimum of a Pentium III or equivalent running Windows 2000, XP or Vista (or Mac OS 10.4) and 1.6 to 3.8 GB hard drive space, 512 MB of memory and a DVD drive.

There was a logical installation sequence with no computer glitches whatever running under the title of InstallAnywhere by Macrovision. Did they really mean install anywhere?

Well they sort of did looking at the licence agreement you can use the program anywhere at a single location at any time and transfer the work from one computer to another and be at home or portable. All this can be done as long as you do not simultaneously use the full programme and the saved work at the same time.

I did get stumped momentarily looking for the serial number as described on the jewel case or packaging which was not its true location. It was actually on the disc itself.

There were three product installation options: typical, full or custom. The latter was recommended for people with limited disk space who wanted to install specific multimedia and images and the typical install would install everything but video and audio files on the hard drive. With ample disk space obviously the full install was the best option. During the process the QuickTime 7 installer fired up clearly required for the multimedia played by this programme.

PC/MAC DVD-ROM
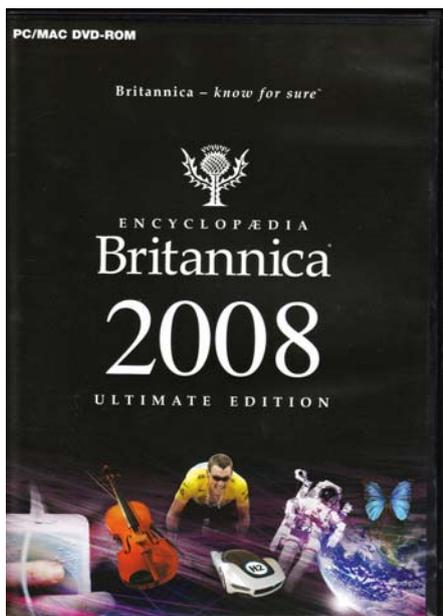
In Use

The new user was introduced to a screen dividing the programme between three age categories: Britannica Elementary Library for ages 6 to 10, Britannica Student Library for ages 10 to 14 and Encyclopaedia Britannica Library for older students and adults.

There was a tick box to always remember one selection which I left unchecked so that all three could be selected in the future.

Registration then followed and once this was complete a screen came up with the exclusive customer benefits of a free subscription to Britannica online for 1 year (worth the same price as the DVD apparently), free content updates, discounts on Britannica merchandise and e-newsletters. Although I said I didn't want to receive the newsletters, they still came and actually were quite interesting telling me what happened on this day in the past type facts.

The online content was nicely laid out from what I could see again containing a section of what happened on the day and some topical articles among various advertising links including a 26 volume Compton's Encyclopaedia presumably on paper and an edition of Britannica for iPhone, which figures given its alliance with the QuickTime program. I would have liked a Windows Mobile edition offered beside this for fairness.

The actual Encyclopaedia presentation was really ergonomic and modern as would be expected. On the left was browse section in alphabetical order with chat to each letter of the alphabet and there was a search box top left with browser style back, forward and home buttons with links to explore, dictionary, Atlas, timelines, brainstorm, workspace and update. The front page consisted of this day in history again with links to change the library and the Britannica shop. One could browse through the various sections or put a word in the search box at the moment the user started typing the first letter, a list of words started being suggested which was superior to Encarta.

Once updated you got an account of which articles were updated resulting in even greater temptation to look through subjects that might be topical.

One feature which I thought could be improved was the atlas section where I would have liked more levels of zoom to perhaps produce an online geographical and political map of any area selected rather than the fairly static in marks that were present in most countries. The level of detail about these however was very adequate. I really like the little notes which one could reference from the articles and collate.

This type of project management makes the whole experience very easy and well organised. And one can save a complete article in one go as a web page (why not something like an .rtf file?) to the hard drive of the computer. Pictures on the webpage however did not generate the larger images they should have done and I think they have got this bit of web programming slightly wrong, but this is a minor

niggle. A complete article copied does carry at the top the fact that it is a Britannica article in fairly bold type which can easily be deleted them by a person compiling an article.

Children's Versions

The Student Library looked serious compared with Children's Encarta 2007 actually more like the grown-up version of Encarta 2007!

The homework help desk would capture the eye of most children struggling with homework. This section replaced the brainstorming of the adult version. There are sections could be accessed via thumbnails in a pleasant interface and more detail was available on each of the short articles the reader retrieved.

The caption "This day in history" is replaced in the student library by "Biography of the day" and in the elementary library by "Animal of the day". There are more references to America and American history in Britannica than Encarta which I think has had a lot of the American bits stripped out and more British put in from what I can see. Tabbed browsing continues throughout all three dictionaries. In general history is given an equal emphasis between American and British in all 3 versions. An example quoted by another reviewer on the Internet is that the recent bombings in London were mentioned in the Encarta 2007 but not the Britannica 2008 which I can confirm is the case.

ENCARTA 2007 REFERENCE LIBRARY

This is not the latest version of Encarta with the 2008 Premium version now available. System requirements with both identi-

cal except the disk space which on 2007 is 850 MB and on 2008 is 1.2 GB. The other details are vague pensions 600 MHz processor (1 GHz recommended) Windows XP SP2 or later and 256 MB of RAM (512 MB or more recommended) and a DVD drive. I read somewhere that the US version has about 1.5 times more content than the UK & Ireland edition which seems a little unfair. As can be seen at the table at the end it is no match for the quantity of information present in this year's Britannica.
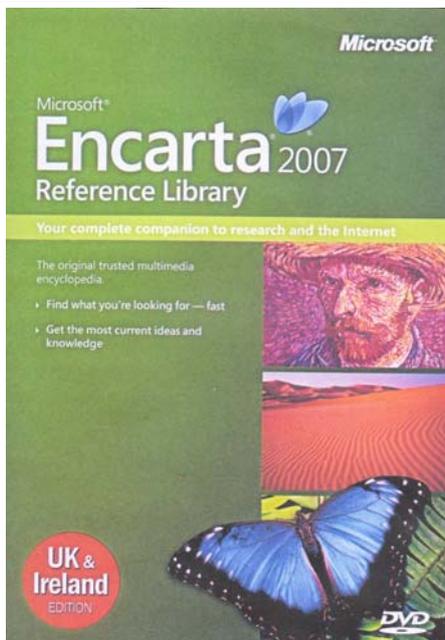
Installation

Following disc insertion, the user is given a somewhat different option to Britannica in that this programme can be installed on a small network within the licence agreement and I clicked on the network install guide and got the following rather complex instruction headings which I did not proceed with:

"Installing the Program over a Network

Making the program available over the network is a four-step process:

1. Create a shared folder
2. Determine the installation location for Learning Essentials
3. Create a server image of the installation files
4. Install the program on client computers

I won't bore you with details but there then followed a verbose and complex set of instructions which described these steps in detail.

There are two installation options: all copied your hard drive or run from the DVD. The space required for full installation on the hard drive was 2.731 GB, which was not what it said on the box so I take it the 850 MB was more of a minimum to run from the DVD.

In Use

The entry screen front page is a rather lurid leaf green background with only the

few navigation buttons (back, forwards, home and features). There is also a search box and in the main window links to art and literature, performing arts, geography, science and technology, history, life sciences, social science and religion, sports and leisure, Children's Encarta and Update Encarta. I really disliked this appearance and would much prefer a Windows Media Player 11 style with a modern looking menu system which they used to adopt in older versions. Everything seemed enormous as if you needed to be able to use the program on very small screens that we have long since abandoned. I thought this seemed a bit extreme. It was quite surprising that the whole article being read could not be saved in its entirety to the hard drive only swiped over by the mouse and copied and then pasted into another program but cleverly the copyright to Encarta appears on the bottom of the article.

Simplicity

Simplicity seemed to be the theme of this version with the link to art and literature and later English literature having a series of thumbnails about famous authors and then a Web style page covering printed and audiovisual links about their work. There was a lot of empty space on each of these pages as shown below.

Because of the absence of tabbed browsing it was quite difficult to return to articles looked at before the previous page and I thought this was an appalling omission considering that Internet Explorer seven caught up with rival browsers by the time this Encyclopaedia was written so we assumed that Microsoft had got the message. Putting a word in the search box only generated a list after a few letters.

On clicking on links there were brief summaries of the works of each author with the option to "open sidebar".

I expected something on the side to open a box but just got another link to a more detailed account of the work with a fairly long extract (claimed to include articles from The Times). I really do feel that things should be described as they are and perhaps the link should have been called "more detail".

One link I selected was part of a play so I thought that I could try to appreciate it with the text reader available from the edit menu. This unfortunately did not read the header description only the content below and in a very robotic voice which seems not to have moved on in the last 10 years of text reader technology. Why could we not have a link to

the Internet for a media file with real actors reading out these passages?

Encarta's Twelfth Night

For comparison this is the Britannica screen of the same play:

Britannica seemed to have more variety when just putting in the words "Twelfth night" including more obscure interpretations links to actors, other Shakespeare and related music compared with just the play and reference to the epiphany that Encarta seemed to concentrate on.

Timelines

Both programmes had timelines, Encarta showing everything but filterable and Britannica forcing the user to select a particular filter from the start. The former was preferable and more visually striking.

Maps

There is one area where Encarta won hands down however we choose in the atlas section which has a far better interface with zooming levels than the very disappointing one on Britannica where a whole country did not even fill the screen with only principal cities and provinces marked. I did not however spot any ability to fly over continents that I seem to remember from previous editions of Encarta (or am I thinking of Flight Simulator?).

The Encarta version of where we were going to spend holiday could be almost comparable to a Google map online that I downloaded and I was even able to stick a fully labelled pincushion where the hotel was a little like Autoroute. You can also measure distances with a single drag the mouse from one location to another which is very useful though just as the crow flies rather than road or rail distances.

Children's Version

This was again a gigantically large, gar-

ish set of icons covering the major topics and the mouseover effect was to create an animated slideshow of pictures over each one.

The appeal was probably for younger children again with thumbnails to click on in each topic but generally of a good standard with Internet links at the bottom.

Remember also the integrated and appealing "Student tools" that create help in producing homework style pieces equally well in maths, science and essay competition. Templates were present in both Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. Nice charting tools were also present but I could not find ways of getting formulae from line graphs which would have been useful and can easily be done in Excel. The new feature of this is a new toolbar that is launched after the "Student Tools" button is clicked to navigate between the different sections in a more stylish manner. I thought the improvement in this area was well worth the purchase price.

Dictionaries and Thesaurus

Each encyclopaedia contains a dictionary and thesaurus of good quality and often more than one source. They were entirely different of course. Encarta also has translation tools both ways in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian. Britannica does not.

I tried to search for the scaphoid bone of the wrist in each of the ordinary Encyclopaedias and Britannica somewhat disappointingly gave me no articles at all so as far as I was concerned it therefore didn't exist. If you went into the dictionary section however there was a brief reference to it. There was, however, a very good article that was completely accurate about the wrist bones in general where scaphoid was actually mentioned so this is a real negative in that it did not manage to cross reference something that surely would be in the original Encyclopaedia index. Encarta did navigate to this bone from its search box is just one dictionary item and no articles. Both got the pronunciation (from the phonetic in Britannica) totally wrong with an "a" like in "scaffold" instead of "scale" and both also incorrectly stated that it was also known as the navicular bone of the wrist which it is not. The reference being just a dictionary one misses completely the medical significance that if this bone fractures and the fracture is not spotted and put in plaster,

serious consequences can occur unlike those to any other bone in the wrist.

Snazzy

The two competing snazzy features as I would term them are the revolving thumbnails are available in the visual browser of Encarta which has been around for a few years now. Movement of the mouse causes the pictures to revolve carousel style and then one of them can be clicked on to appear after a couple of seconds in the bottom of the window where of further click and select the article.

The right-hand sidebar on Encarta also contains similar thumbnails and retreats rather spectacularly when the reader has selected an article.

I am more impressed with Britannica in the incorporation of "The Brain" a mind mapping interface in its "Brainstorming" section.
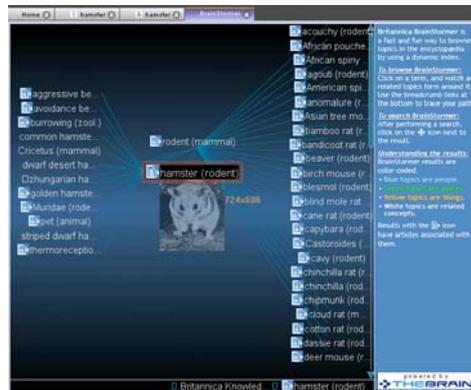
This used to be just an alternative computer desktop that a user could organise for themselves, but this method of linking articles put the whole encyclopaedia into a different order of magnitude with rapid re-linking every time a topic is clicked on so that related topics could be rapidly accessed. The sheer speed and agility of this feature has to be seen to be believed.

Conclusion

Encarta is more entertaining to use and still has the mind maze. I would say that Britannica is more of a traditional encyclopaedia transpose as faithfully as possible to computer catering equally for British and American markets and Encarta is more of a kind of theme park of information presented simply and entertainingly and definitely not a traditional encyclopaedia. Perhaps Britannica

could do with a slight facelift especially in its sidebar appearance which is more difficult to navigate than that of Encarta. The American slant of Britannica is a bit annoying with spelling, article bias and factual differences as in classifying dogs such as the Akita in the American Kennel Club classification as in the working group not the British Kennel Club utility group.

I asked the children which one they preferred and it was Britannica – just.

If I had to choose one it would be Britannica for its more traditional layout and ease of use with the tabbed browsing and brainstorming features winning the day. I still think both could be massively longer with current hard drive sizes perhaps a triple DVD version (all stored on the hard drive) would be more the kind of thing that would challenge Wikipedia and Google. If I were doing any kind of project work I'm sure this could be accomplished by both programmes but Britannica thought more like I do and Encarta surprised and entertained but didn't really seem to be on the same wavelength. I do not really think we need to have UK and US versions of these encyclopaedias but for the more obscure British content the user would really require Encarta rather than the more generalised Britannica. Very small children or those who

need a lot of visual stimulation will certainly prefer Encarta. If you are able to, I would suggest buying both as there are many attributes in each that the other misses.

Comparison Table		
	Encyclopaedia Britannica 2008 Ultimate Edition	Encarta 2007
Disc Space	1.6-3.8 GB	0.85-2.731 GB
Articles	101,230	42,000
Words	56,741,947	?
Internet Article links	166,000	19,000
Still images	20,793	25,000
Videos & Animations	346	275
Sound & Media Clips	644	3,100
Atlas	2,543 Maps	1,800,000 Map Locations
Tabbed Browsing	Yes	No
Microsoft Office Integration	No	Yes
Save Article	Yes	No
Text Reader	No	Yes but robotic
Dictionary Pronunciation	No	Yes
Foreign Language Translation	No	French, Spanish, German, Italian
Cultural Emphasis	US	UK
Multimedia Quality	Adequate	Good
Onboard Workspace Compiler	Yes	No
Price	£36.48 (Amazon)	£2.99 or £51.99 for current full 2008 Student Version.

Acer Aspire one Netbooks

Acer Aspire one — Acer's first mobile Internet device

At the launch last week here's what Acer's Public Relations department have to say about Acer's new baby (baby in all senses as its new and very small) the all-new Acer Aspire one.

Jun 3, 2008 Milan: Acer, the third largest vendor in the global PC market, today presented the Aspire one, an all-new communication device designed to make your online activities fast, simple and utterly cool.

The Aspire one is a brand new product and, despite its size, it is not just another notebook: it's a stylish all-new digital device designed to deliver continuous access to the internet no matter where you are.

The Aspire one is something that follows you everywhere you go, and opens the door to new and unexplored areas of the online world. For this reason it was important to reduce weight and dimensions.

The result is a masterpiece of technological simplicity with an intuitive and specifically optimized software interface to support connectivity needs. At just 24 x 17 cm (9½ X 6¾ inches) and weighing less than one kilo, the Aspire one is not only extremely compact (smaller than an average office diary) but offers numerous connec-tivity possibilities, a full and easy-to-use software application suite and a battery life of up to 6 hours..

Getting Connected

Small and smart, the Aspire one takes you wherever you want to be and keeps you connected when you get there. The Aspire one comes with 802.11b/g WiFi built-in as standard for easy access to available wireless networks and can also be specified with a choice of embedded WiMAX or 3G wireless technologies for even greater wireless freedom. The result is always the same: you're online in an instant and can stay there as long as you want.

Your Editor get a personal hands-on briefing from Gianpierro Morbello, Acer's Corporate Vice President—Marketing

In addition, Acer Signal Up technology ensures maximum quality and stability to the wireless signal.

Keyboard

The input interface of the Aspire one features a 95% full-sized keyboard for natural,

Launch Colours: Silver & Blue

Software Interface showing Connect, Work, Fun and Files menus
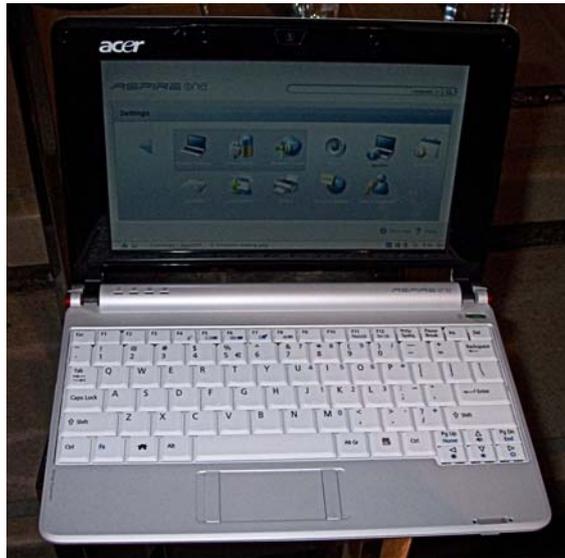
Keyboard and Touchpad

Left Side. Power, External VGA socket, Ethernet, USB2 and SD Card slot

Right Side. Mic. Headphones, 2 x USB2, Memory Card and Kensington Lock

easy typing.

Getting Organised

Whether you're checking your mail, managing your online bank account or chatting with friends, the Aspire one offers a simple, intuitive Linux interface that clearly organizes everything you need to surf, work or simply have fun. The pre-installed software is separated by functions and presented in 4 distinct areas on the screen – Connect, Works, Fun and Files – that is so simple it's impossible to get confused: the easier it is to get things done, the simpler it is to enjoy life.

Ergonomics and reduced dimensions do not mean the view isn't spectacular: the Aspire one has an 8.9" CrystalBrite LED backlit display with a resolution of 1024x600 pixels. Integrated in the top of the screen is the unique Acer CrystalEye webcam for live video streaming, video chats and conferences.

Style

The Aspire one uses colour to combine connectivity with inimitable style. Initially available in blue and white, the range of colours available for the Aspire one will be expanded after the summer with two new soft, warm tones: brown and pink.

The four colours – sapphire blue, seashell white, golden brown and coral pink – give the Aspire one an individual and quite distinctive look and feel that matches the style and personality of its lucky owner.

Data Freedom

The Aspire one is equipped with Intel Atom processor, Linpus Linux Lite or Windows XP Home, and comes with 512MB or 1GB of RAM memory installed.

There are two alternatives for data storage: a NAND flash module of 8GB or an 80GB internal HDD. In addition the Aspire one reads 5 different types of memory card – Secure Digital, MultiMediaCard, Memory Stick, Memory Stick PRO, xD-Picture Card – for absolute data freedom.

To increase storage capacity, the Aspire one features the unique Smart File Manager, a simple solution that instantly and seamlessly

merges extra storage from any SD card inserted in the 2nd SD card slot into the memory available to the user.

Software

Acer has worked hard on improving the user experience by designing a friendly, easy-to-use and comprehensive interface that simplifies interaction between users and the Aspire one by taking a more natural approach to screen layout and functionality.

The Linpus Linux Lite version is the result, guiding and accompanying even novice users through the Internet in an intuitive, "virus-safe" and super-responsive Linux environment.

The Aspire one features the one Mail software suite that lets you manage up to six of your email accounts with a single application interface, including your office accounts. A small icon to the right of the message quickly and clearly shows the appropriate mail account. Nothing could be simpler to replace push e-mail services without using a corporate server.

The Aspire one uses Messenger for Instant Messaging, an application that allows users to simultaneously access Skype, Microsoft Messenger and various other instant messaging services. The software can be used with the integrated video camera for instant video-chats and video conferences.

The Aspire one series comes preinstalled with Linpus Linux Lite version or Windows XP Home. Furthermore, additional software such as OpenOffice 2.3, one Mail, Messenger, Acer eRecovery Management, Acer Launch Manager, Adobe Reader, McAfee Internet Security Suite, Microsoft Office Trial 2007 are also installed.

The Aspire one comes with a 1-year carry in warranty which can be extended to 2 years with Acer Advantage.

Full Specifications

- CPU: Intel Atom N270 (1.6GHz, 533MHz FSB, 512 KB L2 Cache).

- Memory: 512MB DDR2 533MHz SDRAM on-board (Upgradable to 1GB or 1.5GB using 512MB or 1GB so-DIMM).

- Display: 8.9in WSVGA, 1,024 x 600 pixel resolution, LED Backlit, 180 cd/m2.

- Storage: 8GB NAND Flash Module (Linux Versions) or 80GB 2.5in HDD (Windows XP Versions), 2 Memory Card Readers (SD, MMC, RS-MMC, MS, MS PRO, xD). The second SD card slot can be used to expand the memory via a system that Acer calls the "Smart File Manager".

- Audio: Integrated 2-speaker HD Audio with integrated microphone.

- Communication: 802.11b/g Wi-Fi, 10/100 Fast Ethernet, Integrated 3.6MB 3G/HSDPA (Optional), WiMAX (Optional), 0.3 Megapixel WebCam.

- Dimensions: 249 x 170 x 29mm (WxDxH) for NAND Flash and 3-cell battery version; 249 x 195 x 36mm for HDD version with 6-cell battery.

- Weight: 995g for NAND Flash, 3-cell battery versions; 1.26kg for HDD/6-cell versions.

- Power: 30 W adapter with power cord.

- Battery: 24 W 2200mAh 3-cell battery (3-hours life); 57 W 2600mAh 6-cell (7-hours life). Battery life based on NAND flash versions editions.

- Warranty: 1 Year Carry-in, upgradeable to 2 Years.

- Initially available in glossy blue and white Acer will add pink and brown models later.

A Brief Hands-on

At the launch among the scrum of journalists, there wasn't too much time to test the Aspire one, but hands-on it felt good. Although the keyboard is small the keys felt firm and it's quite possible to type quite naturally. However, those with big fingers may find the keys a little cramped.

The touch pad works OK but is slightly odd in that the touch pad buttons are either side of the pad rather than being underneath as in "normal" notebooks, but doubtless this wouldn't be a problem once one gets used to it.

On the demo model the interface is split into 'Connect', 'Work', 'Fun' and 'Files' boxes. Firefox is the supplied internet browsing application, whilst the word processing is done with Open Office. Installed are a couple of other programs with Instant Messenger and an e-mail client to cater for your mail needs.

Connectivity comes through the sockets on the sides. On the left side can be found the power inlet socket, external VGA port, Ethernet socket, a USB2.0 port and a SD memory-card slot. On the right can be found the microphone and headphones sockets, a further two USB2.0 ports, the second memory-card slot and a socket for a Kensington security lock.

Conclusions

Pros: Solid build quality. Good clear screen and cheap compared with the competition in the mini-laptop market such as ASUS EeePC 900 or HP Mini-Note. The Intel Atom processor makes for lower power consumption and long battery life. The only cons are that there is no Bluetooth or built-in optical drive, although it was mentioned at the launch that an external DVD drive will be available as an "extra".

Given the choice I'd go for the 80GB Windows XP version. Acer appear to be on to a winner so watch this space when we get a review sample.

Pricing and Availability

The entry level Linux operated, NAND flash version will retail at £199 inc. VAT and goes on sale on 10th July. The 80GB Windows XP version will cost £299 inc. VAT and will go on sale shortly afterwards.

Intel Atom Processor for Netbooks

At the launch of the new Acer Aspire one Netbook, Intel were on hand to extol the virtues of their new Atom Processor designed exactly for the new generation of mini-notebooks, or Netbooks as they are now called, where low power consumption and good performance in a small package comes to the fore.

The Intel Atom processor serves as the brain for a range of small, simple computing devices called netbooks that are designed for a good Internet experience while you're on the go. Get the performance needed to enjoy popular online activities like streaming videos or music, emailing, web surfing or more.

Intel Atom Processor Micro architecture

Newly designed from the ground up, the Intel Atom processor is based on entirely new hafnium-based 45nm micro-architecture. Representing Intel's smallest and lowest power processor yet[1], the Intel Atom processor enables a new generation of powerful and energy-efficient Mobile Internet Devices (MIDs) and a new category of simple devices for the internet called netbooks and nettops that will be available at affordable prices.

Delivering new design possibilities due to its remarkably small size and performance-per-watt advantages, the Intel Atom processor provides:

- Performance for a great internet experience in a range of sub 1 watt to 4 watt thermal power envelope based on industry leading benchmarks and web page rendering performance

- Greater energy efficiency for mobile devices enabled by incredibly low average power and idle power, scaling performance from 800MHz to 1.86GHz

- Power-optimized front side bus of up to 533MHz for faster data transfer on demanding mobile applications

- Scalable performance and increased power efficiency with multi-threading support

- Improved performance on multimedia and

gaming applications with support for Streaming SIMD Extensions 3 (SSE3)

- Improved power management with new Deep Power Down (C6) enabled on the Intel Atom processor Z5xx series for MIDs, and extended C4 states enabled on Intel Atom processor N270 for netbooks, in addition to non-grid clock distribution, clock gating, CMOS bus mode, and other power saving architectural features

- Low TDP enabled by improved power management technologies delivering high performance to run the real Internet and a broad range of software applications/

Intel Atom Processor for Netbooks

Simple, affordable devices for your online life.

The Intel Atom processor serves as the brain for a range of simple, affordable devices designed for the Internet called netbooks. The Intel Atom processor delivers the performance needed to enjoy popular activities like streaming videos or music, emailing, web surfing or instant messaging. Whether you're at home, travelling, or

hanging out at a café, you can enjoy your favourite online activities.

Designed to be Compact in size – and Price

Based on groundbreaking low-power micro-architecture, the Intel Atom processor powers Internet devices designed to go where you go. Sometimes all you want is to go online to keep in touch with friends or follow your favourite Web sites. Netbooks with the Intel Atom processor deliver con-

venience and flexibility for a good Internet experience.

Empowering your Internet Lifestyle

The Intel Atom processor was specifically engineered to deliver the performance you need to keep surfing, blogging, listening to music, watching video or communicating with the world as you move through your day. And the Intel Atom processor's low-power design enables extended battery life so you can stay online and on the go longer.

All of the Internet, none of the Baggage

Perfect for when you want to take Internet capabilities with you and leave the rest behind. Whether you want a companion machine dedicated to online activities or an easy-to-use device for letting your family explore the Web, the Intel Atom processor makes those Internet activities accessible and affordable.

Performance Parameters

- Clock Speed   Up to 1.6 GHz
- Number of Cores   1
- Front Side Bus   Up to 533 MHz
- L2 Cache   512 KB

New From Pinnacle

Pinnacle Makes it Easy to Preserve and Enhance Videos with the New Dazzle Video Capture Family

Dazzle Products Now Include Software to Effortlessly Create DVDs and Quickly Edit High-Quality, Impressive Movies

London, May 22, 2008 – Pinnacle Systems, Inc., the consumer division of Avid Technology, Inc., announces today the update of its Dazzle video capture family. The Dazzle family allows consumers to easily transfer video content from camcorders, VCRs or almost any other video device and burn it to DVDs for archiving and viewing. The Dazzle family consists of three products: Dazzle DVD Recorder to easily back up videotapes to DVD, Dazzle Video Creator for digitising videos and quickly editing them with the included Pinnacle Studio software, and Dazzle Video Creator Platinum, includes Pinnacle Studio software and ScoreFitter vol.1 & 2 plug-ins to create great looking movies from captured videos. These movies can be shared on the web or even transferred to mobile devices like Apple iPod and Sony PSP.

Many people have their special memories recorded on VHS tapes, which aren't the best format for long-term storage and over the years show signs of video quality deg-

radation, with the risk of having those special videotaped moments disappearing. The best solution is to transfer them to DVD. Today's DVD burners and easy-to-use video capture solutions like Dazzle make the task of transferring footage to DVD discs affordable, fast and simple. The Dazzle product family is the one-stop solution for effortlessly digitising and archiving videos, prolonging the life of all those memories caught on VHS.

With the Pinnacle Instant DVD-Recorder software included in all three Dazzle products, users can record from a video source

to a DVD with one-click. Thanks to its direct-to-disk feature, the Pinnacle Instant DVD-Recorder makes an exact copy of the tape to DVD and automatically adds DVD menus and chapter points by detecting scene changes. In minutes, users will have rescued their family videos from deteriorating and can enjoy their DVD on any home DVD player. Moreover, with Pinnacle Studio software included in Dazzle Video Creator and Dazzle Video Creator Platinum, videos can be easily restored and transformed into high-quality movies with effects, transitions, titles and soundtracks.

Pinnacle Systems' New Pocket-Sized Video Transfer now Available Nationwide

Make the most of your Personal Media Player this summer and records TV Shows and Movies Directly to your iPod, PSP, or USB Device – No PC Required

A must-have for those jetting off this summer, Pinnacle's Video Transfer (PVT) means you now don't need a computer to transfer analogue video onto any USB 2.0 storage device. The ingenious PVT makes child's play of transferring video onto your iPod, PSP or USB device all at the touch of one easy button. Available now at £99.99 from leading retailers including Amazon, Dabs.com and Play.com.

This portable device acts as a bridge and will transfer any of your video recording

whether from your DVD player, TV, PVP, camcorder or from your set top box direct to your personal player such as your iPod, PSP, USB flash drive or hard drive. So you can watch your favourite movies and TV programmes on your portable device or store video footage if you are out and about and watch it or archive it later.

iPod users can now maximize all the features of their stylish music/video player by transferring whole series of their 'can't miss, won't miss' favourite TV programmes - be it Desperate Housewives or Torchwood - from their set top box or hard drive via the PVT to their IPod. And those with PSPs make the most of that great screen and watch films whilst on the move.

With PC-less recording, the compact device will appeal to travellers, holiday makers or people who want a simple way to offload footage from their camera to a portable USB device when away from home. So if you're David Lean out on safari and are running out of space on your video camera hard drive, just transfer the footage to your PVT and free up space for tons more filming. For consumers with personal videos on VHS, Hi8 or VHS-C tape, Pinnacle Video Transfer can be used to make a digital copy on a USB 2.0 hard drive for

safe keeping—without having to deal with complicated PC-based software.

Offering anytime, anywhere entertainment

convenience, Pinnacle Video Transfer hardware is ideal for people who want to enjoy TV shows and personal videos on their iPod Video, PSP or just want to store them on a USB drive to archive or watch later.

Being able to transfer videos to an iPod, PSP or USB device without having to copy the files to your PC is a bonus because it saves both valuable time and hard drive space. PC-less recording and the device's small, compact size also makes it a convenient solution for people who are on the go.

For each connected device, the user can select three different levels, depending on their preferences between video quality and actual size of the video files captured.

Pricing and Availability

Pinnacle Video Transfer is now available nationwide throughout the UK at leading etailers and retailers nationwide at a price of £99.99. In addition to the Pinnacle Video Transfer device, the complete package includes three RCA audio/video cables, an 110v-230v power supply and a Quick Start Guide.

Exhibition Quality Prints – Epson Introduces the Stylus Photo R2880

Epson have launched a brand-new, high-spec Professional / Enthusiastic Amateur A3-sized inkjet printer, the Stylus Photo R2880.

24th May 2008 – Epson today announces the launch of its high specification professional A3+ photo printer - the Stylus Photo R2880. Aimed at professional photographers and keen amateurs, the printer utilises Epson's advanced UltraChrome K3 with Vivid Magenta pigment inks to deliver the highest quality available in professional inkjet printing. The refined look-up table (LUT) algorithms included with the R2880 enable the printer to more accurately match colours and ensure that every image is printed to exhibition display standards.

A unique mode within the print driver enables users to have creative control over black and white tones as well as gradation in much the same way as users can do in their darkrooms by selecting specific papers and chemicals. The improved, customisable user interface (UI) enables users to easily find, change, save and even share print settings. This helps ensure photographers get the desired print first time; making the printer more efficient in terms of inks and media.

The Epson Stylus Photo R2880 comes with all the additional features Epson users have become accustomed to including front

facing USB PictBridge connectivity and dual USB2 ports on the rear of the printer. The Stylus Photo R2880 provides additional media support for CD and DVD printing, fine art paper, roll paper and thick rigid media such as board and poly-board. The printer also offers border free printing up to A3+, often used by photographers when printing images for dis-

play purposes.

The quality of the Stylus Photo R2880 makes it ideal for photographers wanting to create long-lasting prints to sell, exhibit or incorporate within professional portfolios. The Stylus Photo R2880 is able to deliver quality at high speed thanks to its Epson Micro Piezo print head, which is coated with ink repelling Teflon to ensure unparalleled accuracy in dot placement. The UltraChrome K3 ink with Vivid Magenta enables superb grey balance and precise colour without any colour cast. It also maintains the superior features of the UltraChrome K3 ink such as great colour accuracy of neutral and dark colours, excellent short-term colour stability and smooth tonal gradation from shadow to light. The issue of metamerism is virtually eliminated with this inkset.

Mark Robinson, Senior Product Manager at Epson commented "The Stylus Photo R2880 replaces the iconic Stylus Photo R2400. It represents the pinnacle in photo printing for professionals and enthusiasts that require the superior image quality of Epson's large format printers but with a smaller footprint to print smaller production runs."

Epson Stylus Photo R2880 Key Features Summary:

- Superb image quality thanks to Epson's

new LUT Technology and Epson Ul-traChrome K3 Ink with Vivid Magenta

- New Epson Micro Piezo print head: A new ink repelling coating of the print head improves dot placement which in turn improves print quality

- The improved driver enables users to have creative control over black and white tones as well as gradation – similar to selecting specific papers and chemicals in the conventional dark room

- Long lasting prints on a variety of different media

- Flexible media handling with fine art paper support, rigid thick media handling up to 1.3mm, CD/DVD printing, standard auto-sheet feeder and roll feed

- Easy connectivity with front facing USB PictBridge and dual USB2 ports at the rear

RRP (including VAT)

£569.99 – available about now. A web search finds it for £504.

With luck we'll have a review sample for John Childs to cast his expert eye at it.

Three New Products From Magix

SLIDESHOWS IN A FLASH!

MAGIX Xtreme PhotoStory on CD & DVD 7 Deluxe

MAGIX Xtreme PhotoStory on CD & DVD 7 Deluxe makes exciting home theatre even easier.

London, May, 2008, The name has changed a little, but the high level of quality remains the same. MAGIX, Berlin's multimedia specialist, is releasing the seventh generation of its slideshow classic. MAGIX Xtreme PhotoStory on CD & DVD 7 Deluxe's new user interface now makes it even easier to access optimization features, effects, animations, or camera movement via the completely reworked Media Pool.
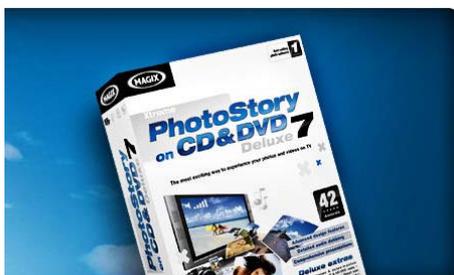
New functions like exact creation of panoramas using multiple photos can also be started via the Media Pool. Now photos from digital SLR cameras and scanned images in 3:2 format can also be displayed automatically on the entire screen without black edges. Your slideshow can be burned directly and without any steps in between using "EasyBurn mode", and it's just as easy to upload the slideshow to your MAGIX Online Album with complete start menus. Besides these additions to the operation (which can be switched from a light to a modern, dark interface as desired) a lot has been done below the surface. A deep reach into the program's effects (transitions, for example) has produced fluid and effortless full screen playback as a result of performance improvements.

For even better slideshows there's the option to contact other users in the MAGIX Knowledge Community and discuss questions online or via live chat. It's helpful to use the new Screensharing function for this so that you can show all of what's happen-ing on the screen of the person you're explaining things to. What's more, you can also order printed photo albums from directly within the program!

Price and Availability:

MAGIX Extreme PhotoStory on CD & DVD Deluxe is available at £39.99 inc VAT from all major UK retailers and online partners including Amazon and PC World.

NEW MAGIX WEBSITE MAKER 2.0

More Space, Security and Choices for Creating Web Pages.

London UK, 21st April, 2008 – Impressive web pages are not always created by professional web designers. With MAGIX Website Maker 2.0 online software, anyone can get to where they want to go – whether it's a homepage with their own up-to-date Flash design; the incorporation of a video clip; animations accompanied by musical sound tracks, or the inclusion of a series of attractive images. MAGIX Website Maker 2.0 online software is convincing not only due to its intuitive operation, but it also now offers the user more space, security and choice of multimedia content. For the retail price of £29.99, you receive not only the rights to use the online application, but also a massive 5000 MB memory space (for 12 months*), countless new design templates and a whole host of additional possibilities to design your web page on the Internet. Included in the package is your own web address as well as a chance to order a custom domain name. The advantage of working online? The result can be viewed in real-time – without any time-consuming data transfer. In addition, useful offline software for editing and managing your media are found in the package which is now available in the retail channels.

A monthly charge is payable after the initial 12 month period.

The Quickest way to Your own Website

Just as its previous version, MAGIX Website Maker 2.0 offers you the fastest way to create your own web page: select your design, customise as you wish, and you're done! But in addition, you get more of everything that an ambitious online de-signer needs. 5000 MB offer enough storage space for your own videos, music and photos, which can all be played back using countless cool new online media players. The application now also guarantees more security for private and personal information by making setting up password-protected websites a breeze. For those who would like to see as many visitors as possible to their website, MAGIX Website Maker 2.0 improves search engine optimisation by website title assignment, keywords and descriptions. To ensure that your web page will open exactly how you want it to, its appearance can be optimised concerning its page size, position, background colour and browser background colour. Individual website components like video players, slideshows, online media players or even the complete homepage, can be easily embedded into your own domain or into an external page.
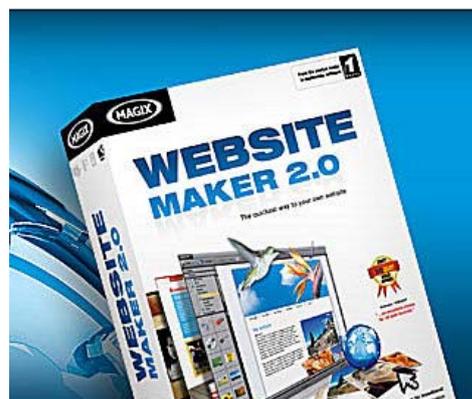
Old strengths — New Individuality

The benefits of online application software – individual, easy and effective use of templates and Flash animations – have been further improved. The results are new, professional-quality templates, with which you can first define the complete layout of your page, and then enhance them with your own material like text, images and music, which gives the whole picture a personal touch. Individual design is highly valued, and all objects can be positioned on the desktop, scaled, coloured, their transparency gradient adjusted and layer order changed just as you wish. Besides multimedia files, additional file formats like PDF, DOC, GIF or XLS can be used on your page.

With just a few mouse clicks your design can look exactly how you imagine a successful page to be. You can get countless tips and tricks from users that share your tastes and goals through the MAGIX Knowledge Community via Live Chat accessible directly from the online application.

Price and Availability:

MAGIX Website Maker 2.0 is available with a SRP of £29.99 inc VAT from all major UK retailers and online partners including Amazon and PC World.

NEW MAGIX MOVIE EDIT PRO 14 PLUS BUNDLE INCLUDING FREE REALLUSION CRAZY TALK 4.

The premium package for video editing, incorporating Animation Studio software to create Lip-sync with Audio and Voiceovers.

London UK, 1st May, 2008 – MAGIX announce Movie Edit Pro 14 now ships with a FREE full copy of Reallusion Crazy Talk 4 worth £29.99. MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS sets new standards in movie editing and is the all-round solution for users with high demands. With effortless video capture, straightforward editing, spectacular 3D effects, a large selection of titles and fades and the addition of brilliant soundtracks, producing stunning videos has never been easier. You can then easily burn your results to an interactive CD/DVD or even export to the web or mobile player. Upload your videos from Movie Edit Pro 14 to YouTube. Simply choose a video file from the media pool or the movie in the timeline add it to YouTube from within the application.

Audio Mastering Suite 2.0

MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS features new Audio Mastering Suite 2.0 for audio editing at the highest level, new Ambient Synth 2.0 for thematic video soundsets and is compatible with the proDAD Vitascene effects collection. In addition, MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS is the only video editing software to include Reallusion iClone 2SE, the animation programme which allows you to create impressive animated movies with your own characters and settings.

Features

- Professional video cut: 67 additional tracks, 3D design, individual effect automation, virtual dub interface, TV ad remover plus more effects, sounds etc
- Full HD support.
- High-end dubbing; 5.1 Dolby Surround with Dolby Digital Creator, Audio mastering Suite, Beat recognition, 2 synthesizers, Music Editor and more.
- Advanced CD/DVD authoring. Create various disc formats, burn high resolution HD DVD format onto low cost recordable blank DVDS.
- Cover and label printing tool.
- New full AVCHD camcorder support – optional plug-in for Flash video export.
- Archiving of photos, projects and videos on the new mass storage blu-ray Disc.
- Video screen capture lets you record web movies directly from the screen to disk.
- New 1 click publishing of the entire DVD project as an interactive, high resolution PC show.
- MAGIX Xtreme Photo Designer 6 – tons of image editing options.

Free Crazy Talk 4

The new MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS bundle includes a free full version copy of Crazy Talk 4 from leading 3D animation company, Reallusion.

With Crazy Talk 4 you can create and control a virtual cast of live talking characters ready to deliver an animated vocal performance for your video, web, mobile or messaging projects. Just a single photograph, recorded or imported audio, combined with transitional effects, animated illustrations and expressive emoticons, and CrazyTalk's powerful facial morphing animation technology is all you need to begin creating speaking actors, virtual guides, and digital hosts adding perfect personalities to any multimedia experience.

CrazyTalk's industry-leading 3D photo morphing Facetrix technology lets you import any facial image and bring it to life via a simple fitting process. Once the image is bonded with CrazyTalk's 3D head framework, your talking character is able to lip sync with any speech and exhibit unlimited expressions and gestures (such as smiling, frowning, crying and laughing).

CrazyTalk's speech technology, Expressix, analyzes the audio of your talking messages and provides lip sync between the character and the audio. You can also add animated comic effects to dramatize your message. To create a talking message you can record your own voice, import a wave file or simply type in a text message.

CrazyTalk's Sequence Editor is an advanced editing interface designed to produce the professional animation output, designer can fully master the animation sequence through the timeline interface, product perfect lip sync result, and build distinctive human nature control individual elements such as head movement and eyeball movement.

Edit you movies easily and professionally with MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS then customize your talking video with full frame images, transitional effects, animated illustrations, and expressive emotions to impress your audience.

Price and Availability:

MAGIX Movie Edit Pro 14 PLUS with free full version Crazy Talk 4 is available with a SRP of £59.99 inc VAT from all major UK retailers and online partners including Amazon and PC World.

About MAGIX:

MAGIX AG, Berlin, is an internationally operating provider of software, online services and digital content for using multimedia products and services in personal communication. Furthermore, MAGIX also offers tailor-made multimedia packages as one-stop solutions to business partners such as online portals and hardware manufacturers. Since 1993 MAGIX has developed state-of-the-art technology for designing, editing and archiving digital photos, videos and music. In 2007, based on sales of products through retail distribution of photo, video and music software, MAGIX held a leading market position in Germany and various other European countries, and was one of the three leading market players in the USA.