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Product Review – Revo IKON stereo table Internet radio (Frontier Internet Radio platform)

30/03/2010 07:31



[1] I am reviewing the Revo IKON, which is the first Internet radio that I have reviewed to be designed in a similar manner to a classic boombox. Here, it has been designed with that similar footprint in mind and also is equipped with stereo speakers that are angled outwards.

Description

The unit actually has an oval shape and has a pop-out iPod dock on the front, under a colour LCD touchscreen which is the set's main user interface. The volume knob and the power button are located on top of the set, although the volume knob is a rotary-encoder type which doesn't show on the display what volume position you have set it to.

Operation and Sound Quality

The colour LCD touchscreen is easy to read and the user interface that it presents to you when you select stations or other options is similar to an automatic teller machine that uses a touch-screen. The home menu shows a list of all the sources available – DAB, FM, Internet, LAST.FM, Media Player (UPnP AV), iPod dock and auxiliary input.

It also comes with a remote control which offers volume control, snooze /sleep control, transport control for the UPnP media player function or attached iPods, LAST.FM song voting as well as the ability to turn the unit on and off. You don't have the ability to change stations or sources from this remote control.

If you are using the Internet radio mode, you can't have ready access to the preset stations like you can with DAB or FM where

you press a star icon to see the preset list. Instead, you have to meander around the menus to see the preset list. This can be an annoyance to those who tune in to local RF-based radio and are likely to visit Internet radio programs frequently and can be a pain for older users.

The unit works with DLNA-compliant media servers but you have to use the touchscreen or remote control to navigate the DLNA media server. This is common with Internet radios because Frontier or Reciva, who make most of the firmware for these radios don't support "three-box" operation using UPnP AV Control Points.

The set supports LAST.FM and can allow users to "scrobble" (expose listening habits to LAST.FM) content from LAST.FM content or from content from a UPnP AV /DLNA media server.

The set has a "clean-up function" that makes it easier to manage changes to the DAB station list, which can be of importance if it is taken between locations or the DAB multiplexes in a city are being re-arranged.



[2]

iPod dock exposed

The set has a similar tone control to the previously-reviewed Revo Domino, where you can select one of five tone presets or set up a customised tone preset. Here, you have bass and treble controls and a loudness-compensation switch. Infact, the "normal" tone preset is with flat bass and treble settings and with loudness compensation switched on.

Speaking of the sound, the sound quality is very similar to most of the low-end to mid-range portable radios made through the late 1970s to early 1980s. It can also fill a small to medium-size room with sound in an intelligible manner.

Connectivity

The set can work with WiFi networks that use conventional WPA2-PSK passphrases or can be “bonded” to routers that support WPS “push-button” configuration. This function should be made available not as a WiFi network option but as part of the setup wizard. It can store the parameters relating to four different WiFi networks, which can be useful for home networks with more than one SSID or if you take the radio between multiple locations.

This radio also has an Ethernet socket which adds plenty of flexibility to how it is connected to the Internet. Here, you could connect it to a HomePlug or MoCA “existing-wires” segment using the appropriate bridge adaptor, a WiFi network that it can’t connect to using a WiFi-client bridge or directly to an Ethernet network like in business premises.

There is only one external output socket in the form of an SPDIF optical socket for connection to a digital amplifier, home-theatre receiver or a digital recorder like a MiniDisc deck. This is limiting as far as outputs are concerned because a set like this could benefit from an analogue output like a headphone jack (to connect to headphones or external active speakers) or a line output jack (to connect to another amplifier or a cassette deck).

Advantages

One main advantage with this set is the stereo sound provided by the two speaker systems built in to the unit. This is an advantage compared to the Internet radios that I have been reviewing in the blog so far. The other main advantage that this set has is the ability to work with an Ethernet network rather than just a WiFi wireless network, which opens up a world of flexibility.

Other features that I like include the colour display, improved DAB handling and support for stations that present logos as part of their Internet-radio streams.

Limitations and Points of Improvement

One main limitation with the Internet radio function is the inability to access the preset-station list from all of the Internet-radio screens unlike what you can do with FM and DAB. This limitation could be rectified through a software update and impairs an otherwise very good Internet radio.

The other limitation with this set is the lack of a headphone jack or line-level output. This also limits the flexibility that the set could offer as far as connection to external audio equipment is concerned.

Conclusion and Placement Notes

Other than the few limitations concerning output connectivity and ready access to Internet-radio presets, this radio does have a lot going for it as a general-purpose Internet table radio.

It would work well as a radio for a kitchen, office or small shop, especially if it is used as a direct replacement for an older boombox or iPod dock or as an upgrade from a single-speaker Internet radio like the Revo Domino or Kogan Internet radio.

Links

[1]

http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/2010-03-19-001.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2]

http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/2010-03-21-005.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Why I cover rural broadband access in this blog

29/03/2010 04:19

I have been covering articles the talk about the state of broadband access in country areas because of the fact that high-speed Internet is needed there just as it is needed in the urban or regional areas.

One common reality is that there are many farmers and small businesses, many of which this blog is targeted at, who need to be able to build their livelihoods up using this technology, such as to send media-rich emails or view /host media-rich Web pages as part of their business life. Eventually, IP-telephony technology will make voice and video communications much more affordable with these users thus putting them at a competitive level with city folk.

Similarly, there are people who live and work in the country either to keep these farms and small businesses going or to provide supporting services for the farmers and small-business owners out there. There is also the city folk who either own properties in the country that they use during holidays or just simply want to live in the country.

Here, these people need to be able to use the telecommunications abilities provided by high-speed Internet to maintain contact with people who live in their home city or elsewhere. Similarly, the high-speed Internet services will provide the ability to bring in entertainment without the people having to travel long distances to get that entertainment. As well, telemedicine will benefit from this technology by allowing specialised doctors and nurses placed in large towns to conduct observations on ill and convalescing patients who are located in rural areas, with only as much as low-skilled medical professionals like GPs or district nurses attending to the patient in these areas.

I have also lived for a while in the country and have experienced firsthand that people who live there often get second-rate treatment when it comes to utilities and telecommunications services. So that’s why I consider the issue of rural broadband access, especially as part of the universal broadband service, very important in this blog.

UPnP AV /DLNA pour la plateforme Apple Macintosh

26/03/2010 06:38

Introduction

Je vous écris ceci pour aider les utilisateurs d'Apple Macintosh savent ce qui est disponible quand il s'agit de l'intégration de leurs ordinateurs avec l'AV UPnP /DLNA Media Network, particulièrement en tant que moyen de fournir de manière rentable de distribuer la musique, des photos et vidéo sur la réseau de maison. C'est aussi parce que la plupart de l'équipement conforme de la norme DLNA est disponible à des prix que la plupart des gens peuvent se permettre et que la plupart des fabricants qui vendent des "premium" de qualité grand équipement audio-vidéo comme Linn^[1] ou Loewe exécutent au moins une unité capable de jouer au moins la musique d'un Media Server qui conforme à la norme DLNA.

De même, l'article est également plantée aux personnes qui ont décidé de passer à la plate-forme Apple Macintosh en provenance d'autres plates-formes informatiques qui fournirait inhérents prenant en charge DLNA Media Server comme Windows.

Apple ne fournit pas de logiciel pour combler la plate-forme Apple Macintosh pour le Network Media DLNA, que ce soit en tant que serveur, la lecture ou le programme de contrôle. Une des raisons principales est de maintenir la plate-forme étroitement intégré avec les produits multimédias d'Apple comme l'iPod, Apple TV et Apple Airport Express. As well, some Apple Macintosh diehards may consider the UPnP AV /DLNA Home Media Network as an anathema to the "purely Apple" IT lifestyle that they desire. En outre, certains irréductibles Apple Macintosh mai envisager les réseaux qui conforme à les normes UPnP AV /DLNA omme un anathème pour le «purement Apple» e vie qu'ils désirent.

Donc, ce besoin est rempli par un logiciel écrit par des développeurs tiers. Le logiciel est principalement sous forme de serveurs de médias, qui peuvent user prestation définie par les bibliothèques ou les bibliothèques iTunes et iPhoto pour le Network Media DLNA. Les programmes qui disposition des utilisateurs des bibliothèques défini peut être fait à iTunes et bibliothèques iPhoto fois que vous savez où ces programmes stockent leurs fichiers.

Logiciels DLNA pour la plateforme Apple Macintosh

TwonkyMedia fournissent une version du **serveur TwonkyMedia** à MacOS X, qui peuvent travailler depuis n'importe quel utilisateur défini par les dossiers. Ce programme est disponible par le biais <http://www.twonkymedia.com/>[2]. Ils ont l'intention de porter le logiciel TwonkyMedia Manager à la plate-forme Apple Macintosh dans un avenir proche.

Allegrosoft ont eu **Allegro Media Server** pour un certain temps et cela fonctionne directement avec l'iTunes Music Library. Ce programme est disponible à partir <http://www.allegrosoft.com/ams.html>[3].

Elgato EyeConnect^[4] est disponible chez tous les concessionnaires d'Apple Macintosh qui vend Elgato EyeTV

cartes tuner TV et est étroitement intégré avec le système d'Apple iLife. Cela signifie qu'il ne peut partager les dossiers utilisés par iTunes, iPhoto et d'autres logiciels Apple sur le réseau DLNA Media accueil d'une manière plus polie.

Nullriver Connect360 et **Medialink**. These shareware products are pitched at integrating iTunes and iPhoto with the Xbox360 and PlayStation 3 games consoles, but can provision content to DLNA Home Media Network devices. Ces produits de shareware sont arrêtés à l'intégration d'iTunes et iPhoto avec les consoles de jeux Xbox 360 et PlayStation 3, mais peut fournir un contenu de dispositifs le réseau de DLNA Media. Infact, some friends that I know are using the NullRiver MediaLink to bring their online video collection which is held on their Apple Macintosh to a PS3 to view on their flatscreen TV in the main lounge area of their home. Enfait, certains amis que je connais sont en utilisant le logiciel Nullriver Medialink d'apporter leur collection de vidéos en ligne qui a lieu sur leur ordinateur Apple Macintosh pour une PS3 pour afficher sur leur téléviseur à écran plat dans le salon principal de leur maison. . Elles sont disponibles via www.nullriver.com[5].

Songbook Mac est un autre iTunes serveur pour les réseaux UPnP AV/ DLNA, mais ce programme est aussi l'un des premier UPnP AV programmes de maîtrise des points disponibles pour le Macintosh. Elle est principalement destinée aux personnes qui font fonctionner l'une des médias sur les lecteurs du réseau Linn, mais peut être exécuté sur n'importe quel appareil avec MediaRenderer UPnP AV. Il est disponible à <http://www.bookshelfapps.com/songbookmac.php>[6].

YazSoft Playback est un autre programme qui est étroitement intégrée à la plateforme Macintosh et peut traiter tous de la vidéo haute définition que beaucoup d'utilisateurs Mac seront confrontés. Il peut aussi travailler avec les utilisateurs désignés par les dossiers et est disponible à www.yazsoft.com/[7].

L'utilisation de périphériques de tierce partie NAS

Si vous utilisez une partie du tiers (non-Apple) connecté un périphérique de stockage de réseau comme le Netgear ReadyNAS, ou les QNAP TeraStations Buffalo, vous pouvez utiliser ces dispositifs comme un serveur UPnP /DLNA media. Ils proposeront également des fonctionnalités de serveur de musique iTunes, ainsi que Time Machine sauvegarde. Aussi, votre «box» comme les Livebox, Neufbox /Box SFR et Bbox peut partager les fichiers audiovisuelles sur une disque dur USB qui est connecté à cet appareil.

Multimédia DLNA logiciel de contrôleur pour l'iPhone

La plupart d'entre vous qui possèdent un Macintosh d'Apple sera propriétaire ou manquent de posséder un iPhone d'Apple ou iPod Touch par l'entreprise et ces appareils peuvent fonctionner en tant que contrôleurs des médias pour les médias-Dispositifs de rendu qui acceptent "poussé" de contenu. Ils sont le iMediaSuite (iTunes directs[8]) et iNetFrame (iTunes directs[9] et mention blog[10]) à CyberGarage[11], PlugPlayer[12] (iTunes directe [13] et mention blog[14]) et Songbook Touch[15] (iTunes directe [16])¹ qui sont tous disponibles sur le iTunes App Store.

Conclusion

Rester fidèle à la plateforme Apple ne veut pas dire que vous avez à manquer sur les aptitudes que le DLNA Home Media

Network offre, surtout maintenant que de plus en plus de consommateurs font des fabricants de produits électroniques DLNA-compliant équipements multimédia en réseau disponible à tous les niveaux de prix et les marchés.

Links

- [1] http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=fr&langpair=en%7Cfr&u=http://www.linn.co.uk/&rurl=translate.google.fr&usg=ALkJrhj_rQ_aB7sInYOGd8b9ta19P5phVQ
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Product Review - Hewlett-Packard OfficeJet 7000 wide-format network printer

25/03/2010 11:21



[1] I am reviewing one of the few inkjet-based dedicated printers that can be connected to a small network. This printer, the Hewlett-Packard OfficeJet 7000, is an A3-capable wide-format printer, but it has a little brother in the form of the OfficeJet 6000 which can only print on A4 paper. These printers, like the OfficeJet 6500 all-in-one that I had previously reviewed use the same family of ink cartridges as each other - the 920 cartridges for standard runs and the 920XL for high-yield runs.

Setup

Loading ink cartridges

The ink cartridges are very easy to install and replace and the lid is able to be operated without any extra effort. This would be typical of a dedicated inkjet printer rather than most of the multifunction devices that I have been reviewing.

Network connectivity

This printer connects to your network using Ethernet only and this may be seen as a mixed blessing because you can use a wireless client bridge for connection to a wireless network or simply use the existing-wires technologies like HomePlug powerline or MoCA to connect the printer in a more flexible manner.

You know when you are connected to your network if the left-most button lights up and you can check on the current IP address that it has taken by holding this button down for it to print a network report.

Software setup

Like the other HP printers that I have reviewed, there is a CD with all of the drivers and software that you may need to get your computers going with the printer, but I always prefer you to download[2]the latest driver software from the HP website. This may also make sure that your printer can work with Windows 7 or Apple MacOS X Snow Leopard.

If you have another recent HP printer, you can get by with downloading the “basic” drivers rather than the full software set so as to allow it to work with the existing HP software.

Print abilities



[3]

HP OfficeJet 7000 ready to take A3 paper

Here, I am mainly assessing the printer as an A3 wide-format printer, which is what the people who are after this model would be seeing the printer as. Therefore, I have run a significant number of tests on its ability to handle A3 print runs.

The time to print on to an A3 sheet of regular paper would be around 1 minute 38 seconds. It doesn't matter whether the job was a photo “blow-up” or a text-graphics job.

I printed a photo of a baby in her father's arms on to A3 paper to assess flesh-tone accuracy and quality and had found that that these had come up accurate even with a mixture of complexions. It may look better on photo paper but I don't have any A3 photo paper to assess with.

Limitations and Points Of Improvement

The OfficeJet 7000 could benefit from increased local memory for buffering multipage A3 print jobs, thus taking the load off the host computer. It could also benefit from a dedicated A4 paper tray so that it can become useful as a secondary A4 printer, especially if it is the colour printer for an office.

Another limitation that these printers have is the lack of an automatic duplexer which may limit paper-saving efforts that may be in force in many offices.

Conclusion and Placement Notes

This printer is suitable as a large-format complementary printer for a small organisation who has an inkjet or laser multifunction printer as their main printer. Here, it could work well for printing large spreadsheets, “download-to-print” campaign /promotional materials, “inkjet proofs” of publications, maps, presentation slides and similar documents.

Both it and Its little brother, the OfficeJet 6000 could also be used as a complementary colour inkjet printer for an office where there is primarily a laser or LED monochrome printer or multifunction centre as the main printer device.

Links

[1]

http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/OfficeJet-7000-1.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[2]

<http://h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/softwareCategory?lc=en&dlc=en&cc=au&lang=en&product=3883002>

[3]

http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/OfficeJet-7000-head-on.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Product Review- Hewlett-Packard OfficeJet 6500 all-in-one printer

23/03/2010 23:47



[1]In this review, I have been given the opportunity to assess a multifunction printer that is optimised for small-business use rather than a consumer-rated unit. These units are designed to be economical to run, have high-speed throughput for scanning and printing; as well as supporting a higher duty cycle than the consumer units.

The HP OfficeJet 6500 is a size similar to most multifunction printers and has the controls located closer to the user. It has a large high-contrast two-line LCD monochrome display which is good as a status display for tasks like faxing or scanning. The controls are arranged in a task-specific manner that makes it easier to perform what you want to do.

Setup

The only assembly that you would have needed to do beyond installing the ink cartridges is to attach the duplexer mechanism to the back of the printer. This unit, which looks like a laser printer's toner cartridge just snapped in to the back without much effort.



[2]

Control panel and display

As far as connections go, the printer can be directly connected to the host computer via USB or it can be connected to an Ethernet wired network or a WiFi wireless network. There are two RJ11 phone sockets for use when setting the unit up as a fax machine. This is to permit you to connect existing telephone devices to the unit thus obviating the need to use a splitter.

The printer comes with a CD-ROM which has all of the drivers and applications needed to get the printer going, but it would be a good idea to download[3] the latest drivers from HP's Web site. This also means that newer operating systems like Windows 7 or MacOS X "Snow Leopard" will be catered for.

Loading ink cartridges

You don't need much effort to open or close the lid to install new ink cartridges. As well, like the Photosmart Wireless multifunction printer that I reviewed previously, you don't have to mess with any stays to keep the lid open while changing the cartridges. Similarly, you don't need much effort to remove or install the ink cartridges and there is nothing "fiddly" about this job.

Network setup and abilities

This printer can work in a small network as a network printer or scanner. It connects to the network either via 802.11g WPA2 wireless or Cat5 Ethernet cable, which can also work in conjunction with a better Wi-Fi client bridge or an existing-wires technology like HomePlug powerline or MoCA TV coaxial.

You can use the printer's control panel to enrol it with a wireless network, including entering the WPA-PSK passphrase using the numeric keypad in a manner similar to how a teenager taps out a text message on their mobile phone. On the other hand, you can use the USB port and the supplied software to configure the printer for your wireless network. It doesn't support WPS easy-configure modes, but this omission may not be missed in a lot of business setups.

If the printer is connected wirelessly to the network, it can lose touch with the network when it goes in to low-power state and you may have to turn it off and on using the ON/OFF switch on the control panel when you want to start printing. This problem is due to the absence of a standard "wake-on-wireless-network" protocol for activating network devices connected to a wireless network that have entered a low-power state. This problem doesn't occur if the printer is connected via an Ethernet network whether directly or via a HomePlug segment.

There is a built-in Web server that is used for managing the unit and this is accessible through a shortcut on the HP software. Windows Vista and 7 computers can gain access to this interface through the "Network" option as part of the DPWS technology that is part of the operating systems. There is also the ability to start "plug-and-play" installation from this interface by right-clicking on the printer icon in the Network folder and selecting "Install". Here, you would need to make sure that the drivers are installed in the computer beforehand.

Use

Printing

The OfficeJet 6500 Wireless comes with a rear-mounted duplexer attachment so you can save paper by printing on both sides. The only disadvantage with this is that the document has to have a larger bottom margin so that the duplexer can properly handle the paper when turning it over.

I have the printer print a large document (214 page user manual) with double-sided printing in order to assess how it goes with handling a large print run. This would mimic conditions similar to printing a large report or something similar; or simply sustaining a large run of documents. I have then found that it could complete this kind of job unattended without printing-reliability issues.

Scanning



[4]

Automatic Document Feeder

This OfficeJet unit can also work as a scanner and has an automatic document feeder that is capable of handling 35 pages at a time. Here I ran the automatic document feeder through a reliability test by having the unit copy a 20-page document fed through the feeder and it performed the job properly although there was a high-pitch squealing noise from the ADF. This phenomenon may be particular to the review sample that I was using.

It supports scanning over a network link, either with the scan job initiated at the computer or at the unit's control panel. The latter method requires you to have the supplied scanner software on your computer to receive and process the documents. This software allows you to scan as a document or picture and save the file to the computer's local file system or send it as an e-mail.

Use with digital-camera cards

There is a built-in memory card reader for use with digital-camera memory cards but this function is very limited. This is brought about by the printer not having a colour LCD display which can make it easier for you to choose pictures to print. If you want to print selected images, you would need to select the pictures using your camera's DPOF print selection menus before putting the card in the printer.

Another limitation is that the card reader doesn't support the SDHC memory cards which are now being used in most of the current digital-camera range. On the other hand, the card reader is accessible over the network as a network storage location with its own drive letter on Windows systems but it can be accessed as the MEMORY_CARD share-name for the printer.

Fax

The OfficeJet 6500 is an inkjet plain-paper fax machine that can work as an elegant replacement for that economy-tier fax machine that many small businesses and home users see as their fax solution.

It can be set up to work on a dedicated line or on a shared line with support for distinctive-ring setups (separate number for fax) or fax auto-answer. The latter mode has it that the unit takes the

call if it hears the distinct repeating "CNG" beep from a transmitting fax machine when another device like an answering machine answers the line. When you determine the fax header information, you only need to provide your own name or company name and your fax number rather than having to determine "CSID" and "TSID" fields which can be obscure when you set up fax equipment.

The unit has memory for one outgoing fax job (for scheduled transmission) and is able to keep new received faxes in memory at all times or only during error conditions. There are limitations with this machine's implementation is that you cannot set the fax machine to receive "only to memory", a feature which could come in handy for secure "out-of-hours" fax reception; and you cannot schedule multiple outgoing fax jobs, which may be a pain in the neck for people who do a lot of overseas business.

It also supports transmission and reception of colour faxes with compatible fax endpoints and can work in high-resolution modes for "best-case" fax operation. There is a 100-number "speed-dial" list with the first three entries being available for "one-push" access from the control panel.

The unit supports "fax-from-computer" with a dedicated fax print driver and this can be done from any computers that exist on the network. It can also support "fax-to-computer" with jobs ending up at one computer on the network. The "fax-to-computer" mod is limited to monochrome faxes and requires a computer to be alive and running the supplied software all the time.

Output Speed And Quality

The output quality is very typical of a good business inkjet printer and it takes a few seconds per page to print a typical business document. You don't lose any extra speed when you print colour documents, especially now that most business documents now have some form of colour on them.

If you do double-sided printing, you will have a speed penalty of 10 seconds per sheet of paper to allow the ink to dry on the "first" side of the paper.

Photos printed with this printer have a good dynamic range and the flesh-tones being accurate even when handling a group shot with people of different races. This is on a par with the Photosmart Wireless printer that I reviewed previously and it certainly says that the unit could make a satisfactory effort for printing photos in a "general-purpose" office environment.

Advantages

The unit is easy to use for most tasks and offers a capability set at a price that most small business owners and home-office owners will appreciate. Here, you have functions like an automatic document feeder, double-sided printing and wired /wireless network connectivity as well as separate cartridges for each colour that will be appreciated by the cost-conscious business user.

Limitations and Points of Improvement

I will always be saying this with all consumer and small-business network-ready inkjet printers, especially multifunction printers, is that the manufacturers could improve on the provision of non-volatile onboard memory. This will certainly increase user productivity for improved multi-source print queue management, failed-job recovery, improved fax functionality - more delayed fax sends, receive-to-memory, etc. It can also cater for "CD-free" network printer setup through the Web interface.

Another point of improvement that I would like to see is support for Internet-based (NTP) time synchronisation. This would avoid the need to manually set the time and date whenever there is a power failure or as part of setting it up. It could then be based on time-zone settings with automatically-updated daylight-savings rules similar to what happens with most computer operating systems.

It can also benefit from the SD card slot supporting SDHC cards in order to work with the newer digital cameras that can use these cards. As well, it could benefit from a USB host port for connection to PictBridge-enabled digital cameras.

Conclusion and Placement

From what I have seen, I have described this unit as a capable general-purpose workhorse that suits most small-business and home-office requirements. So I would recommend it be used in a home office or "back office" or "reception-area" in most small organisations. As well, it could work as a colour "general-purpose" multifunction printer for a place like a clinic where one or more monochrome laser printers may be used for receipt printing and similar applications.

The best price that I could get for this printer was AUD\$178 from the Officeworks office-supplies chain in Australia. As well, the ink cartridges cost \$22.26 each for the colour cartridges and \$45 for the black cartridge assuming you are using the 920XL high-capacity cartridges. There is the option of using the cheaper "920" standard-yield cartridges but I would suggest using the 920XL high-yield cartridge for the black ink if you do receive faxes on a regular basis.

Links

[1]
http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/OfficeJet-6500-1-front.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[2]
http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/OfficeJet-6500-2-control-panel-detail.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[3]
<http://h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/softwareCategory?lc=en&dlc=en&cc=au&lang=en&product=3944627>

[4]
http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/OfficeJet-6500-3-ADF.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Another step towards the return of the iconic Commodore computer brand

18/03/2010 11:28

News articles

The Commodore name licensed again for a line of keyboard PCs - Engadget[1]

Commodore Is Back - Le Journal Du Geek (France - French language)[2]

My comments

What was this legendary brand?

Think of watching these films: "Fame", "Flashdance", "Back To The Future" or "Ruthless People" at the cinema or on the VHS video recorder. Or think of these songs "Fame", "Let's Hear It For The Boy", "Caribbean Queen", "The Power Of Love" or "Ruthless People" playing out of that ghetto-blaster. The thing that is common with all of this was that it was part of life of the mid 1980s, in which a certain brand became part of personal and educational computing life.

This brand was "Commodore" who got their claws in to the personal-computing market with the "VIC-20" home computer in 1982. This machine had the processing power installed in the same chassis as the keyboard and was able to be connected to a regular TV set whereupon it provided a display capable of rendering in 8 colours as well as basic musical audio output through the TV's speaker. You were able to load software from ROM cartridges, audio cassettes (with an optional cassette drive) or 5.25" floppy disks (with an optional disk drive).

Then, in 1984, they launched the Commodore 64 which had improved memory, graphics and sound capability but could use any peripherals that worked with the VIC-20. But this computer had a large collection of software, especially games, written for it and had attracted a larger legion of computer hobbyist followers with it.

The VIC-20 and the Commodore 64 used a compact chassis that was just as big as the keyboard itself both of them had set a standard for highly-capable "keyboard computer" designs. Most earlier "keyboard computers", especially those that offered sophisticated display or sound capabilities, typically were deeper than the keyboard itself due to the extra electronics and inefficient circuit design that existed at that time. As well, Commodore released the Executive-64 series of transportable computers which were simply a Commodore 64 with a disk drive, small display, speaker and power supply in a "sewing-machine" case with the keyboard being the system's lid. Compared to machines of its type, this unit offered a lot more capability, especially in the form of colour display and sound capability.

By the late 80s, Commodore had released the Amiga which had greater processing ability, a WIMP-based user interface and the basic unit used 3.5" disks as secondary storage. This unit became popular with video producers as a machine for editing video or

inserting graphics in to a video production. But it was also released at a time close to the “acid-house” craze and these computers were used by hobbyists to create many “demos” which were animated graphic display loops that were accompanied by an “acid-house” music soundtrack generated by the computer. Some of these were shown off at competitions or used as part of the “acid-house” parties of the day.

But this brand disappeared in the early 90s when they tried ideas that the market wasn't ready for, such as selling a games console and a “lounge-room” PC based on the Amiga platform; as well as releasing in to a crowded market, regular desktop computers based on the MS-DOS platform.

The revival of the Commodore brand

There have been “placeholder companies” who are protecting the Commodore brand with its “chickenhead logo” in order to make sure it only ends up on suitable computer and consumer-electronics products. They also are reviving the classic games that were available for the Commodore 64 by porting them to mobile phones, Java-based online play and other current platforms. Through this decade, they are releasing contract-built products in a way as to revive the nostalgia associated with this brand and its market position in its heyday of the '80s. One of these companies released a series of customisable tower-style “gaming-rig” PCs in 2008 to evoke memories of the Commodore 64 and the Amiga being considered “games machines of all time”.

Now this company is releasing a “keyboard PC” which has a similar footprint to any of these Commodore classic machines but is slimmer than them. It also has secondary storage built in to it like the Amiga 500, but it is in the form of a large-capacity hard disk, an optical drive and a multi-format card reader. The idea behind this machine was to evoke the nostalgia associated with these machines.

The main question with Commodore resurfacing is whether there will be broad takeup of any of these products. The people who will value this brand more will be those of us who lived through the 1980s where the brand was considered to be significant, but others may just consider it insignificant in a crowded home or small-business IT market.

Also, could this story of Commodore be like a lot of other classic brands who previously produced iconic products then closed up shop or left the market due to differing conditions in their market, only to be used as a marketing tool by other firms as a way of selling “ho-hum” products to the generations that remember these brands?

Links

[1]
<http://www.engadget.com/2010/03/16/the-commodore-name-licenced-again-for-a-line-of-keyboard-pcs/>

[2]
http://www.journaldugeek.com/2010/03/17/commodore-is-back/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LeJournalDuGeek+%28le+Journal+du+Geek%29

Rural Broadband Activity in the Haute-Pyrénées and Brittany regions in France

18/03/2010 09:10

News articles (French-language only)

Les Hautes-Pyrénées et le Finistère en haut et très haut débit - DegroupNews.com[1]

From the horse's mouth

Hautes-Pyrénées Conseil-Général

Press release[2]

Brochure (PDF)[3]

Finistère Conseil-Général

Press release[4]

My Notes and Comments

Hautes-Pyrénées

In this mountainous département of France, there are plans to establish a fibre-optic backbone that will lead to an improvement in Internet service across this area.

The improvements will be in the form of improved ADSL service for more of the telephone exchanges, including “dégroupage” (local-loop unbundling) for competitive-service access as well as a fibre-optic uplink. It also includes “sub-loop access” where DSLAMs will be installed closer to customers' premises for those customers that are far away from the exchanges, like farms or mountain properties. These improvements will allow the customers to have the same level of IPTV access as would be expected around France.

There will also be a WiMAX wireless broadband network with 58 stations that will be set up to cover areas that are not likely to have proper broadband service, with satellite coverage for the most difficult cases. This situation may be necessary for some of those properties that exist on the slopes of the Pyrenees.

The fibre-optic network will not just be for a backbone but will provide “next-generation broadband” for key areas such as public service, health, research and education as well as “communities of interest” for the département.

Finistère (Brittany)

This département, which covers the western-most tip of France, has a goal of achieving the minimum of 2Mbps throughout its area.

This will be achieved with a fibre optic backbone through that département. It will also mean that exchanges that service ADSL “dead-spots” can be lit up for ADSL. There is also the possibility of a 97-station WiMAX wireless-broadband network set up in this area.

Both areas

The “sub-loop access” effort that is being undertaken with the Hautes-Pyrénées project is impressive because it represents an effort to get the full-speed broadband to the customer’s front door. But I would also suggest that these efforts include checking for decaying wiring and other limitations that can impede ADSL performance.

Also, the fibre deployments should cover not just the key economic areas in the départements, but assure FTTH deployments in the cities where the key economic areas are, especially the residential parts of these cities. This can avoid the tendency to “redline” the towns when it comes to further investment in them. In the case of the Hautes-Pyrénées project, if a town is identified as being a ski resort, it should be looked at in the context of full fibre deployment so that the small businesses in that area which service the snowfield traffic can gain as much benefit as the big businesses in the cities.

Links

- [1] http://www.degrouppnews.com/actualite/n4574-axione-finistere-hautes_pyrenees-haut_debit-reseau.html?xtor=RSS-1
- [2] <http://www.cg65.fr/front.aspx?PubliId=1330>
- [3] <http://www.cg65.fr/UploadFiles/publications/1330/Haut%20debit.pdf.V1.aspx>
- [4] [http://www.cg29.fr/Accueil/Le-Conseil-general-et-vous/Economie-et-insertion/Le-Haut-debit-pour-tous-!/\(language\)/fr-FR](http://www.cg29.fr/Accueil/Le-Conseil-general-et-vous/Economie-et-insertion/Le-Haut-debit-pour-tous-!/(language)/fr-FR)

BBC reception problem now rectified for Kogan Internet radios

17/03/2010 13:53



[1]

Kogan Internet table radio — BBC updates now available

Over the last few months, those of you who own a Kogan Internet/DAB+/FM table radio[2], which I have reviewed in this blog[3] in November, wouldn’t have been able to receive any

Internet radio services from the BBC. It may be of concern to UK expats or Anglophiles who have bought this radio primarily to listen to the sound of the BBC radio stations that broadcast there like BBC Radio 4. The symptom was typically in the form of the radio showing “Network Error” when you select a BBC radio service. This was because the BBC were doing a technical re-engineering of their online radio streams and were moving away from the original Real-Audio streams to newer technologies.

vTuner had updated their “master” Internet radio directory which services Frontier-based sets as well as a lot of other Internet-radio designs to reflect the BBC changes. The set manufacturers had to then roll out the updates to each of their set designs through the over-the-air updates. In the case of this Kogan table radio, it took a frustrating long time for the update to materialise because the OEM who makes these sets had to make sure it was working properly before releasing the update.

As of 18/03/2010, Kogan have rolled out the updated directory to these radios and next time you turn on the set and select “Internet radio”, you will have an “update notice” appear on the display. Press the INFO button in response to this “update notice” and wait for the update to complete. The radio must not be disconnected from the power at all during this process. The progress of the update is highlighted with a “fuel gauge” bar that appears on the bottom row of the display and when the set is updated, the display will show “Press SELECT to continue”. At this point, press the large “tuning knob”, and the set will restart and, a while later, the last Internet radio station that you listened to will play.

Then you can tune to the BBC stations using the menu system or recall any BBC stations that you previously allocated to the preset buttons. This update does not affect any other functionality or personal settings that you have established when using this set.

If you had bought one of these radios and the BBC reception problem had made you think of returning the radio to Kogan, now you don’t need to do so because of this update/

Links

- [1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/KoganInternetradiocloseup.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
- [2] <http://www.kogan.com.au/shop/kogan-wi-fi-digital-radio-ipod-docking-station/>
- [3] /2009/11/product-review-kogan-wi-fi-internet-table-radio-with-ipod-dock-frontier-internet-radio-platform/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Product Review – Hewlett-Packard Photosmart Wireless network multifunction printer

15/03/2010 07:10



[1] I am reviewing the Hewlett-Packard B109n Photosmart Wireless[2]network multifunction printer which is HP's latest entry in to the basic network-enabled consumer multifunction printer market. It is based on their basic HP Photosmart printer, but has 802.11g WPA2 WPS wireless networking added to it.

The Photosmart Wireless is a piano-black machine with a very small LCD mounted at an angle on the left of the unit. The display has touch-buttons that light up in a “pinball-machine” fashion to provide an operation experience similar to most automatic-teller machines. This is with buttons placed on the edge of the screen and whatever the button does is indicated on the display screen.



[3]

Control panel

Setup

The setup experience is typical for many consumer multifunction printers, where you have to install drivers from a CD-ROM supplied with the printer. You can download[4] the software from HP's website if you want to make sure the printer works with the latest drivers for your operating system, and will have to do so for Windows 7 systems.

Loading ink cartridges

This printer has been improved as far as access to its interior is concerned. When you open it up to load ink cartridges, you don't need to operate any catch to release the lid. As well, the lid stays open and wide without the need to work with any stays or levers to prop it up, which is also of benefit for people who are short-sighted

There is no need to apply any extra pressure to remove or install any of the ink cartridges, which I consider important for older people or people who have arthritis or similar limitations.

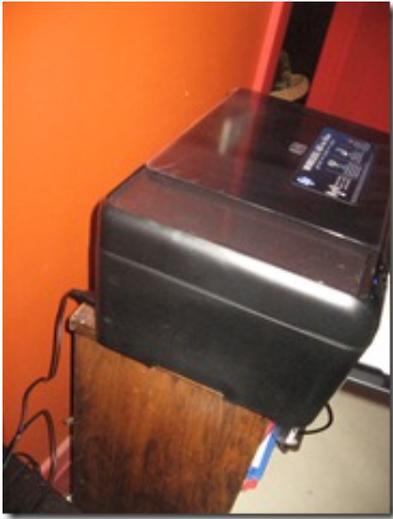


[5]

4 ink cartridges that are easy to load

This printer uses one cartridge per colour, which allows you to replace the colours that you need to replace when they run out. This is compared to an inefficient practice older colour inkjet printers where you replace a “colour” cartridge if any of the colours run out. It can work with a standard cartridge or, a large-capacity cartridge which is available at a slight price premium over; and you can choose to run with either of these types for each of the colours.

Network capability and setup



[6]

Only cable connected to printer is the power cable

There is the ability for this printer to support “push-button” or “PIN-number” setup from its control panel if you have a WPS-enabled Wi-Fi network. On the other hand, you have to connect it to a host PC and run the software on the CD-ROM to set it up to work with a Wi-Fi network.

The printer doesn’t have an Ethernet port, so that puts other network technologies like regular Ethernet or HomePlug powerline out of the picture. This may not be an issue with typical wooden or brick-veneer suburban homes where you can receive Wi-Fi everywhere from one router, but can be an issue with older double-brick homes or larger homes.

As far as network functionality is concerned, you can print or scan via the network. There isn’t a “wake-up” arrangement which allows you to bring the printer out of low-power mode from any network-connected computer. Therefore you have to make sure that the printer is fully on when you want to start printing or scanning.

Printing

There were no major hassles involved with printing documents, which it was able to do very quickly. I even ran a “pressure-test” print of one of the HP manuals for this unit from HP’s website to see how it can handle a large printing job like a school assignment or large report. It was able to allow 30 pages to “pile up” on the paper tray without causing reliability problems. As well, I was able to replenish the paper supply and continue printing by using the unit’s controls and without having to go back to the host computer when it ran out of paper.

This reliability has been provided for because Hewlett-Packard had stuck to the same kind of inkjet printing mechanism for their desktop inkjet printers ever since they released the original Deskjet in 1988.

For photographic work, the unit worked well with keeping the colour balance and flesh tones right. Infact it didn’t “over-saturate” pictures even when a person who was in the picture had a reddish complexion. It still took its time to print the

photographic images because of the requirements of that job.

It can also print from camera cards including SDHC camera cards, and can print DPOF print orders that you set using your camera’s user interface. It still has the usual limitations of requiring the card to stay in the slot during printing, which can be a limitation when you want to grab more “moments” while the unit is printing your pictures.

Scanning

The printer can scan documents and images, whether direct-connected or network-connected. If you want to start the scanning job from the printer’s control panel, you will need to make sure that you select the desired computer to send the job to. This is determined by whichever computers have the HP software installed on them.

I have scanned some 35mm prints using this machine, including some pictures of people and the printer’s scanner was able to reproduce the pictures properly. This included a picture that I took with people who had different complexions and this kind of scenario could be a trial for some scanners.

The Photosmart Wireless printer took around 15 seconds to copy an A4 page, no matter whether the unit was to make a colour or monochrome copy of that page. This would still make the printer suitable as a convenience copier for most households.

Fit and finish

This printer is finished in that “gloss piano black” look that makes it appeal to home use. This would be more of an advantage with rooms where the furniture is primarily a “dark wood” finish or a finish similar to that lacquered-black grand piano. The only disadvantage with this finish is that it attracts fingermarks too quickly.

There is still that sense of sturdiness that is common with good-quality printers with everything snapping in to place in an assured manner.

Advantages

It is easy to perform routine maintenance tasks on this printer like replacing ink cartridges because there isn’t much effort required to open the lid or remove and install the cartridges. As I have said before, this is important for those with weaker hands like older people.

The printer is very quick at most of the routine tasks that you would expect it to do. It also has the hallmarks of Hewlett-Packard’s build quality and reliability that they have been known for.

The software isn’t likely to get in the way of your computing tasks or place unnecessary burdens on your computer’s performance. Infact, the only way it makes its presence felt is to inform you of your print-job status or to accept scanned documents or images if you start the scan from the printer’s control panel.

Limitations and Points of Improvement

One main limitation is that you have to connect the unit to a computer running supplied software via USB for it to work with Wi-Fi network segments that don't use WPS configuration. It cannot be used with wireless networks that use WPA-Enterprise security, nor does it have an Ethernet socket for use with other networking technologies. These particular limitations are most likely to be typical of a low-end Wi-Fi-enabled consumer multifunction printer.

There isn't a USB host socket, which rules out the use of the printer for PictBridge printing or printing from USB memory keys. As well, the small display screen may be a hindrance for some people, especially those who have eyesight limitations.

Now that the cost of secondary-storage flash memory is becoming very cheap, manufacturers like Hewlett-Packard could install an extra SDHC card slot or low-capacity flash memory in these printers and use it as a low-capacity "hard disk". This could permit print-job buffering for memory-card or network print jobs, CD-free setup for USB or network installations and improved network-scanning workflow.

Conclusion and Placement Notes

I would recommend buying this printer as an entry-level Wi-Fi network all-in-one printer, especially if you are moving your computing lifestyle towards the "new computing environment". This is based around a laptop that connects wirelessly to the Internet via a wireless router and is likely to be used around the house. It would also work well as a secondary Wi-Fi network printer for the home such as one that would be placed in the family room while you have the more-expensive unit placed in the study or home office; or as a Wi-Fi network printer for use at a secondary home location like a holiday house or city flat.

For small-business use, this printer could work well as an "away-from-office" multi-purpose printer/scanner where there are occasional small print runs or the need to do "quick copies". The network ability would only support Wi-Fi network setups that don't use enterprise-level authentication. This would mean that it can work properly with the typical 3G routers that "edge" temporary networks.

The machine is priced at a "street price" of AUD\$129 (obtained from Officeworks advertisement) with original-name (HP Genuine) ink cartridges (part number 564) costing AUD\$18.76 for the black and AUD\$16.76 for each colour. You can also buy original-name (HP Genuine XL) "extra-yield" (part number 564XL) cartridges for AUD\$51.20 for the black and AUD\$29.56 for each colour if you find you do a lot more printing.

Links

- [1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/B109n.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
- [2] <http://h10010.www1.hp.com/wwpc/au/en/ho/WF05a/18972-18972-238444-410635-410635-3794623.html>
- [3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/B109n-display.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

- tm_campaign=feed
- [4] <http://h10025.www1.hp.com/ewfrf/wc/softwareCategory?lc=en&dlc=en&cc=us&product=3794621&lang=en&>
- [5] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/B109ninkcartridges.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
- [6] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/B109nconnectedonlytopower.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Reference section being added to blog site

14/03/2010 15:20

Hi everyone!

I have established a reference section on this blog to improve its useability. This is being achieved through a glossary[1] that uses simple language to explain the computing terms that will be used in the blog or by salesmen in this industry. There is also a "network hierarchy[2]" reference table which describes the logical areas of a network in relationship to each other, as well as the relationship of various device classes to the network.

As this blog evolves, I will be adding more reference material to this area as a way of making the articles easier to understand.

With regards,

Simon

Links

- [1] /reference/home-networking-and-it-terms#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
- [2] /reference/network-hierarchy-terms/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

What could be the definition of the European universal broadband Internet service?

14/03/2010 11:29

thinkbroadband :: European USO could interrupt government plans[1]

My comments and summary

The European Commission are looking in to the idea of a standard for baseline broadband Internet service across the European Union. This is based on certain factors where the UK's fixed broadband coverage is 99% whereas the average across the European Union is 93% with the EU's rural areas clocking in at 77%. In my opinion, these figures don't quote a minimum service

speed “at the door” for any of the ADSL services.

The issues they were raising include:

- competitive service provision to European-Union standards, especially in rural areas
- access to the Internet service by disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, people on low means and people who are in remote areas
- Minimum service speed
- How should the universal service be funded
- Should the standard be determined by the European-Union nations themselves or by the European Commission in Brussels

Competitive Service Provision

I had used the DegroupNews website to observe how ADSL Internet service was being provided through France, and that there were many service providers in the population-dense areas whereas the population-sparse areas were serviced by one operator. A very good example of this was the département of Alpes-Maritimes (16) which has the cities of Nice and Cannes. Here, all the exchanges covering areas near the seaboard had many operators, with those big resort cities had many operators whereas the towns in the Alps had just one operator.

If you don't have the same level of competitive service in a geographic area as you do in another geographic area, there is an increased likelihood of the dominant operator providing poor service quality or taking time to roll out service and technology improvements to that area.

Disadvantaged groups

A common issue that may be raised would be provision of broadband service to disadvantaged groups like the disabled, people on low incomes and people who live in remote areas. The cost of providing computer-usage-aids to disabled people is reducing because of various imperatives like the ageing population, civil-rights measures that include disability access, increased use of standard hardware /software interfaces and easy-to-implement software modifications. This group of users, along with the elderly, may also benefit from having broadband service included in to communications-access welfare measures like telephony-service benefits that are part of pensions and benefits.

This heading also includes economically-disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed or those on low income. It should also include provisions to prohibit service providers from “redlining” service out of economically-disadvantaged areas in a similar pattern to what happened in major cities in the USA through the 40s to the 60s. As well, there may be issues raised about minimum bandwidth to be made available for “social” or “low-cost” private services as well as the provision of public-access facilities in the form of “cybercafé-style” terminals and/or Wi-Fi hotspots; and cost-effective broadband service for community organisations.

It also includes providing broadband Internet service to remote communities, whether through a wireless technology like WiMAX; extending wired technology to these communities or

a mixture of both methods. This will also encompass the issue of providing any extra consumer-premises hardware that is needed to receive broadband under these conditions.

The standard network speed

An issue that is also being raised is what should be the defined headline speed for the universal service. Some countries may run on either 512kbps or 1Mbps for the standard speed but the UK is preferring to call 2Mbps as the standard for universal broadband service. As well, the European Commission are showing a preference for a 2Mbps service as the baseline standard.

Funding of the universal broadband service

The question of funding the costs of meeting universal broadband service targets is a similar one to how the cost of providing universal telephone service was met. Here, there isn't an established broadband Internet service provider in the same way that there was an established telephone service provider. This is although in most European countries, the established telephone service provider such as the “PTTs” or the telephone spinoffs such as British Telecom or France Télécom ran a basic online service in the form of a “viewdata” service and had established their own retail ISP services.

One method that may be considered easy would be for the established ISP to bear the costs themselves and end up charging steep prices for discretionary services like what has happened with the established telephone services. On the other hand, there could be a universal-service fund similar to what is established in the USA for the provision of the universal telephone service. This could be funded by all Internet providers through a levy charged to all customers' services which the UK was proposing or a turnover-based tax, or simply the national government or European Commission to offset this through line-item spending.

A similar argument that may be raised is whether the nations should fund the universal service themselves or rely on the powers-that-be in Brussels to manage the funding.

Should the standard be determined at national level or European-Union level

This issue is being raised because some countries in the European Union, most notably the UK, France and Germany have made headlong progress in achieving the goal of the universal broadband Internet service. Some countries, such as the UK, have also achieved highly-ambitious standards like 2Mbps as the baseline speed.

The national vs European-level determination may affect whether countries are able to compete more easily in the European single market and whether an advanced country should be “pegged down” by lower baseline standards that may be determined to accommodate countries with not-so-advanced Internet infrastructure or expectations.

Conclusion

Other countries and country groups that are outside the remit of the European Union should observe what is being decided in Brussels for the universal broadband Internet service so they can know what is expected for such a basic level of service and what factors should be looked at when determining this expectation.

Links

[1]

<http://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/4173-european-uso-could-interrupt-government-plans.html>

Samsung Super AMOLED explained in pretty moving pictures (video) — Engadget

11/03/2010 11:05

Samsung Super AMOLED explained in pretty moving pictures (video) - Engadget[1]

Samsung's explanatory video clip[2]

My comments on this technology

Same desirable attributes as the OLED displays, but improved in significant ways. Ability for the display to have integrated touch-sensitivity, This leads to slimmer touchscreen handsets which is an increasingly-important application in the now-competitive smartphone market, as well as similar applications like remote-control handsets and personal media players.

They have improved the outdoor viewing ability and display responsiveness for this display, which would be of benefit to mobile phones as well as digital-imaging and handheld-games-console applications. But do I see this technology going further? Another application that I could see the Super AMOLED work well with is a watch which works as an auxiliary display and control unit for mobile phones, like some of the Sony Bluetooth watches that have been surfacing lately. Such watches could then permit a colour display on the wrist with various interesting applications.

An area where this Super AMOLED technology could excel would be automotive and marine applications, especially if the cost of larger-area displays comes to a par with the common LCD displays. For example, the new multi-function displays that are becoming the control point for HVAC, infotainment, navigation, and similar applications in newer cars could move towards this display technology. Similarly, this technology could appeal to personal navigation devices a.k.a. "sat-navs" or GPS units, marine GPS /fish-finder units as well as aftermarket car-audio equipment.

What I see is that the Super AMOLED could be one of the next key display technologies as was the LCD or the LED displays.

Links

[1]

<http://www.engadget.com/2010/03/09/samsung-super-amoled-explained-in-pretty-moving-pictures-video/>

[2] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQkLMG3SBQ4>

Now Google is proposing search for the big screen in the home

11/03/2010 05:58

Google Testing TV /Web Search on DISH Network Set-top Boxes | eHomeUpgrade[1]

Video business-news bulletin[2] including story about Google's TV /Web search

My comments on this technology

Google has become a byword for searching for information on the Internet in a similar manner to the way the word "Walkman" became a byword for personal stereo equipment or "Hoover" became one for vacuum cleaning. Their presence is now strong on the computer screen and the mobile screen, but the territory that they haven't conquered yet is the television screen.

Now they are working with DISH Network (one of two major satellite-TV services in the USA) to develop a TV-show /Web search user interface for use on the set-top boxes that DISH Network provide to their satellite-TV customers. Could this mean that we could be able to find RF-broadcast content as well as content on the Web like YouTube clips or Web sites such as online episode guides. They reckoned that this may need the use of a QWERTY keyboard near the TV.

But I have observed an increasing furtherance towards text entry from the couch, which would be important with Google's TV/Web search. For example, some remote controls are implementing text entry on a 12-key keypad similar to how those teenagers type out text messages on their mobiles and others, including TiVo are issuing remote controls that have a slide-to-expose QWERTY keyboard for text entry. On the other hand, there have been manufacturers who offered small wireless or USB keyboards being pitched at "lounge-room" use.

This is even though I have seen situations where teenagers have brought laptops in to the lounge area so they can IM or Facebook friends while watching their favourite TV shows, or where I have used Google or the Internet Movie Database from my mobile phone to search for information relating to a show that I am watching.

So it definitely shows that the Internet is becoming part of the regular TV-viewing life rather than a separate activity.

Links

[1]

http://www.ehomeupgrade.com/2010/03/10/google-testing-tv-web-search-on-dish-network-set-top-boxes/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ehomeupgrade%2Fentries+%28eHomeUpgrade+1%29

[2]

<http://online.wsj.com/video/pm-report-google-tests-new-tv-search/627466E7-D963-4D8B-BAF3-24E3AE0992C4.html>

The Browser Choice Screen - we are still not happy

09/03/2010 06:01

Les éditeurs de navigateurs se mobilisent contre Microsoft - DegroupNews.com (France - French language)[1]

My comments on this situation

There is still some disquiet in the European Union regarding the Browser Choice Screen that Microsoft launched in that market on 1 March 2010 to satisfy the European Commission's anti-trust issue concerning their delivery of Internet Explorer 8 as the standard browser for the Windows platform.

The main issue was that the only browsers that were immediately visible to the user were the "top 5" desktop browsers - Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Microsoft Internet Explorer and Opera. The user had to "pan" the menu rightwards to see the other browsers like Maxthon, GreenBrowser, K-Meleon and Flock. This had annoyed the developers of these alternative browsers, some of which were "super-browsers" built on either the Mozilla Firefox or Internet Explorer codebases and were endowed with extra features.

These browser developers want the European Commission to mandate an easily-identifiable visual cue as part of the Browser Choice Screen user-interface to indicate more browsers available. This is even though there is a scroll-bar of variable width under the browser list that can be dragged left and right to reveal the other browsers.

Personally, I would also look into the idea of an alternative user-interface layout in the form of a 6 x 2 grid for the browser-selection part rather than the current "ribbon" menu. This can cater for more browsers to be shown to the user, but the downside would be that it requires more screen real-estate which limits its utility on smaller screens like netbooks. It may also make the user-interface more cluttered and intimidating.

It is certainly a situation that reminds me of many council planning-permission fights that I have read about in various local newspapers whenever one of the big American fast-food chains like KFC or McDonalds wants to set up shop in a neighbourhood. A very constant argument that I read of in these reports is that the fast-food chain's logo and colour scheme stands out like a sore thumb against all the other small cafés that had existed previously in that area. The alternative browser developers like Maxthon see themselves as the small café who is put out of business by the "big boys" (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer & co) who are seen in a similar light to McDonalds, KFC & co.

Links

[1]

http://www.degroupnews.com/actualite/n4561-microsoft-internet_explorer-europe-concurrence-navigateur.html?xtor=RSS-1

Product Review - Revo Domino Internet table radio (Frontier Internet Radio Platform)

08/03/2010 03:43

I am reviewing one of Revo's latest Internet radios - the Domino FM/DAB+/Internet table radio which one of many of the radios appearing in this class.



[1]

This set comes in a charcoal-grey rubber-textured housing, with a joystick on the front as the main selection control. It also has a knob for selecting between operation modes and another knob to turn the volume up and down. As well, you turn the radio on and off by pressing this knob in a similar manner to most car radios.

The display is in the left "porthole" on the front of the set and is a small OLED display with a similar "off-white" colour to the vacuum-fluorescent displays on most consumer electronics made by Sony and Panasonic.



[2] There is an integrated iPod dock that is covered by a removable panel and the set came with Apple-style iPod inserts that work with whichever iPod or iPhone you have.

It also comes with a card-style remote control which, like its stablemate, allows for operation from a distance and allows for direct access to the locally-preset stations.

Setup

This process is similar to most Frontier-platform Internet radios like the Kogan and the Revo iBlik. The set is capable of supporting “quick-setup” with WPS “push-button-setup” routers and is the first one that I have reviewed to offer this method/But this option isn’t made as part of the Network Setup Wizard, rather you have to go to System Settings - Network menu and select “PBC setup” to instigate this kind of setup.

It is also the first Internet radio that I have reviewed that supports multiple wireless-network profiles (SSID and security-parameter combinations). Here, this set can remember the profiles for the four last-used wireless networks but the user can delete a particular network profile from the list.



[3]

Operation

It works in a manner similar to the other Internet radios that I have tried, with a “mode selector” and heavy use of menus. The unit also supports FM radio with RDS and DAB/DAB+ digital radio for regular RF-based radio service. The aerial for this is a telescopic rod one that is clipped vertically on the back of the unit so you don’t have to unclip it when you just need to extend it upwards.

The set stores 10 preset stations for each “band” - FM, DAB and Internet radio; and you select them by pressing the star button and highlighting the station with the joystick then pressing the joystick to hear it. To set a station as a preset, you press the star button to show preset list, then hold joystick button in until “Preset saved” comes up on display. For Internet radio, this is in addition to the favourite stations that you have identified at the wifiradio-frontier.com[4] Website.

The set works properly with a UPnP AV /DLNA home media network and the transport controls on top of the set allow you to move across the music collection that you are playing.

The set can work as a replacement for the old clock radio in the bedroom. The Alarm button on the front of the set is for enabling different previously-set alarm times when the set is off or to set the alarm times when the set is on. You can set two different alarm times and determine what to wake to - buzzer, FM station, DAB station, Internet station or iPod for each alarm time. Like the iBlik that I reviewed previously, you can set an alarm event to occur on a particular date, every day, every weekday or every weekend. When the alarm sounds, all the buttons on the unit reset the alarm. The joystick works as “snooze button” and

repeated pressing of it allows you to extend the snooze time. There is a sleep-off timer that causes the set to stop playing after a known time, but you have to go through the menus to start the sleep timer, something you wouldn’t do if you are very tired and just want to drift off to music.

There is inherent support for the last.fm “personal-music” service which can “learn” your music tastes from music played from your iPod, last.fm’s Internet radio service or a UPnP AV media server.

Sound quality

The Revo Domino is the first Internet radio that I have reviewed to have tone controls. These are found under “Equaliser” option in “System Settings” menu. There are 5 preset tone settings plus a user-determined tone setup - bass, treble and loudness-compensation.

The NXT “dual-radiator” speaker allows for some “punch” in the sound without suffocating the vocals when music is played. It also reproduces speech very clearly and the set can put up a significantly loud volume without distorting. This can be of benefit if you need to use it in noisy environments.

This unit has the similar output level to most radios of its kind, enough to fill a reasonably-size room with easily-identifiable music and can compete with the noise emitted by typical kitchen appliances.

Points for improvement

There are a few places where the Revo Domino could be improved.

One is that the OLED display could be made a bit larger. This could improve its useability, especially if the user doesn’t have good eyesight, which may be common with senior citizens.

It also could benefit from having a headphone jack installed, which can cater for late-night listening or for playing it through an active speaker system.

Conclusion and placement notes

Beyond the above-mentioned limitations associated with a small display and the lack of a headphone jack, there isn’t anything much else that I could fault this set on.

Here, I would recommend that the Revo Domino be best sold as a “step-up” Internet radio /iPod-dock combination for use in the kitchen, office, workshop, or small shop. It can also work well as a clock radio even though you have to go in to the Main Menu to set the alarm or enable the sleep timer.

Links

[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Revo-Domino2.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Revo-Dominodisplaycloseup.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[3] <http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Revo>

thinkbroadband :: Broadband Campaign “Final Third First” launched

08/03/2010 02:12

thinkbroadband :: Broadband Campaign “Final Third First”
launched[1]

Advocacy site

Final Third First blog[2]

My Comments on this campaign

There have been steps taken in the UK to “get broadband to the farm gate” but there are still a lot of questions concerning how this is going on. The main issue being raised regarding rural broadband in the UK is lack of “proper access”. IMHO, this would mean “at the door” access speeds that match service-package “headline speeds” for mid-tier ADSL packages.

Previously, I had blogged about rural broadband not just being about planting a DSLAM in to a rural telephone exchange and providing a backhaul to one or more Internet services. There is a lot more that needs to be looked at in this context, such as the quality of the telephone wiring from the exchanges to the properties. The act of planting a DSLAM in the telephone exchange may provide close to headline-speed DSL to every one of those fixed telephone lines in the built-up area such as a hamlet or village. Then you have the issue of “clapped-out” telephone lines servicing the rural properties that limits DSL performance to these properties. Other factors also include a failure to use the options that are part of the ADSL2 standard to “push out” the signal over long distances.

I would therefore recommend a gradual but prompt process of renewing and reorganising telephone lines for particular geographic areas as users register interest in broadband Internet in their areas of residence. This may also include investigating the use of ADSL repeater setups and similar “push-out” hardware setups. I would also look at the idea of deploying fibre-based Internet like Vitesse[3] did in Birch Green, Bramfield, Hertingfordbury and Stapleford in Hertfordshire (UK), whether directly “to the door” or as part of a backbone to copper-based runs.

Links

- [1] <http://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/4177-broadband-campaign-final-third-first-launched.html>
[2] <http://finalthirdfirst.blogspot.com/>
[3] <http://www.vitesse.com>

The Android-driven Wi-Fi cordless phone that thinks it’s a smartphone

05/03/2010 07:24

News and Blog articles

DSP Group’s Android DECT /Wi-Fi Home Phone Reference
Design Has Me Drooling | eHomeUpgrade[1]

DSP Multimedia Handset – Android Based Home Phone | Android
Community[2]

From the horse’s mouth

DSP Group’s “video brochure[3]” available on YouTube

DSP Group’s Web page on this phone[4]

My comments on this phone

Most of the news concerning Android is focused on smartphones that are pitched as cellular mobile phones. But this phone is an intent to take Android to a new territory – the home cordless phone which is used as a household’s “common phone”.

Here, it uses VoIP technology through a Wi-Fi network (which nearly all home networks are based around) but can work as a DECT-based cordless phone. But it can work with a home network by providing DLNA functionality, access to home automation, consumer-electronics control; as well as being a hand-held Internet terminal. Telephony service providers like Telstra can customise the phone to suit their needs such as providing a branded customer experience like they do with mobile phones. This can also extend to hosted-PBX providers providing this phone as part of an IP-based business phone system for a small business.

This has been achieved through the use of Google Android as the phone’s operating environment and the phone being able to gain access to applications provided for the Google Android MarketPlace. This can open up this home phone for all sorts of innovative applications. I would also extend this to business-related applications including order-entry for restaurants or tourist information for the hospitality industry.

This phone has become the first reference design for an in-home /in-premises cordless phone to have an interface and level of functionality that puts it on a par with today’s smartphones. It will also definitely appeal to the competitive “triple-play” marketplace that is being built out in different countries around the world and could herald the beginning of a new age of “in-premises” telephony.

Links

- [1] http://www.ehomeupgrade.com/2010/03/04/dsp-groups-android-dect-wi-fi-home-phone-reference-design-has-me-drooling/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ehomeupgrade%2Fentries+%28eHomeUpgrade+1%29
[2] <http://androidcommunity.com/dsp-multimedia-handset-android-b>

ased-home-phone-20100303/
[3] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb9po86HXL8>
[4]
<http://www.dspg.com/english/Product.aspx?CatalogId=729&ProductId=81&CategoryID=4>

Phone integration for in-car audio – not just for the iPhone anymore

04/03/2010 11:28

Articles

Nokia and Alpine integrating handsets into cars, bringing Ovi Maps to your dashboard — Engadget[1]

From the horse's mouth

Alpine's press release[2]

My comments



[3]

Phones like this one can now let the Alpine blast

Alpine[4], who has been considered the status symbol as far as car audio is concerned, have been one of the first car-audio manufacturers to provide phone integration for a phone platform other than the Apple iPhone, nowadays considered the status symbol for mobile phones. What they had done is to allow the Symbian-based Nokia phones similar to my N85[5] to work with the car stereos by providing access to Ovi Maps navigation, the music playlist, weather applets and more alongside the usual calling and phonebook functions.

They have achieved this through "Terminal Mode" which uses a "gateway app" installed on the phone and the phone linked to the system through a USB cable or a Bluetooth link. The phone's apps can benefit from the larger display found in high-end car-audio installations.

The reasons I am pleased about this technology is that

a) the mobile phone that links with a car stereo for full functionality doesn't have to be the Apple iPhone

b) there is an incentive for vehicle builders, car-audio manufacturers and handset manufacturers to establish a level playing field for achieving full functionality for mobile phones from the dashboard.

This can also lead to further functionality like Pandora, Last.fm, Internet radio, location-based services and extended navigation becoming available at the dashboard without needing to use multiple applications installed in a phone platform that you don't have or on your car's infotainment platform.

Links

[1]

<http://www.engadget.com/2010/03/03/nokia-and-alpine-integrating-handsets-into-cars-bringing-ovi-ma/>

[2] <http://www.alpine.com/e/corporate/news/20100303/>

[3]

http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Nokia-N85smartphone.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

[4] <http://www.alpine.com>

[5]

/2009/11/product-review-nokia-n85-3g-multimedia-phone-symbian-s60-version-3/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
