

Nifty USB kit proves a versatile gadget

ONCE in a while, someone comes along with a simple little gadget that turns a complicated or messy job into a much simpler one. In this case, the gadget is a USB 2.0 to Serial ATA/IDE cable. Think about it: a cable that will allow you to run a couple of external hard disks, a CD or DVD burner from one of your computer's USB ports.

You could back up files to an external hard disk, watch movies on an external DVD drive, burn music files to a CD rewriter. Any device that will accept a standard SATA or IDE connector can be used with this cable and many computer users have a spare drive or two left over from their last upgrade.

You will need a power cable too, of course, and a suitable Australian power cable is provided with the box by Brando Workshop, a Hong Kong-based electronics specialist, as well as a power transformer.

The cable has a USB 2.0 connector at one end and a plastic dooover at the other bearing three connectors: a 40-pin IDE connector for standard devices, a 43-pin IDE connector of the type commonly used by notebook hard disks and on the top a SATA socket. A SATA cable is also provided.

You cannot run two different types of IDE disk simultaneously but you can run a SATA drive and one IDE drive at the same time.

You plug the IDE connector into a drive first, then the power cable goes into the drive and the power transformer goes into



computers
Tom Pillans



The clever little USB 2.0 to SATA/IDE kit from Brando Workshop.

the mains socket. Lastly, you plug the USB end of the cable into the host machine's socket and the drive should spin up.

Windows XP should recognise the additional device instantly. Earlier versions of Windows will need drivers and a suitable disk is included in the box.

An ancient 41Mb hard disk – salvaged from my first PC nearly 20 years ago – and a comparatively newer 120Gb model provided the test machines for this exercise.

Windows detected both with no fuss and re-partitioning and formatting proved trouble-free.

Performance was only fair to middling but that was only to be expected with such old hardware – a reminder of just how far hard drives have come.

The data cable supports USB 2.0 data transfers of up to 480Mb/sec and worked faultlessly, allowing a movie to be viewed on one external drive with no discernible stuttering, while files were written to the other.

The kit costs \$US35 (\$US3 postage) and is an interesting gadget for both desktop and notebook owners.

<http://usb.brandoworkshop.com.hk/>



Mini-racers

CODEMASTERS is reviving its classic *Micro Machines* miniature car racing series. The fourth title in the series is being developed for PC, PSP, PlayStation 2 and Nintendo DS. *Micro Machines v4* will feature even more power-ups and weapons to use against opponents while racing as well as some old favourites, like the car-mounted giant hammer.

www.atari.com.au

Playing housewife

A GAME based on the popular television series *Desperate Housewives* is being developed by Buena Vista Games, a subsidiary of Walt Disney Co.

Acronis updated

MANACCOM has launched version 9.1 of *Acronis True Image*, the backup drive imaging software, for Windows-based server and enterprise-class offices.

www.manac.com.au

X-Men return

ACTIVISION will release *X-Men: The Official Game* to coincide with the forthcoming release of the movie *X-Men: The Last Stand*.

Sequel to God of War

A SEQUEL to *God of War* is on the way for PlayStation 2.

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