

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### Greetings one and all!

This is our last issue of *The Printer* until September. But before we go, there is a fantastic meeting scheduled for June 7. One of the leading educators of digital photography, Michael Alloy, will be at the June 7 meeting. Mr. Alloy will discuss how to get into the swing of things in digital photography, affordably. I am sure he will have a lot of advice for using and buying a digital camera. This would be a great meeting to attend if you haven't been to a meeting, or bring a friend! And once again, there will probably be some door prizes at this meeting too, but we don't want to promise anything. Take a look at the photos of the happy winners of the Epson R-800 Printer and the 50/50 drawing from the May meeting.

It's short and sweet this month. I hope everyone has a great summer, take LOTS of pictures with your new found digital camera expertise.

*And we'll see you in September!*

*Michael*



## Microsoft Tells All - cont'd

*Gartner Group*, which said in a March 28 report that Vista will require at least 1GB of memory to show its full colors, suggested that corporate buyers specify desktops that include the 945G chip set, a *Pentium 4* processor and at least 1GB of RAM, while notebooks start with a Core Duo processor, the *945GM* chip set and 1GB of RAM. Technology-minded buyers looking for greater performance, particularly in notebooks, should look at stepping up to 2GB of RAM and a discrete graphics chip, the firm said.

*Microsoft*, assuming that most consumers and even IT managers aren't going to want to take the time to dig into their PCs' hardware to determine their *Vista* readiness, will lend a hand with its *Get Ready* campaign.

The *Get Ready* site, a part of the *Microsoft's Vista.com site* for providing information about the OS and its various versions of *Vista*, is expected to offer the *Upgrade Advisor* beta. The application will render advice on what the machine might need to get ready.



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# Mid Range System Build Suggestions:

Thinking about upgrading, even with AM2 and Core Duo 2, right around the corner? Well here are some thoughts on this process:

AMD will be launching their new socket AM2 platform in just a few more weeks, so going out and purchasing a new system right now based on their older 939 platform, doesn't seem to make much sense.

What it all comes down to, is that we really don't expect AM2 to seriously change the outlook of the AMD market. It certainly won't be a bad platform, but we expect most midrange buyers will wait at least several months before switching, as that will give the platform a chance to mature, and it should also bring lower prices. High-end buyers will definitely want to wait, because at the top of the performance spectrum the new platform should offer the potential for another 10% more performance. Overclocking enthusiasts might also want to wait, if for no other reason than to see how DDR2 affects the price/performance overclocking scene. The current prices of DDR2-533 and DDR2-667 are much lower than competing DDR offerings, and while latency is slightly higher, you can get much higher bandwidth - that's especially if you want 1GB DIMMs. For the remaining potential buyers as well as upgraders, there is much less incentive to wait for the new platform. Waiting a few more weeks might save you \$20, but that's about it.

## System Summaries

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Amazingly, we're actually under the \$1500 budget with both systems this time. Some of you might argue that \$1500 is still too much for a midrange system, but considering that you get everything other than the software and applications, we think that's a pretty reasonable cost. Drop the

keyboard, mouse, display, and speakers and you're down to \$1000, but of course you need to add in \$90-\$150 for Windows XP. All told, you may not get the same level of service that you get with a prebuilt OEM system, but the quality of components and performance offered will almost certainly be higher - much higher should you choose to go the overclocking route. Here are the system summaries, but if you're looking for additional options remember to check out the individual component pages where we have listed some alternatives.

## AMD HARDWARE

Component	Price
<b>Processor</b> Athlon 64 X2 3800+ 2x512K 2.0GHz (939) - Retail	297
<b>Motherboard</b> DFI nForce4 SLI Infinity	115
<b>Memory</b> Patriot PC-3200 2x1024MB EPLL (2-3-2-5-1T)	190
<b>Video Card</b> EVGA GeForce 7600GT CO 256MB (580/1500)	184
<b>Hard Drive</b> Western Digital SATA3.0Gbps 250GB 7200RPM 16MB Caviar SE16	95
<b>Optical Drive</b> NEC 3550A (OEM)	37
<b>Case</b> COOLER MASTER Centurion 5 CAC-T05-UW	61
<b>Power Supply</b> ENERMAX Liberty ELT400AWT ATX12V 400W	86
<b>Display</b> BenQ 20 inch 8ms Widescreen LCD FP202W	325

*cont'd on Page 4*

# Mid Range System Build - cont'd

Hardware	Component	Price
Speakers	Logitech X-530 5.1 70W	62
Speakers		
<b>Keyboard and Mouse</b>		
Microsoft Comfort Curve 2000 B2L-00047		32
<b>Bottom Line</b>		<b>\$1484</b>



Hardware	Component	Price
<b>Processor</b>	Pentium D 930 2x2MB	
3.0GHz (775) - Retail		212
<b>Motherboard</b>	ASUS 945P P5LD2 Deluxe	151
<b>Memory</b>	G.Skill PC-5300 2x1024MB	
Extreme LA (4-4-4-12)		148
<b>Video Card</b>	EVGA GeForce 7600GT CO	
256MB (580/1500)		184
<b>Hard Drive</b>	Western Digital SATA3.0Gbps	
250GB 7200RPM 16MB Caviar SE16		95
<b>Optical Drive</b>	NEC 3550A (OEM)	37
<b>Case</b>	COOLER MASTER Centurion	
5 CAC-T05-UW		61
<b>Power Supply</b>	ENERMAX Liberty	
ELT400AWT ATX12V 400W		86
<b>Display</b>	BenQ 20 inch 8ms	
Widescreen LCD FP202W		325
<b>Speakers</b>	Logitech X-530 5.1 70W	62

Hardware	Component	Price
<b>Keyboard and Mouse</b>		
Microsoft Comfort Curve 2000 B2L-00047		32
<b>Bottom Line</b>		<b>\$1393</b>

If you're looking for a system that can do just about anything well, both of these qualify. Without any extra tweaking, the AMD system will usually be faster, but the Intel system certainly isn't bad. If you're looking for more performance from the Intel side of things, you might want to try the Core Duo + AOpen + Overclocking route, or else wait for Core Duo 2 to launch. Both systems as configured currently lock you into an "outdated" platform, but we don't generally recommend building systems for upgradeability. You end up spending more money for the potential to upgrade, and when the time comes to finally upgrade you often find that it's better to simply build a new system and sell off your old one.

There is no such thing as a "one-size-fits-all" computer, so naturally it is possible to tweak the component choices in order to improve performance in the areas that you need it most. Upgrading the graphics card and downgrading the CPU, for example, is something to consider for gamers. I would still rather just spend the money on a faster GPU and go a bit over budget, however, because I really like my dual core systems.



# Top 5 19-inch LCD Monitors

The 19-inch monitor has become the default screen size for most desktop computer systems. They provide the same amount of screen space as a 21-inch CRT monitor, but with much less space. And with prices that aren't much higher than 17-inch LCDs, it's hard not to go for the larger screen.

## 1. Dell UltraSharp 1907FP

Dell's UltraSharp 1905FP was a very strong performer, but they have upgraded the display to the new 1907FP that have some incredible numbers for a 19-inch screen. Brightness and contrast were both significantly upgraded and the response times dropped. This lets the 1907FP work well no matter what it is used for. The screen uses both DVI and VGA connectors and has a 5-port USB 2.0 hub.

## 2. NEC MultiSync 90GX2

While most companies use traditional anti-glare coatings for their screens, NEC has decided to use one that allows more light from the screen to come through giving the MultiSync 90GX2 some of the brightest colors available in a 19-inch LCD. Response times have been significantly improved over their previous 19-inch screens as well. It uses both DVI and VGA connectors.

## 3. Samsung SyncMaster 970P

Samsung was once one of the top companies for LCD monitors, but their last few generation of panels were a bit disappointing. The new SyncMaster 970P tries to change that with some of the highest contrast ratios seen for an 19-inch screen. Response times allow the screen to be used for fast motion video from movies or gaming. It uses both the DVI and VGA connectors.

## 4. ViewSonic VX924

Viewsonic has a reputation for fast response time monitors with the PC gaming groups. The VX924 is a bit older than some of the other panels on this list, but it still features extremely fast response times making it a great monitor for PC gaming or for fast motion video playback. Because it is an older screen, prices are much more competitive than newer screens. It uses both DVI and VGA.

## 5. LG Electronics L1980Q

LG Electronics L1980Q is probably the least expensive of the screens on the list, but it still retains a number of key features. The screen has good contrast and brightness with a fast response time that allows it to be used for fast motion video and gaming. One unique feature is the auto-mirror that lets the screen be bent back to face the other direction with the image being auto corrected.

**Editor:** I recently upgraded my old 17" CRT for the Dell 19" LCD. I've been really pleased with the height adjustment feature. That has allowed me to lower the screen to rest on the back shelf of my computer table. I use both USB thumb drives and a USB memory card reader and love the USB ports on the side of the monitor.

# Microsoft Tells All on Vista's Hardware

by  
John G. Spooner

*Microsoft*, for the first time, is telling PC owners exactly what it'll take for them to run its forthcoming *Windows Vista* operating system.

As expected, the software giant, on May 18, unveiled its *Windows Vista Get Ready Web* site, along with a set of minimum PC hardware guidelines for *Vista* Capable PCs—which call for at least an 800MHz processor, 512MB of RAM and a DirectX 9-capable graphics processor, but ask for more for those who seek to use all of *Vista's* features—and an *Windows Upgrade Advisor* application, as part of a campaign to prepare people.

*Vista*, *Microsoft's* first major overhaul of *Windows* since 2001, promises numerous updates for performance, security and productivity. Given that it's long been expected to require more powerful PC hardware than *Windows XP*, consumers and business IT managers have been awaiting *Microsoft's* recommendations as they plan for upgrading to the OS, due in early 2007, or as they evaluate the purchase of new systems.

But even though the minimum hardware specs for the OS show that *Vista* will run on just about any PC sold over the last few years, its most advanced features—including the three-dimensional Aero user interface—will require additional performance, causing at least some consumers and corporate IT departments to take a look under the hood before upgrading.

To that end, *Microsoft* released two sets of minimum hardware recommendations. In addition to delivering the Get Ready Web site and upgrade advisor application, now in beta, it issued a second set of recommendations it calls *Windows Vista Premium Ready*.

The software maker's *Windows Vista Premium Ready PC* specifications call for a 1GHz processor, 1GB of RAM and 128MB of dedicated graphics memory, along with a fairly recent graphics processor that meets several additional specifications, so as to ensure a PC can run *Aero*. The machines must also have at least a 40GB hard drive or 15GB of free space and an internal or external DVD-ROM drive.

The guidelines, analysts said, give PC owners an idea of what will be needed to upgrade a PC to *Vista*, in addition to telling them if a PC they might be considering will run the OS out of the box.

*Microsoft* “doesn't want to take the steam out of hardware sales right now. So it wants to make sure that people going into stores are comfortable that hardware on sale will run *Vista* when it comes out,” said Roger Kay, president of *EndPoint Technologies Associates*, in Wayland, Mass. Meanwhile, PC owners and prospective buyers want to know “they can be comfortable that [the hardware] is spec'd to run *Vista* in a fashion that will satisfy them.”

But, given the wide range of hardware available in the market, not every PC will be able to run *Aero* right out of the box. At the same time, many PCs already in place in homes and businesses won't meet *Premium Ready* specs either without some sort of upgrade.

Many PCs sold in the last year, for example, went out with 512MB of RAM, and so require an upgrade. Others may not make the *Premium Ready* cut based on their graphics processor.

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# Microsoft Tells All on Vista's Hardware - cont'd

*Microsoft* has specified that *Premium Ready PCs*' graphics processors must adhere to *DirectX 9* and *WDDM* (its *Windows* display driver model format for writing drivers), along with supporting *Pixel Shader 2.0* and a color depth of 32 bits per pixel.

Of all PCs in the market, high-end models purchased from the factory with discrete graphics—most desktop cards sold today come with at least 128MB of on-board memory—should be most able to leap the *Premium Ready* hurdles.

But, given that the bulk of PCs sold at retail and purchased by businesses use so-called integrated graphics, some PC owners—particularly those with notebooks—may run into trouble.

Integrated graphics are built into PC chip sets, chip bundles that handle the movement of data inside PCs. Integrated graphics processors help save on costs, but they have drawbacks in that they tend to lag discrete graphics chips in performance, particularly when it comes to notebooks whose chip sets tend to come out several months behind their desktop brethren. Integrated graphics also use portions of a PC's main memory for a graphics frame buffer where the bulk of discrete graphics are generally paired with their own memory, on add-in cards or notebook motherboards. The widespread use of integrated graphics makes *Premium Ready's* 1GB RAM requirement even more necessary as 128MB of that allotment will be used for graphics.

Thus only recent integrated graphics chip sets for desktops and notebooks are capable of meeting all of the *Premium Ready* requirements.

PCs based on *ATI Technologies' Radeon Xpress 200* and *Intel's 945*, popular in consumer-oriented desktops and notebooks and among businesses, respectively, meet the minimums, their

manufacturers say. But many other older chip sets do not.

Many desktops can be updated with discrete graphics cards, however. Just about any discrete graphics processor dating back over the past two or three years will meet the *Premium Ready* requirements, graphics chip makers *ATI* and *Nvidia* have said.

Notebooks, on the other hand, may not be as lucky. Given that discrete graphics chips are generally soldered to notebook motherboards and cannot be upgraded, Kay estimated that a third to a half of notebooks sold right now at retail would deliver *Vista's* basic features only. Buyers must make sure the system they're choosing meets the *Premium Ready* specifications if they seek to upgrade to *Vista* and run *Aero*, he said.

But some questions remain about just how well integrated graphics chip sets will run features such as *Aero*.

However, one PC industry executive, who asked not to be named, said chip sets such as the *ATI Radeon XPress 200* and *Intel's 945G* will deliver adequate performance for businesses even with 1GB. Of course, 2GB would deliver greater performance, the insider said. "Is [the *945G*] going to be blazing fast? No," he said. But "does a business need that? No. A mainstream, *945*-based desktop is more than enough for a user in any sort of business case."

Given that, buyers who intend to use *Vista* for gaming, editing movies or using corporate applications such as CAD (computer-aided design) running more than one display are likely to want to not only add a beefy graphics card but also tack on some extra memory, analysts say.

cont'd on Page 2

# Site Advisor

by

*Fran Damratowski*

Site Advisor (<http://www.siteadvisor.com>) is a 467 Kb browser plug-in that works with both Internet Explorer (IE) and Firefox. Site Advisor can be loaded for both IE and Firefox on the same computer. The purpose of the site is to rate the safety of websites that attract measurable traffic for spyware, spam, viruses and fraudulent activity. When using IE, after loading the plug-in, a small button on the browser toolbar will change color when you visit a website, green for safe, red for danger, yellow for caution, and gray for untested. By clicking on the menu arrow to the right of the button you can customize Site Advisor, by right clicking on the button a balloon with a brief evaluation of the website will appear.

When you do a search using Google, MSN, or Yahoo a green check mark (**P**), a red X, a yellow exclamation point (!), or a gray question mark (?) will appear after the name of the websites. The green check mark indicates a safe website. A red X is a warning that the website is a security threat, it may be a scam, may misuse your e-mail address, may contain spyware or adware, or have excessive popups. A yellow exclamation mark (!) means the site passed the safety test, but proceed with caution. When placing the cursor over the red X, green check mark (**P**), yellow exclamation point (!) or gray question mark (?) a balloon will appear with additional information related to the test results. Click on "more" and you will see the results of the tests. The first section of the test page will tell you if significant problems were found, the year the website was established, the country of origin and its popularity. The next area of the test result page will tell you if email was received, and if down loads were tested. A graphic will demonstrate in color (green and red) the

online affiliation for the website. Other comments from the reviewer related to spam, adware, spyware, viruses, excessive popups, phishing, other scams, and the shopping experience may be included. There is also an opportunity to become a reviewer for Site Advisor. Another nice feature is the opportunity for the webpage owner to communicate with Site Advisor. The websites are periodically retested.

You can also check an individual website by going to the Site Advisor home page, scrolling down to the bottom of the page, and entering the name of a website. Try this using both "winzip.com" and "freemusic.com". Then try a favorite website you visit.

The automated software tool that is used to rate the website was developed by engineers at MIT. So far they have tested websites using AOL, Ask, Google, MSN, and Yahoo representing 95% of websites they have identified as having heavy web traffic looking for excessive popups, phishing, and other fraudulent and exploitive activity. They are also analyzing downloads for viruses, spyware and, adware as well as testing sign-up forms and using feedback from users of Site Advisor. About 5% of the visited sites rated a red X and about 2% rated a yellow exclamation mark (!). This means that about 95% of web sites are relatively safe. Generally, the first five pages, identified during a search are safest, but there is a caveat, some websites will pay to have their sites list at the beginning of a search. Organic websites are the safest, these are the websites that are placed at the beginning of a search because of the frequency of the visits to the site. You can check the publishing policies of the search engines by going to their home pages.

Key words were also tested and evaluated by search engine (AOL, Ask, Google, MSN, and Yahoo).

# Site Advisor - cont'd

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Although differences were found in the different search engines, some words were found to be less safe than others. For example, generally safe words groups are airlines (American Airlines, Southwest, etc.), animals, cars, katrina, phone services, sports, and top worries. Other words are less safe. Examples of unsafe words include band names, music, peoples, software, and tech toys. Check the tested Zeitgeist Keyword Group at <http://www.siteadvisor.com/studies/c4-detail.html> for additional information about the words tested.

All of the testing used five search engines AOL, Ask, Google, MSN, and Yahoo. Google, MSN, and Yahoo all used the rating system described above. AOL was not review for this article. Ask did not use the rating system.

The system requirements include a processor running at a minimum of 400 MHz, 128 MB of RAM, 10 MB of free disk space, and Windows 98, ME, 2000, but Windows XP is recommended.

Site Advisor was acquired by McAfee in April 2006 and is currently still free by going to <http://www.siteadvisor.com>. The above review was written after using IE to go to the Site Advisor website and loading the plug-in for IE. The next day the plug-in for Mozilla's Firefox was loaded. The program functioned in the same way as described above except for three differences: (1) the button was located in the lower right hand corner of the screen as opposed to the browser toolbar, (2) the balloon no longer appeared when the button was right clicked, and (3) the drop down menu on the button was slightly different. Since the changes occurred the next day using Firefox the plug-in was loaded on another computer using IE. The only differences noted on the second computer using IE the next day were the addition of the name McAfee, which did not previously appear, the words "get fully protected" were added to the bottom of the balloon, and a gray question mark (?) replaced the word "untested" in the ratings. Clicking "get fully protected" takes you to the McAfee home page.



*Our Illustrious President, doing his thing.*

# PASSWORDMAKER

## The Problem

If you're like most people, you have a few passwords that you use over and over again on many different websites. You know this isn't secure, yet you do it anyway. Why? Because it's difficult to remember a unique password for each and every web site that requires one.

## Existing Solutions

Maybe you do use unique passwords, and get around the problem of remembering them by storing them in a spreadsheet or other file. Maybe you even use one of the many password managers that are available. But now you've centralized your passwords and access to them becomes difficult while at work, a friend's, or a public internet terminal. You can't get to your passwords without carrying them around or publishing them on the internet. Some people even carry a USB keychain with their passwords wherever they go. How inconvenient. And publishing them on the internet? Yikes! We need not even mention the security risks inherent with that solution. Even if you trust the company storing the passwords, you can be sure every hacker in the world is drooling over the prospect of accessing their database.

## Our Solution

**PASSWORDMAKER** solves all of these issues. It is a small, lightweight, free, extension for Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mozilla, Netscape, Flock, and Yahoo! Widgets which creates unique, secure passwords that are very easy for you to retrieve but no one else. Nothing is stored anywhere, anytime, so there's nothing to be hacked, lost, or stolen.

## How It Works

You provide **PASSWORDMAKER** two pieces of information: a "master password" — that one, single password you like — and the URL of the website requiring a password. Through the magic of one-way hash algorithms, **PASSWORDMAKER** calculates a message digest, also known as a digital fingerprint, which can be used as your password for the website. Although one-way hash algorithms have a number of interesting characteristics, the one capitalized by **PASSWORDMAKER** is that the resulting fingerprint (password) does "not reveal anything about the input that was used to generate it." 1 In other words, if someone has one or more of your generated passwords, it is computationally infeasible for him to derive your master password or to calculate your other passwords. Computationally infeasible means even computers like this won't help!

## What About Portability?

For times when you must use non-*Firefox* browsers or can't install *Firefox* extensions, there's an online version which mimics the extension and works in all browsers new and old. No downloads or installations are required. Additionally, stand-alone versions for desktops, mobile phones, and PDAs are coming shortly.

Go to their website:

***<http://passwordmaker.org/>***  
for more information.

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## Photos from Our May Meeting



*Our June presenter on Digital Photography, Mike Alloy.*



*The Gretag Eye-One Color Calibration presentation by Mac Business Solutions.*

**The Next Regular Meeting will be at  
The Severn River Middle School**

**Wednesday,  
June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**Meeting will be held in the large meeting  
room.**

**It starts at 7:00 PM with club business  
and a short discussion period.**

**There will be Presentations on  
Digital Photography  
by  
Michael Alloy**

**Members and their friends are welcome to  
come, ask questions and become enlightened.**

**How to Find: Severn River Middle School**

SRMS is close to the Arnold, MD campus of the Anne Arundel Community College. From Annapolis and parts south, take Rte 2 (Ritchie Highway) north about 3 miles from the intersection of Rt. 50, **turn right on College Parkway**. At the first light, turn left on Peninsula Farm Road. (Of course, if you are coming from points North, you would turn left on to College Parkway) about a half-mile down the road the large SRMS school building, set back off a large two level parking lot, will be visible on your right. Park here and go to the main entrance. Signs will be posted to direct you to the **Large Group Room** where we will be meeting.

**How to find: The Technology SIG, A ChPCUG Special Interest Group\*\***

*Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM*

**The meetings are held at the SRMS in the Library.**



**Chesapeake PC Users Group**

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**FIRST CLASS**

**INSIDE THIS VERY ISSUE!**

**President's Corner  
PASSWORDMAKER  
19" LCD Monitors  
Site Advisor Plug In  
Mid Level Systems  
Real Color Photos  
... and a little more!**

**Note:** *The date above your name on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership. Contact the Membership Chairman (page 2, column 2) to update.*

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