

Rich's Ramblings July 2006

Accidentally I found a vendor selling a small 1 Gigabyte USB drive at a computer show which evidently came from those "geeks on call" troops from Best Buy. The guy's price seemed very reasonable, and I can always use another 1 gigabyte drive.

I put it in my goodie bag and kind of forgot about it. One day I decided to try it out and see what it contained. I was surprised when I plugged it into my laptop. It immediately came up as a CD-ROM drive. I was unable to write to the drive so I figured that I would just format it and away we go. NO NO NO, it won't work as the device would not allow me to format or change it.

So I decided to check out what was on the drive and found a program called launchU3.exe. Because I had just imaged my laptop with Norton's Ghost, I figured what the heck. I executed the program and it came up with a beautiful menu of programs that were installed on the USB device. Being an adventurous type, I took a look at the programs and they seemed pretty well what I would want on a portable device. After looking thru the help files I ended up at the U3 web page. I ended up installing Mozilla Firefox browser, Thunderbird E-Mail, Open office (a free competitor to Microsoft Office professional), and an anti-virus from U3. All in all almost a complete set of applications and utilities. I was able to turn on the security so that it required a password to get into the drive. (It came without any security being setup) This is really great for those of us who have to visit other peoples computers. I was able to import all my Internet Explorer bookmarks into Firefox and it worked great. I installed one of my many email addresses into Thunderbird and away it went. Nice little program. I updated each of the programs from the U3 website and it was very painless. I even found my favorite multipurpose Instant Messenger program Trillian. I was able to retrieve my AOL IM, Yahoo IM buddies list and get on IRC for a conference that I have to attend each month. All in all a great device..

Evidently there are several different manufacturers of the USB drives who license the U3 technology which allows the price to be

pretty reasonable. This week (June 11th), CompUSA has a sale on the 1Gigabyte SanDisk U3 Micro Cruiser for \$39.99 after a \$20 mail in rebate. They have a 4 Gigabyte version for \$169.99 after a \$30 mail in rebate. (Note: I hate the mail in rebates as you have to be very careful to do exactly what they say or you never get the rebate) If you travel, you might want to consider one of these devices as you can carry your passwords and favorite settings and programs with you. If you have a friend who might have a virus, you can even run a virus scan on their computer entirely from the USB drive

I have another one of these USB drives which I really like as it has a write protect physical switch on the side to prevent someone's computer from giving you a virus. It is a 1 Gigabyte which is just about the minimum now a days. <G>

The web site for U3 <http://www.u3.com/>

Rich Schinnell is a Retired member of Capital PC User Group having served as President, Vice President and a SIG chair. He is retired from the USN and supports his toys and other hobbies by consulting for several small businesses for their networks and office workstations. He can be reached via E-Mail at Schinnell@cpcug.org or as a last resort by phone at (301) 949-9292.

PS: Next time I write, I hope to be able to describe my trials and tribulations with VISTA.

Watch this space.