# PRODUCT REVIEW

# Soundzone SZ1001 Capsule Speaker *by Chris Taylor*

In an episode of *The Big Bang Theory*, the guys are helping Penny with a new business. Penny asks "How are flower barrettes going to appeal to men?" Howard exclaims, "We add Bluetooth". When Penny expresses surprise that they want to add Bluetooth to a hair barrette, Sheldon replies, "Penny, everything is better with Bluetooth."

And so it was when I recently came across an ad for a portable speaker. I already have a shoX mini speaker that puts out great sound (http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/shoXmini.htm). So how could a mini speaker be made better? Bluetooth, of course!

The Soundzone SZ1001 is - at first blush - a fairly standard looking portable speaker. But glancing at the specs, it quickly became apparent this is not - to paraphrase Oldsmobile - your father's portable speaker.

First, what is similar to other portable speakers such as the shoX mini? *(see shoX review in October 2011 issue or at http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/shoXmini.htm)*

It is compact. It has an expanding section that opens up a chamber for much improved bass sound. It comes with cables that allow it to be plugged into any sound device with a 3.5mm jack as well as charge it from a USB port. The sound quality from the 3W speaker is excellent.

But there are two areas where the SZ1001 leaps ahead. The first is connectivity and the second is battery life.

The big difference is Bluetooth connectivity. Once you pair the speaker with your audio device, it just works. It really is nice to use it without having to worry about cables. I found it held a wireless connection reliably up to about 20 feet in most circumstances, which I found to be quite adequate for my needs. If I moved out of range, it would reconnect automatically as soon as I moved closer.

I was able to easily pair the speaker with my laptop and my BlackBerry. However, I found changing devices messed up the pairing. As long as I stayed with one device, simply turning on Bluetooth was all I needed to get the

connection to happen. If I switched devices, I had to re-pair. A simple operation, but something to keep in mind if you want to use the speaker with more than one device.

You can also use the included audio cable which has a 3.5mm jack for a wired connection to just about any MP3 player or computer. It is one of those funky cables like the shoX mini with a mini-USB connector that plugs into the speaker and the other end has both the 3.5mm audio jack and a standard USB-A plug for charging the device. There is also a tethered 3.5mm audio cable that tucks into the bottom of the speaker. This very nice addition means, if I were to lose the separate cable, I could play through the cable in the bottom of the device and then buy a regular cable with a USB-A at one end and mini-USB at the other for charging the device.

## Inside this issue:

# PIZZA, 6:30 pm, WEDNESDAY, June 13th, 2012

# June Raffle

**C**ourtesy of SoundZone, we have an **SZ5002 MP3/FM Radio Speaker**.
While you can read the review of the SZ1001 in this issue (*on page 1*), the SZ5002 is so new, even the SoundZone web site does not list the product yet!

This great little capsule speaker - listed as "Little speaker, mighty sound" will not only playback from any audio device with a 3.5mm jack (such as an MP3 player, smart phone, or computer) but comes with a built-in MP3 player (takes SD cards up to 8GB) and an

FM radio so you can have music with you with nothing more than this little 2.5 inch diameter ball!

Valued at $90, this is a terrific prize for anyone who wants portability when it comes to sound but does not want to compromise on quality and versatility.

Tickets are, as always, a good deal at $1 for one, a great deal at $2 for three or the unbelievable bargain of $5 for ten! Help keep your membership dues low by buying tickets on this great little speaker.

I will have my SZ1001 at the meeting if you want to listen to how great the sound is before buying your tickets.

## May Prize Winners

**Vern Colford** took home our Acronis 10 door prize while **Henry Blaszczak** was the winner of the evening's raffle prize of the McAfee All Access 2012 Software.

Congrats to the winners and thanks again to our prize suppliers.

# Coming Up…

Wednesday, June 13th, 2012

PIZZA PARTY (at <u>6:30</u> pm)

The OPCUG is pleased to host the FIFTH Annual Pizza night to thank its members for their continued support. Please come early to ensure you have a choice of several popular varieties of Pizzas.

As usual, we will also supply several varieties of soft drinks, plus water and dessert.

The food will arrive, at 6:30 pm, under the big tent in the front yard of the Canada Science and Technology Museum.

Guests are welcome.

At 7:30 the regular meeting will take place (see MEETING notice below).

MEETING (7:30 pm)

Speaker: Ross Kouhi, Executive Director, National Capital FreeNet

"For the June 13 talk, I'll provide an overview of NCF and some news about big changes behind our high-speed DSL internet service. I'll describe how we're currently restructuring much of how our service works and how the path over which several thousand Ottawa area members connect to the Internet is changed as a result. Included will be a look at the challenges of running a non-profit ISP behind the scenes, and how we're different from the rest of the ISP community."

## 2012 CALENDAR

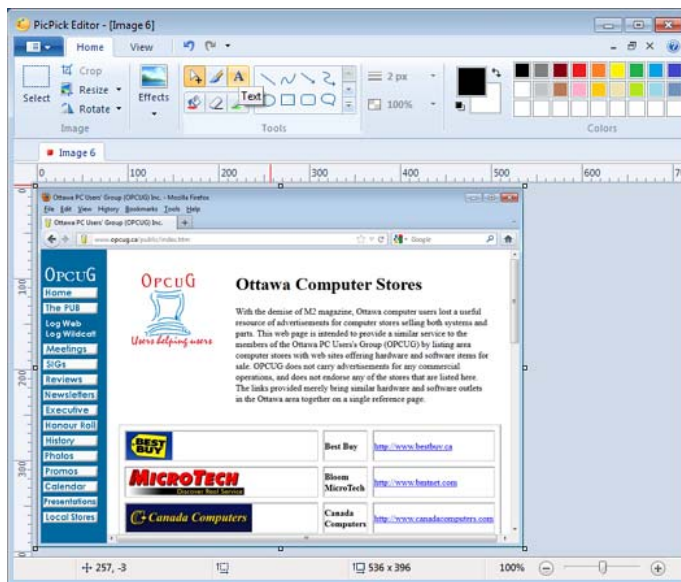| Meetings | Date | Time and Venue |
|---|---|---|
| OPCUG General Meeting | Wednesday, June 13th | 7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the **Canada Science and Technology Museum**, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/index.cfm |
| Beginners' SIG | Wednesday, June 13th | Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. |
| Linux / Open Source SIG | (suspended) | Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. |
| Beer BOF (Wing SIG East) | Wednesday, June 13th | 10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd. |
| Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting). | | |

# PRODUCT REVIEW

# Screen Capture in Windows 7 *by Alan German*

I always wondered what was left out of Windows 7 Home Premium in order to make it into the Starter Edition. Obtaining a net-book computer with Windows 7 Starter Edition installed gave me the chance to find out first hand.

One of the things that became apparent was that the Windows Snipping Tool, used to capture full or partial screenshots, was no-where to be found. This set me on a hunt - to locate a free screen grabber - just so that I could create a screenshot with which to illustrate this article. Well, not really, but since I do take images off my display screen quite often, I need an easy-to-use and flexible screen capture utility.

One program that I found really easy to use, but with considerable power, is PicPick. This little utility loads itself into the system tray and is then always ready to jump to the task of obtaining a screenshot.



There are many configurable options. Capture of the full screen, the active widow, or an outlined region can be specified, and a variety of file formats in which to store the screen image are available. The captured image is first loaded into the program's main window (see above) where a range of tools, including resize and crop, and the ability to add text and graphics to the image, are provided.

PicPick makes it easy to grab an image of any portion of the display screen, do simple editing, and then store the image to disk in BMP, JPG, PNG or GIF format. The program is free for non-commercial use.

**Bottom Line**

PicPick (Free for non-commercial use)
Version 3.0.3 Wiziple Software
http://www.picpick.org/

# REVIEW OF OPCUG FINANCES—2011

Once again, Richard Aylesworth has conducted a detailed review of the financial records for the past fiscal year and has con-firmed that the Treasurer's report, published in the February newsletter, accurately stated the club's financial position for 2011. Our-eagle-eyed reviewer noted one error in the associated documentation. The Board of Directors would like to thank Richard for his thorough review of the club's accounts.

Report:

Recommendations from the previous year's review have been implemented. This year, there was one incorrect cheque number, which did not affect the totals, and some minor inconsistency in the reporting of accounts having no transactions.

Alan did a great job.

*Richard Aylesworth*

# ARTICLE

# Power-line networking *by Andrew Petrovic*

## Introduction

When an ISP provides an Internet connection to your home through a coaxial cable or DSL connection, it feeds into a modem unit (usually supplied by them) which will either have a router incorporated or will likely need to be connected to a separate router. Either way, the router has several network outputs that can supply one or more computers.

In larger homes where several people each have a computer in different rooms, there has to be a method to distribute this Ethernet network signal throughout the house. Even if there are no extra computers, several devices, such as Blu-ray and media distribution devices or gaming consoles can connect to the Internet via an Ethernet cable.

So what are the methods of distributing this network signal around the home? Here are the common ways:

- **Wired connections**. Here there are actual network cables running inside the walls of the home. Where the cable terminates there will be an Ethernet socket on the wall and you just plug your device into it and go. This is by far the best method, but of course is the least convenient and most people don't want to go to the trouble of setting all this up. Also the wires and connectors are in a fixed position, so you must connect where the cable runs only.

- **Wireless**. This is a much more common method and the technology has improved over the years. There are drawbacks with it though. You must have wireless-compatible equipment, such as a wireless router and also each device (desktop computer; laptop; etc) must be capable of using wireless. You also need some technical understanding of setting up wire-

less in order to make it secure, as the signal can be picked up around your neighbourhood quite easily.

- **Power-line**. This is an alternate method that uses the 110 volt power cables running throughout your house. The network signal rides on top of the power in the electrical wiring and can be picked up wherever there is a power outlet in your home.

## How Power-line networking works

To make this work, you need to buy Power-line units – one for each network node. For example, you can locate one near to the existing network router. You plug the unit, which is a small box the size of two decks of cards, directly into the power outlet on the wall. Then connect an Ethernet network cable from this unit to an available network connector on your router.

You then take another unit (they are often sold as two units in a 'starter kit' ) and plug this into the wall outlet somewhere else in the house, where your remote computer is located. This computer then connects to that unit with a standard network cable.

Actually the basics of the technology is not that new – there were home intercom units years ago that worked by only needing to plug them into electrical outlets without a separate communication wire.

## The good and bad of Power-line networking

Probably the main plus of Power-line networking is the fact that it's very easy to set up. There is no extra wiring to install and the end points can be anywhere that there is an electrical outlet. In addition, there is a minimal amount of technical know-how required to install it.

Wherever the network connection comes out, you can plug in other distribution switches or wireless units if you need to and make quite a complex network environment.

It's not absolutely perfect though, because in some older houses with older wiring it may not work very well. Even in more modern houses it is possible that if the end points of the network are on different electrical circuits (different phases) then it may not work, or speed may be reduced, although in my house, which is 13 years old, I was able to have the router and one Power-line unit in the basement and the other Power-line unit could be connected to any outlet anywhere in my house, on any of the three levels and never suffer more than a minimal loss in speed.

The older Power-line units did suffer from quite slow connections, but these days the technology has been improved to the point where the network speed can be typically 100 or 200 Mbps and recently up to 500 Mbps. For comparison, wired Ethernet in the home can go up to 970 Mbps and the fastest wireless up to 600 Mbps.

Note also that the unit should be plugged directly into the wall outlet and not through extension cables or power bars and especially not through any surge devices that could affect the signal quality. Also plugging into an AFCI circuit breaker line can reduce performance.

## Security of data

One of the disadvantages of using a wireless connection is security. Unless you tighten up that security then you are vulnerable to outside 'hackers' picking up your signal and allowing them to access your data – both data being transmitted and data stored on your PC.

## Power-line networking
*(Continued from page 4)*

Power-line has the option of easily set up encryption. If you are just streaming video or audio around your home, then encryption is less important and you need the maximum bandwidth available. For data transmissions you need to set the security up, which is usually done by pressing a switch on one unit and afterwards pressing a switch on the other unit. Not exactly difficult. Encryption may slow down the network speed slightly because of the overhead involved, but it should not be significant.

It could be possible for your neighbours to pick up your Power-line signal if they have a compatible unit and are on the same electrical phase (perhaps more common in apartments than houses) though the distance the signal can go is fairly limited and the data encryption you can apply is quite strong, so should not be a reason to be concerned.

### Availability

Most of the main computer suppliers stock Power-line products now. You can start off by buying a starter kit, consisting of two units, then if you need to expand the network you can buy additional units to add to your home wherever they may be needed.

The devices should also come with some software that you can install on your computer to manage your Power-line network. Accompanying instructions will detail exactly what software can be set up. The software may not be required to be installed for the units to work, but it does make life easier to use the software for renaming, testing and troubleshooting connections.

♦♦♦

## Soundzone Capsule Speaker

I am always leery of stated battery life, especially when it claims "up to" a certain number of hours. So I was sceptical about the "up to 12 hours" claimed in the manual. I was pleasantly surprised. Even over Bluetooth, I got a solid 9 hours from a full charge. And the SZ1001 charges in just 2 hours on a standard USB computer port.

Then I tried it on an audio cable rather than Bluetooth. I had to start taking notes because the battery was not dying before I had to go to work, or to bed, or out to dinner. The battery lasted an incredible 29 hours on a single charge! I found this so unbelievable, I had to retest. The volume had been a little high for my first test, so I turned it down to a little softer, yet still quite clear, level. This time, the battery lasted 38 hours! Amazing.

When operating on a Bluetooth connection, the SZ1001 has controls for adjusting the volume, pause/play, and skip forward/backwards by track. I picture being in a hotel room on a trip, with Shaula (my netbook) across the room on a desk plugged in and charging, with the Soundzone speaker beside me on the bedside table. Very, very handy to be able to control the media player right from the speaker rather than getting up and crossing the room.

One thing I had not counted on when using a Bluetooth speaker was interference with WiFi networking (802.11b/g/n). This is not the fault of Soundzone - it is inherent with Bluetooth as it uses the same frequencies. I was happily transferring some music from my desktop computer to Shaula and was getting my normal 1 to 1.5 MBytes per second file transfers. While I continued to transfer files, I fired up the speaker and started listening to music. While the music played fine, I saw my file transfer speed drop to an abysmal 50 to 60 KBytes per second, or about 5% of the performance without Bluetooth running!

Although the technology in Bluetooth allows for some fancy footwork in shifting channels to try to avoid collisions, it certainly didn't work for me. I might play with the channel my WiFi uses at some point to see if it helps, but for now I will just live with the limitation.

If there is one failing with this wonderful little speaker, it has to be the instructions that are included. The four pages of incredibly small type (one page has 554 words in a square 2" x 2") cover safety instructions (including the peculiar admonishment not to "defeat the purpose of the polarized plug" - which might make sense if the device had such a thing), one page of pictures with a packing list, one page on how to pair the speaker, and finally one page of specifications.

Unfortunately, there were no instructions on how to use some of the dual-purpose buttons on the speaker, no instructions on how to switch between Bluetooth and cabled operation, and not even an explanation that the written instruction "To switch on the speaker, press down on the power button for some time." actually meant 5 to 10 seconds!

Fortunately, at the Soundzone web site, there is an FAQ which expands enough on the instructions that, with a little stumbling around and trying things, I figured everything out.

The Soundzone SZ1001 is not cheap. The price at the web site is $79.90. Orders over $50 ship for free from the Oakville Ontario company, so that helps a little.

Overall, I am really impressed with the quality and functionality of the Soundzone SZ1001 Bluetooth capsule speaker. Although a little pricy, if you need a wireless speaker, or a speaker with amazingly long battery life, I don't think you will be disappointed in it.

### Bottom Line:

Device: Soundzone SZ1001 Bluetooth capsule speaker

Price: $79.90 (shipping included)

Web: http://www.soundzoneonline.com

# PRODUCT REVIEW

# Ashampoo Burning Studio 6 Free *by Alan German*

**T**he publisher of this software says: "Ashampoo Burning Studio 6 FREE focuses on what you want: To burn discs quickly, easily, with maximum quality and minimum hassle. It includes everything you need to be able to do that. And it excludes everything that could get in the way." Can it really be this good - and free? Well, yes it can. Ashampoo lets you burn files to a CD in literally just a few mouse clicks.

As indicated on the screen shot, Ashampoo has many features including burning data, audio and video files to disk, copying entire disks, burning ISO files, and erasing the contents of re-writable disks.

To burn files to a CD, select "Burn Files and Folders", and then choose either to create a CD, DVD or Blu-ray disk, or to update an existing (multi-session) disk.

The program takes a little time to check the disk in the burner and then indicates, with a green check mark, that you should click on "Next" to proceed. This part of the process is essentially foolproof since the alternative is a large red "X" overlaid on the disk icon, and a message indicating that "The CD-R is not writable".



Selecting the files and/or folders to be copied to the disk is as simple as dragging and dropping the items from Windows Explorer into Ashampoo's window, or pressing the "Add" button and browsing through the file system to locate the desired items. A capacity gauge along the bottom of the program window indicates how much space on the disk will be taken up by the files, and how much free space will remain.

Once the file selection has been made, pressing the "Next" button displays the currently selected burning options, such as the write speed, whether the copied files are to be verified after burning, and if the files are to be buffered to the hard drive prior to burning. This display is a very handy feature since, should you leave the burning program set to finalize (close) the disk, one of the displayed items indicates "After recording the CD can't be changed anymore". A "Change Options" button allows any of several burning options to be modified prior to burning the CD.

The actual burning process is accompanied by a scrolling progress report and terminated by a message indicating: "Data CD recorded and verified successfully".

What could be simpler? Drop a CD in the burner, run Ashampoo, a few mouse clicks, and your files have been copied to disk. And, this version of the software is indeed completely free.

**Bottom Line**

Ashampoo Burning Studio 6 (Freeware)
Version 6.80 Ashampoo GmbH & Co. KG Oldenburg, Germany
http://www.ashampoo.com/en/usd/pin/0710/Offline/Ashampoo-Burning-Studio-6

# OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 32 *Compiled by Alan German*

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available software is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful.

### Freemake Audio Converter

Convert sound files between all key formats: MP3, WMA, WAV, FLAC, AAC, M4A, and OGG. Play audio files on your MP3 player or other mobile device. Merge multiple audio files or export audio from video files. Freemake Audio Converter has no time or feature limitations, and is absolutely free for all uses.

Current Release: Version 1.1.0
Web Site: http://www.freemake.com/free_audio_converter/

### SlimCleaner

This is the first utility to use social networking for PC repair and optimization. SlimCleaner combines the industry's fastest cleaning engine with a community of users who provide real-time feedback to improve computer performance.

Current Release: Version 2.0.18282
Web Site: https://www.slimwareutilities.com/slimcomputer.php



### Cave Story

Cave Story is the English version of a Japanese, side-scrolling, platformer game (Doukutsu Monogatari) from Studio Pixel. A great cast of characters, an interesting plot, good music, and beautiful old-school 2-D artwork.

Web Site: http://www.cavestory.org/

### Vim

Vim is a highly configurable and very efficient text editor. The program is free, but is distributed as charityware with donations supporting needy children in Uganda.

Current Release: Version 7.3.480
Web Site: http://www.vim.org/

### screenr

This web-based screen recorder makes it a breeze to create and share your screencasts. Just click the record button, capture your screen and voice, and share the resulting web link. Informative – but some people call it fun!
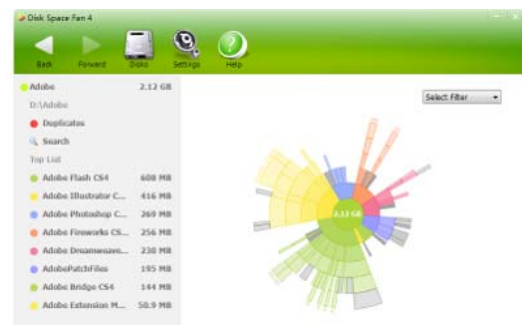
Web Site: http://www.screenr.com/



### Disk Space Fan 4 Free

This disk analyzer and duplicate file remover helps you free up disk space by finding and deleting big files. Space usage is displayed as a ring chart with dynamic animation. You can easily navigate folders, then browse, open, and delete files through integration with Windows Explorer.

Current Release: Version 4.x.2.100
Web Site: http://www.diskspacefan.com/



### Office Tabs

This office add-in provides a tabbed view of documents in Microsoft Office 2003, 2007 and 2010. With Office Tabs, you can manage multiple documents within a single window easily and quickly in Word, Excel or PowerPoint.

Current Release: Version 8.00
Web Site: http://office-tabs.com/

### EasyBCD

Having problems booting your computer? EasyBCD lets you take control of your bootloader. Supported operating systems include: Windows 7, Vista, XP, Linux, BSD, and Mac OS X. Just point and click. EasyBCD does the rest.

Current Release: Version 2.1.2
Web Site: http://neosmart.net/EasyBCD/

# OTTAWA PC NEWS

**Ottawa PC News** is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

## Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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| **Web address:** | **http://opcug.ca** | |
| **Bulletin board** — The PUB (BBS) | **http://opcug.ca/default.htm** | |

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Linux / Open-Source SIG
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|---|---|---|
| **(vacant)** | | |

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OPCUG

*Users helping users*

# Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

**B**ring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you.

Any items left over at the end of the meeting have to be taken back home by those who brought them in.