

East SIG Report - July 2015

The July meeting commenced with Frank Maher welcoming all members again in the absence of Paul Woolard our normal mc who is taking a sunny break up north.

The first session commenced with Q&A with George Skarbek. After a long pause, a question was finally asked which then lead to many others.

Q: Often when a USB stick is inserted into a USB slot on my desktop PC, the computer does not recognise it. If another memory stick is inserted into the same port it is recognised. Do you have any thoughts why this happens?

A: George said he's had the same problem when inserting some USB sticks into the front USB ports of his PC. The solution is to insert the USB stick into the rear slots, as these slots come directly off the motherboard and always work for him. George uses a USB extension cable from the rear to connect to a rear USB port.

Q: As Office 2013 with Outlook costs \$239, would it be better to go with Office 365 instead?

A: There is no definitive answer. Some thought are: Older versions of Office will be just as practical as the latest version if you already have a copy. Why not consider a free alternative to Outlook in Thunderbird, Gmail or Windows Live Mail. Your MelbPC account will give you free access to Office 365 rather than paying \$70 yearly for Office365 or buying Office 2013 outright. Office 2016 is due soon, so if you must have the latest wait for that to arrive.

Q: I use a 1 year old USB3 hard drive for backups. When plugged into a USB3 slot I get a message that "this device will work faster ...". Is there anything faster than USB3?

A: This is a surprising message as USB3 is the fastest USB interface. Are you using the correct USB slot coloured blue? Just because your hard drive has a USB3 interface, doesn't mean it will work at a higher rate than the controller and the electronics allow. Some devices are being advertised as having an USB3 interface as a key selling point but won't go any faster than USB2.

Q: After a recent problem with smoke alarms going off at home, the voltage was checked and found to be 252 volts. Can my PC handle this?

A: The PC should be able to handle 252 volts. The problem comes at 260 to 265 and will affect florescent lights first. I wouldn't worry about 252 volts.

Q: I had a virus called "Tapsnake" on my PC that's now been removed, but a program called Sophos antivirus appeared at the time. Is Sophos a genuine antivirus program?

A: Sophos is an Australian antivirus program. However that doesn't stop someone calling itself by the name of a legitimate antivirus program.

Q: My daughter has a second-hand laptop that came with Windows 7 Home. She wants to load Windows 7 Ultimate but when trying to format the drive, Windows said the drive cannot be found. The hard disk is not the original but a SSD so could this be the cause?

A: The question is why do you need Ultimate as it offers very little to the home user. As for the hard drive you can't just use format C as Windows self-defence will prevent this. You need to format the drive from DOS.

How to download videos using aTube Catcher"

In our next session Trevor Hudson played another of his instructional videos titled "How to download videos using aTube Catcher". As the title suggests Trevor's video shows how to install and run aTube Catcher to download videos from the internet. The software used is available at www.aTube.me. Trevor's video can be found on YouTube by searching the title above.

How to Turn your TV into a Smart TV

Next up was Dave Botherway. Dave's presentation compared a selection of the latest mini PCs, PCs on a stick or Stick PCs as they have become known. These devices run Windows (or Linux) and when inserted into the HDMI connection on a TV can turn that TV into a Smart TV. A Smart TV is defined as a TV that can connect to the internet. These Stick PCs are the next generation of devices after Google Chromecast or Measy, both of which have been the subject of earlier presentations. The whole PowerPoint presentation was completed using the MeegoPad operated by a wireless keyboard and mouse. As far as the audience was concerned the presentation using the MeegoPad was no different to other presentations using a notebook PCs connected to the same projector. Summary of this presentation is included elsewhere in PCUpdate.

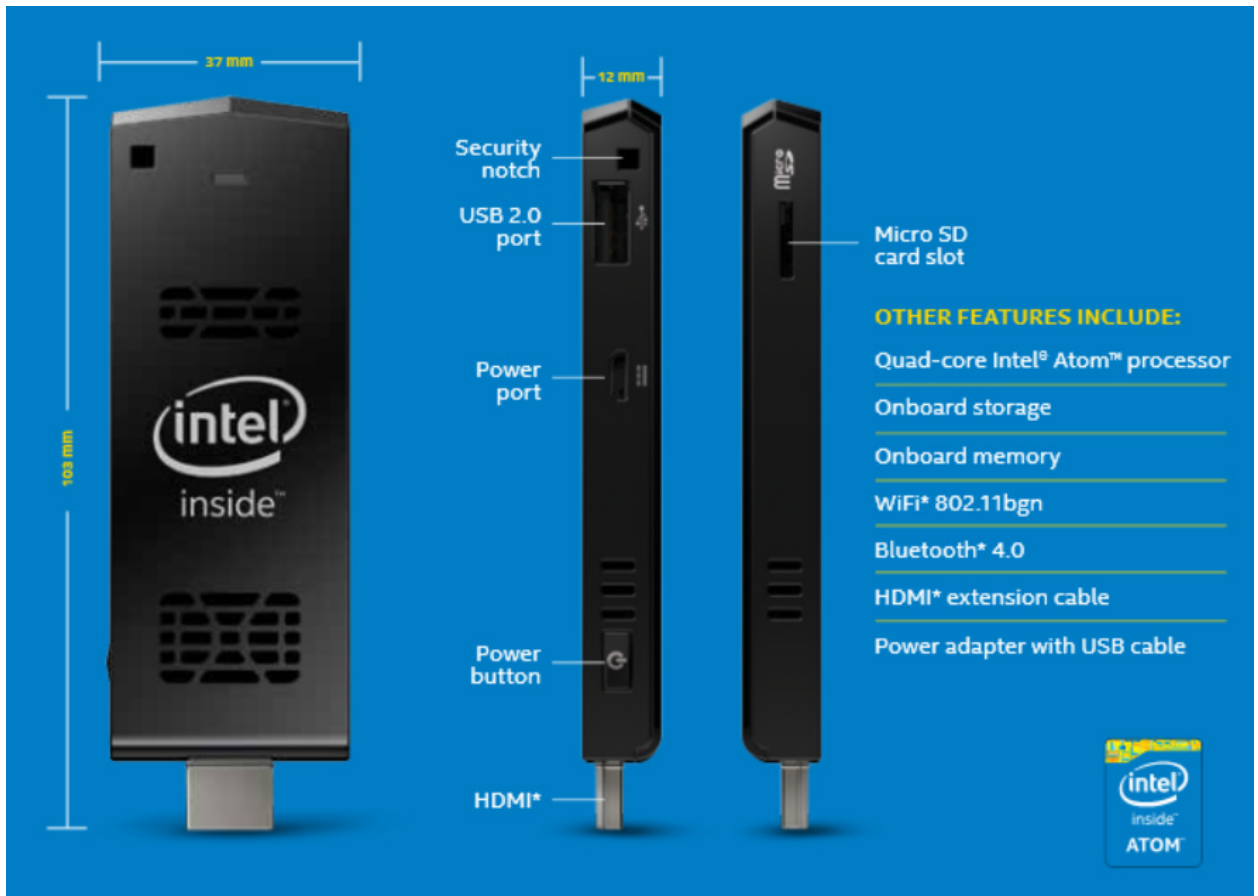
If you have a recent TV with a spare HDMI connection, you can turn that TV into a Smart TV for the cost of little more than \$200. For those who are not sure what a Smart TV is, it's a TV that can connect to the internet and do all the things you can do on your normal PC or Tablet (within reason) on the TV screen. To upgrade your TV to a Smart TV you will need a device called a Stick PC, which plugs into the HDMI port on the TV and a keyboard mouse to connect to the Stick PC via Wi-Fi.

Three of these Stick PCs were recently reviewed by Dave Botherway at the East SIG meeting and David King at the Ripper Hardware SIG. This article is a summary of their presentations. The Stick PCs are fully functioning PCs and come with Windows 8.1, but will also run Linux if that is your taste.

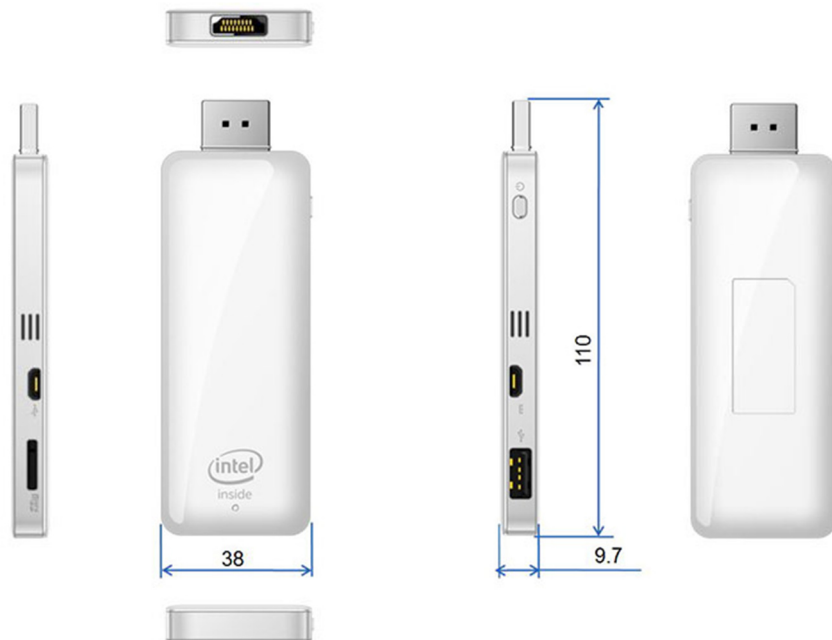
The presentations mentioned above focused on playing media from the internet or from the Stick PCs memory, which it did very well. However these Stick PCs although not a desktop replacement, when plugged into the HDMI port of a computer monitor (assuming the monitor has an HDMI port) or TV, is able to handle light workloads such as editing of documents, watching videos, playing music, using Skype or obviously browsing the internet.

Three Stick PC's that MelbPC members are currently using are listed below:

- Intel "Compute Stick" available from PCcasegear for \$229.
- Leader "PC On A Stick" (Intel inside) sourced locally from PCcasegear for \$199.
- MeegoPad T02 sourced from China for \$144 (Chinavasion)



Intel Compute Stick



Leader "PC On A Stick"



MeegoPad T02 Stick PC

These Stick PCs typically come with an Intel Atom 4 core CPU, 2GB of RAM, Intel HD Graphics, built-in wireless and Bluetooth connectivity, 32GB on-board storage, a micro SD card slot for additional storage and Windows 8.1. In addition to the necessary male HDMI connection to insert in the TV, they have 1 or 2 USB ports, audio out (MeegoPad only), a 5 volt power connection and on/off switch. They are around 100mm long and 40mm wide. (See table below).

The cheapest of the three Stick PCs, the MeegoPad has similar specifications and a Windows Experience Index (WEI) similar the other two. It represents good value however there is some concern about the legitimacy of the copy of Windows 8.1 that comes with the MeegoPad and the often difficult to understand Chinglish (as Dave calls it) instruction manual.

The table below gives a comparison of the 3 StickPC's in this article.

	Compute Stick (Intel)	PC On A Stick (Leader)	MeegoPad
General			
Model	STCK1A32WFC (Win) STCK1A8LFC (Ubuntu)	Leader (Model no. specified)	T02
Style	MiniPC / StickPC	MiniPC / StickPC	MiniPC / StickPC
Operating System	Windows 8.1 Ubuntu	Windows 8.1 Android 4.4	Windows 8.1 / Ubuntu
CPU/GPU			
CPU/GPU	Intel Atom Z3735F	Intel Atom Z3735F	Intel Atom Z3735F
CPU Frequency	1.333GHz	1.333GHz	1.33Ghz
Core	Quad Core	Quad Core	Quad Core
GPU	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics
Storage			
RAM	2 GB DDR3L	2 GB DDR3L-RS	2 GB DDR3L

Storage	32GB eMMC	32GB eMMC	eMMC4.5 32GB
Expanded Storage	SDXC v3.0	Micro SD Slot	USB2.0 device MicroSD Max 64GB
Network Communication			
WiFi	8.2.11b/g/n wireless	8.2.11b/g/n wireless	8.2.11b/g/n wireless
Bluetooth	BT 4.0	BT4.0	BT 4.0
I/O Ports			
Data	1 @ USB2.0	1 @ USB2.0 1 @ USB2.0 mini	2 @ USB2.0
Power	Wall mount	Wall mount	1 @ micro USB2.0
Audio Port	Intel HD Audio via HDMI	Intel HD Audio via HDMI	Standard Earphone port
Other	1 @ Micro SD 1 @ HDMI 1.4a	1 @ Micro SD 1 @ HDMI 1.4a	1 @ Micro SD 1 @ HDMI
Key Features	Power On/Off	Power On/Off	Power On/Off
Power Adapter			
Power Adapter	5V, 2A wall-mount AC-DC power adapter	5V, 2A wall-mount AC-DC power adapter	Input 100V-240V 50/60Hz Output 5V 2Amp
Dimensions			
	103x37x12mm	100x38x10mm	106x43x10mm
Cost			
	\$229 (PCcasegear)	\$199 (PCcasegear)	\$144 (Internet 29 July 2015)
Instructions			
	English	English	Chinglish
Accessories			
	HDMI cable, USB cable for power, 5V/2A wall mount AC-DC power adapter, Quick start guide.	HDMI cable, Micro USB cable, 5V/2A power adapter	USB Cable, Power adapter, User manual
Warranty			
	Unknown, most likely 12 months	1 Year	1 Year from Chinavasion

As with any computer you need a mouse and keyboard to enter data or move the cursor around the screen. The two wireless devices described below and used by MelbPC members with their StickPC's are ideal for this purpose. The first is the MINIX Neo A2 Lite wireless keyboard mouse. It is a double-sided 2.4GHz wireless air mouse with mini QWERTY keyboard and has a rather modern look. The second a DgTec wireless keyboard also featuring a mini QWERTY keyboard but with a track pad, mouse buttons and laser pointer. These are pictured below. The Minix is thought to be the more versatile of the two.



MINIX Neo A2 Lite double-sided Wireless Keyboard Mouse



DgTec wireless keyboard & mouse

Neil Muller