



ONTRACK DATAERASER 2.0 PROFESSIONAL

utilities

Wipe sensitive information from disks prior to disposal

Requirements 386 processor, 8MB RAM, Win9x or NT for installation only
Tested on AMD K6 200MHz and Intel Celeron 366, 64MB RAM **Extra information** Cut-down Personal Edition available for £21

■ PRICE £143 ■ EX VAT £122 ■ SUPPLIER OnTrack ■ PHONE 00 800 1012 1314 ■ WWW www.ontrack.com

DataEraser presents a few simple options that enable you to wipe data and verify erasure with selectable levels of thoroughness.

PC Plus

VERDICT

DATAERASER V2.0 PROFESSIONAL

For insurance against data haemorrhage. Makes it safer to sell or donate equipment that would have been scrapped

Against £143 for one floppy disk of code?

Range of features.....8
 Ease of use.....7
 Documentation.....7
 Performance.....9
 Value for money.....4

6/10

We've all heard tales of sensitive files being found on second-hand PCs. This is usually due to negligence or incompetence, but removing all traces of data from a drive is not easy. If you just delete files, they can be quickly recovered. If you format the disk, the data is still not hard to get at. And if you try to overwrite the disk with junk, advanced techniques may be able to read parts of what was there before.

DataEraser Professional Edition obliterates data from hard disks. During installation a bootable floppy containing the program files is created. You restart the PC from this and DataEraser loads automatically. Although Windows is required for installation, the floppy has its own operating system (DR-DOS) and includes SCSI drivers.

The program is generally simple to operate and doesn't need a mouse. You can wipe an entire disk, including boot records and file tables, or just selected partitions. OnTrack loses an ease of use mark for not displaying a drive label or letter when asking you to confirm erasure of a partition. This can make it uncertain you're about to kill the right one.

One of the keys to blanking data beyond the scope of even forensic science is to wipe the disk repeatedly. The US Department of Defence specifies three passes. DataEraser supports US and German standards, and enables you to select between one and 99 passes in which every byte on the disk or partition is overwritten with a new value.

After erasure of a complete disk there is an option to verify nothing is readable. Additionally, a low-level sector viewer enables you to check the disk contents visually. We would like to see this strengthened with improved navigation and a search feature to hunt for text you specifically want to check has gone.

As a final step, on complete disk erasure only, a certification file may be created for the disk and the drive added to a database file on the floppy.

DiskEraser is certainly a worthwhile program and could pay for itself, even though it seems way too expensive for what's in it.

Ian Sharpe

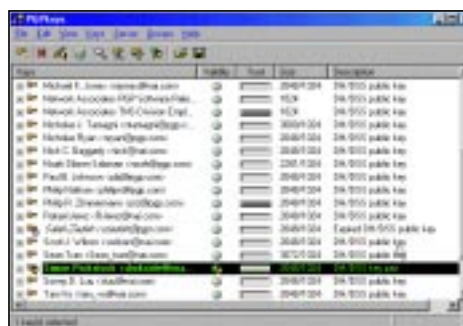
utilities

MCAFFEE PGP PERSONAL PRIVACY

Keep those e-mails and data files strictly private

System requirements 486 with 32MB RAM, Win95/98 or NT
Tested on AMD K6-3 400MHz with 128MB RAM, Win98

■ PRICE £20 ■ EX VAT £17 ■ SUPPLIER Network Associates ■ PHONE 01753 827 500 ■ WWW www.mcafee.com



Encryption has always been a contentious subject, with many people wanting the security it offers, but with most governments afraid that terrorists and criminals will use it. The US classifies cryptography programs as a weapon and therefore imposes export restrictions upon it. Up until recently, the strongest encryption that could be exported was 56-bit, but that has now been relaxed to 128-bit.

McAfee acquired PGP in 1997 and this new version is packed with features, including a minimum key length of 128-bit, although the default is 2,048 – not something that is going to be cracked in a hurry.

PGP works on the principle of Public and Private keys, enabling you to encrypt, sign, decrypt or verify any file or folder. When you use PGP for the first time, you create a pair of keys, based on a pass phrase of your choosing. You then upload your public key to a server, while the private key remains on your system. If someone wants to e-mail you securely, they use your public key to encrypt the message, and only you with the private key can then

decipher it. PGP integrates fully with most popular e-mail programs including Outlook Express, Exchange and Eudora. Once in your e-mail package, you will notice new tool bar buttons; Digitally Sign, Sign with PGP, Encrypt and Encrypt with PGP. Simply click on the relevant button and send your message.

PGP is not just restricted to e-mail. You can also use it to encrypt individual files and there is full system integration with both the System Tray and right-click context menus. You also have the ability to securely wipe any files from your hard drive so that they cannot be recovered, or even encrypt your whole hard drive if necessary. On the whole PGP is easy-to-use, although it's worth giving the manual a thorough read if you've not used an encryption program before. This brings us to our only real gripe – the manual is in the form of an Acrobat document on the CD. While the Acrobat reader is included, it would be nice to have a paper manual to refer to as well.

Simon Pickstock

PGP works on the principle of keys, you hand out your public key and keep your private one secure.

PC Plus

VERDICT

MCAFFEE PGP PERSONAL PRIVACY

For Military strength encryption
Against Do you really need it?

Range of features.....9
 Ease of use.....8
 Documentation.....7
 Performance.....9
 Value for money.....9

8/10

PC Plus

HANSOL

710D MONITOR

monitor

A monitor at the right price that won't disappoint

Tested on K6-2 400MHz
with Matrox G400 card

PRICE £246 EX VAT £209 SUPPLIER Spire Technology PHONE 01202 828 444 WWW www.hansol-uk.com

Hansol's latest 710D is one of a new generation of economically priced flat screen monitors. Under £250 for a quality, 17-inch monitor has to be great value for money. Based on its new Dynafat tube, the front glass of the 710D is almost flat. If you're used to a 'normal' monitor, this type of screen can give the impression of being slightly concave. This is probably due to our eyes compensating when we use curved monitors – it soon passes.

The 17-inch tube has a diagonal viewing area of 16-inches and is capable of 1,600 x 1,200 screen resolution. In use, 1,280 x 1,024 is more practical. With a vertical refresh rate of up to 160Hz, the screen is extremely stable and capable of supporting these high screen resolutions. The dot pitch is a nice, tight 0.25mm. This is a straightforward monitor without speakers or USB hub but, at this sort of price, who's going to complain?

Hansol has adopted the one-monitor any region design with the 710D. You can plug it into a power source of either 50 or 60 Hertz and at any voltage between 100 and 250 volts. With a choice of five display languages, the OSD (On Screen Display) is truly international. Producing one monitor for all regions helps reduce manufacturing

and distribution costs. The monitor is fully Plug-and-Play, and installs in Win98 without drivers. The OSD enables a range of set up controls, with full geometry adjustment that include rotation, zoom and pin balance control. Colour can be individually adjusted including setting the relative colour temperature of the display. Sometimes, when you have so many geometry controls you may try to over compensate with one setting and correct with another. This can get confusing but the controls enable you to reset the display to its default settings and start again.

If a monitor has been in one position for a length of time and subsequently moved, the relative change in orientation of the earth's magnetic field can cause colour distortion on the screen. The degauss feature will refresh the display and attempt to remove any image distortion caused by local magnetic fields.

A few years ago, this type of display would have cost at least twice the price. A good image with well saturated colour, plenty of on-screen controls and a three-year warranty – this has to take our Value Award.

Paul Warner



A few years ago this sort of performance wouldn't have been available at twice the price.

PC Plus

VERDICT

HANSOL 710D

For Good quality flat screen at the right price

Against Not much

Range of features.....8

Ease of use.....8

Documentation.....7

Performance.....9

Value for money.....10

9/10



AOpen's excellent AX64 Pro takes SDRAM-based boards a step further with full 133MHz support.

motherboard

AOPEN

AX64 PRO

The Coppermine board using VIA's Apollo Pro 133 chipset

PRICE £93 EX VAT £79 SUPPLIER CMS Computers PHONE 0151 709 0900 WWW www.aopen.com

Tested on Celeron 500

Specifications ATX format, VIA Apollo Pro chipset, accepts Celeron, Pentium II and Pentium III up to 8xmultiplier, 4xPCI, 1xISA, 1xAGP and AMR slot, 4xUSB, 2xserial, 1xparallel, PS/2 mouse and keyboard connectors, on-board sound and game port

PC Plus

VERDICT

AOPEN AX64 PRO

For 133MHz FSB with 4xAGP and 4xUSB

Against If you're not using on-board sound and modem, then four PCI slots may not be enough

Range of features.....9

Ease of use.....9

Documentation.....10

Performance.....9

Value for money.....8

9/10

When you unpack AOpen's latest motherboard, you'll be struck by one thing: Gold. This board supports a 133MHz FSB and uses the latest VIA Apollo Pro 133 chipset. To keep this running cool, Aopen has fitted a 24K gold-plated heat sink.

The board supports Celeron, Pentium II and Pentium III processors. With CPU clocking ratios up to eight times and, with a theoretical FSB of up to 150MHz, you have real speed potential. AOpen does warn you, however, that running faster than 133MHz can cause system damage. CPU settings are jumperless, making this an ideal board for over clocking. A dedicated FM3540 chip supports core voltages from 1.3 volts to 3.5 volts and the BIOS detects the CPU and adjusts voltages accordingly.

You can install up to 1.5GB of memory, a small LED just in front of the RAM slots confirms that they are receiving power. If you get carried away installing and short out or overload the board, a resettable power fuse is situated behind the on-board USB sockets. A back plane is also provided with two extra USB sockets.

Four IDE devices can be connected – a master and slave on each channel supporting ATA/66 transfer speed.

You won't notice much difference on a standalone machine but hard drive performance will improve considerably if used for multiple accesses on a network server. An edge connector socket is provided next to the four speed AGP card slot. This can be used to install a small audio modem riser card. When fitted, this will support WOM (Wakeup On Modem). If the machine is in standby mode and the modem is activated then the machine wakes up. WOL (Wakeup On LAN) functions in a similar way if a PCI network card is installed.

An on-board audio chip gives you full Sound Blaster compatibility. If you wish to use a PCI sound card then this can be disabled in either hardware, by jumper or by software, in the BIOS. The backup facility in the 'Die Hard BIOS'. This is effectively another BIOS, if the primary one is damaged, then moving a jumper enables the secondary BIOS and gets you up and running.

This is a great board, which moves us into the realm of Giga Hertz processing and the next generation of faster SDRAM. Ideal if you want more control over bus speeds and clocking ratios.

Paul Warner