Hardware Review:

Western Digital's FireWire/USB 2.0 Combo
SE 250 GB External Hard Drive

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Need for Speed with Storage to Boot
Perhaps your data is growing out of hand thanks to your newly acquired digital
camcorder, fancy megapixel-icious digital camera, or infamous MP3 collection. Have I
got the solution for you! If your internal drive is screaming at you, *"Scotty, I got no room
to spare,"* you must check out Western Digital's FireWire/USB 2.0 Combo SE External
hard drive. By the way, the SE is for Special Edition.

From the moment I received the press release about this hard drive, I was pining to get
my hands on it. Why? Could it be the flexibility of having both lightning fast interfaces
built-in (FireWire and USB 2.0), the stunningly cool pink tinted neon style lights running
down both sides of the acrylic see-through case, the high performance engineered 7,200
RPM with 8MB cache, the voluminous 250Gig storage capacity…or perhaps the words
"Special Edition" because I'm special too? Duh, it's all of the above! Let's cut to the
chase and put this attractive Western Digital FireWire/USB 2.0 SE combo external hard
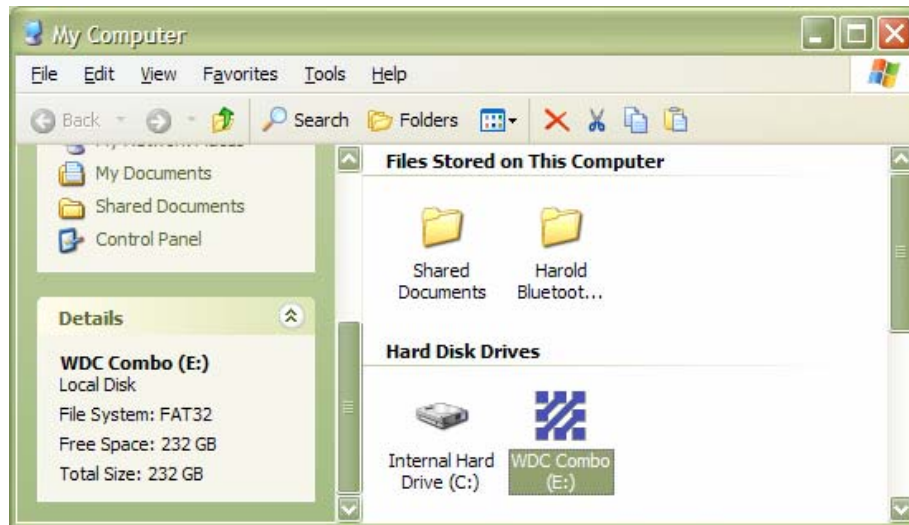drive to the test.

The Out-Of-Box Experience
Included are both FireWire and USB cables. The cables measure 6 feet in length—the
FireWire cable is 6-pin to 6-pin and the USB cable is 2.0 (high-speed certified). You'll
find the typical A/C brick and cord. Documentation consists of an 8-page folded Quick
Install guide which I found clearly written very useful.

Following the Quick Install guide, the first step is to plug it in and apply power. The
pinkish red lights jump to life as the drive starts spinning up to speed. A second later, the
green colored ready light illuminates indicating the drive is powered up and ready. At this
point I noticed a minor annoyance. The drive is quiet for a 7,200 RPM external.
However, the drive caused the surface of my desk to vibrate in an oscillating manner.
Examining the bottom of the drive, I felt the cushioning feet were not adequate and could
have been beefed up (or perhaps made of a different material) to reduce or dampen
vibrations. On the plus side, if you're using Windows XP, 2000, or ME there are no
drivers to install or mess with—they're built into the OS. Another nice touch is the drive
is pre-formatted at the factory for you, so it's ready to go right out of the box! For you

more advanced users, the drive comes pre-formatted as one Fat32 partition. Should you desire to reformat the drive into multiple volumes or NTFS, it's very easy to do—page 4 of the Quick Install guide covers it.

Performance and Use
After attaching the FireWire cable to my computer, Windows immediately detected my WD FireWire/USB 2.0 SE combo external hard drive and placed the icon in "My Computer" (see below).

The pre-formatted capacity on my computer was 232 Gigabytes. I tested this drive on a myriad of different file formats and sizes ranging from a few Megabytes to 2Gig. On normal MPEG's, AVI's, MP3's, WMV's the drive is flat out quick—averaging 500MB in about a minute. Most impressive was the Half-Life2 "Traptown" movie demo. This 185MB file copied in 14 seconds! Keep in mind these tests were performed with my older Dell notebook's pokey 5,400 RPM internal HD. Newer computers will realize even better performance.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts
I can't say enough good things about this drive. It runs cool, it looks cool, it's quiet, it's speedy, it's portable, it's simple to operate, it's stackable, and it's trouble-free. In fact, this drive is faster and more convenient than DVD or CDRW writers for back-ups (and extra storage). The estimated street price is $349. To learn more about the WD 250G FireWire/USB 2.0 Combo Special Edition HD or any other Western Digital products, visit www.westerndigital.com. The system requirements are Windows XP, 2000, Me, and 98SE. It also works with Macintosh. With the exception of the minor intermittent vibration issues, and skimpy 1-year warranty, this drive is a real winner. This model is also available in a 120Gig size. WD includes 90 days free technical support for these drives.