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Review CTFDINPC-1

Introduction

Currently the section of Single-DIN complete systems on the market is marginal. Only a small number of manufacturers specialize in the production of an all around product suitable for a Radio-DIN-Slot.

All the better, there is finally a product on the market again, that has all the makings of a true Car-PC.

The CTFDINPC-1 includes a VIA C7 chip set with a 1.2 GHz CPU, fully motorized Sharp 7 inch touch screen, implemented GPS module, Bluetooth, 4-channel amplifier, AM/FM radio, pre-installed Windows XP Pro as well as the 'RoadRunner' touch screen interface.

Specifications

Model	CTFDINPC-1
Type	InDash Single DIN Car PC
CPU	VIA C7 1.2GHz
Graphic	2D/3D Display accelerator, supports MPEG-2 hardware decoding, MPEG-4 and HDTV for digital video playback
Memory	1024 MB DDR-II 533 RAM
Display port	VGA extern
HDD	- 4 GB Flash intern - external 2,5" HDD case (HDD not included)
Audio	- 4x speaker output (Front left/right, back left/right) - booster (4x 45W) - built-in Microphone - headphone output
Bluetooth	Integrated bluetooth module
GPS	Integrated GPS module (antenna not part of delivery contents)
Radio	AM/FM radio (function in Windows or as standalone while PC is turned off)
USB 2.0	1x front, 2x back
Extras	- Starts/Stops automatically based on ignition plus - Fast Boot (12 seconds cold start) - CF-/SD-Reader in front (flap on back)
Power supply	9-16V DC
Accessories and delivery contents	- External USB 2.5" HDD case with - earphones - Front-frame, mounting-frame + mounting accessories - IR remote control unit - Touchpen (Touchscreen also operable with finger) - Power/Speaker/Misc-connector cable (Litzen)
Software	- Windows XP Pro (pre-installed)

	- Driver-CD - CarPC Touchscreen Desktop Software ("RoadRunner")
Dimensions (height x width x depth)	5cm x 17,8cm x 19cm (including fan in back)

The system and the ports
The core of the CTFDINPC-1, as you can learn from the specifications, is a VIA C7 processor, which operates with 1,2GHz. Rather no typical, the product comes with a pre-installed Windows XP Pro, as well as all drivers and the 'RoadRunner' touch screen desktop interface are already stored on a 4 GB flash memory card. You can start right away.
Furthermore, implemented are a 1GB DDR2 533 memory, a GPS module (GPS mouse not included), integrated Bluetooth antenna and an AM/FM radio, which can be operated as a standalone device– thus, the PC does not have to be turned on.

Manufacturer of the 7" display panel is Sharp, therefore it sires very high quality. The physical resolution is 800x480 pixels, while the luminance density amounts to 400nits. The touch screen registers input very quick and also works well when you use your finger to operate it. Unfortunately, the surface of the display reflects but other displays are reflecting as well. It could become difficult to read with direct sunlight.

Self-explanatory is, that the CarPC is controlled with the ignition plus. As soon as you turn the ignition key, the PC receives the signal to start and it will shutdown accordingly too. Thanks to the Flash memory, the booting time in our test was only approximately 15 seconds and it can be reduced to 5 seconds with the standby function.

The built-in amplifier has 4 x 45 Watt for two front and two back speakers. Convenient is, that a microphone, which is useful for hands-free Bluetooth cell phone use, was built in directly in the display case. Therefore you only have to setup your cell phone and then you will be able to call utilizing the 'RoadRunner' software

If the driver is distracted or annoyed by the music taste of the passenger or bugged by the noise of the movie, the passenger has the option to plug in the earphones in the front, which are included in the delivery contents.

Due to the fact that the device itself has a integrated 4 GB Flash HDD, the manufacturer included in the delivery contents an external 2.5" case. A 2.5" HDD has to be purchased separately though. Hence, you can carry your movie-, video-, and software collection everywhere with you and if demanded even extended at your home PC. A small, cushioned bag makes sure that the case including the HDD is well protected.
For whom the HDD isn't big enough as a storage medium, it is possible to add to the CarPC a CF- or SD- storage card.

For those who like to take pictures on the go and the memory card is full again, you have the possibility here to look at the pictures in the car, and if needed save and/or edit them. Furthermore, you can connect a total of 3 USB devices to the CarPC. A USB-Hub is hidden behind the front panel; two more are located at the back of the device.
An IR remote control, which covers all necessary operation elements, is included in the delivery contents as well.

Workmanship
All things considered, the overall impression of the workmanship is positive. The basic case looks solid and sturdy – screwed decently. The case of the 7" touch screen doesn't look cheap. There are no creaking pressure points or uneven manufactured edges. Nevertheless, when closed the LCD light is shimmering through the top frame. The recoil spring of the display case has a little to much clearance and could be a bit more close-fitting. But, if you drive on a regular build street this flaw is not of any consequence. The motor of the extendable display works rather quickly, it doesn't snag and the whole mechanic makes a good, consistent impression.
The operations elements in the front look in order and well placed. The pressure points of the buttons are crisp and precise; however they are placed a bit unsteady in the case. The volume control has precise snap points and makes a good impression as well. On the other side, the panel with the front ports looks rather cheap and rickety.

The software

The software packet is, to make it short, more than just well done. The pre-installed and ready-to-use operation system Windows XP Professional with SP2, is included in the delivery contents. All drivers for the hardware are installed, the touch screen interface 'RoadRunner' is installed and ready-to-use as well, even a complete codec packet for all common formats has been installed. Hence, the all around carefree packet is ready to go. The drivers including the software are Linux compatible according to the manufacturer.

Not included is a GPS navigation program, which would have been too much to ask for, for the price anyways. Furthermore, everybody can choose a navigation program them self according to the driver's needs and wants. The concept of the 'RoadRunner' software is that any possible navigations program can be implemented. Next to the navigation, the user has the most important control elements of 'RoadRunner' available in a small bar on the right upon starting the program in most navigation interfaces.

The radio unit works reliable and the channels are received very well and clean. Here the 'RoadRunner' interface is simple and neat as well, and you can change the channels intuitively, without being distracted from the road.

Performance

Despite the generally under-performing 1.2 GHz VIA processor, the system is mastering all assignments fast. The fastest reaction times of the programs have to be credited to the flash HDD, if they were filed on the like. Due to the fact that the 'RoadRunner' software is preferably installed on the flash HDD, you can navigate quickly through the menu
Thanks to the Mpeg2 Decoders and Mpeg4 HDTV accelerator, all video formats run without any problem on the display.

As HD video we utilize a 1080p Blue-Ray Rip wit AC3. The full capacity of the CPU averages around 50%, what is perfectly fine with a 1.2GHz CPU. The graphic controller takes up quite some work, which you definitely recognize. DivX movies and other formats never strain the CPU with more than 45%.

Conclusion

A complete packet was brought to the market, which is capable to be installed in a car without any further effort or computer knowledge. Very convenient is that everything is pre-installed and the only thing left to do is to connect (and install) external devices for example the cell phone with accompanied software. The „RoadRunner" software is structured simple and therefore easy to operate. All buttons are mostly marked with clear symbols and self-explanatory. Most of the time all necessary functions are available on the same screen and if not they are easy to reach. Nice is also, that the music player can utilizes Winamp. As is generally know, there is no accounting for taste. Yet, the playback quality alone makes all the difference to the Mediaplayer. The 8GB of the flash HDD seems a bit marginal, but it does make a difference in regard to the price of the device, because flash memory is still quite expensive these days. The storage space is sufficient to file the most important programs and functions there. The music- and video collection can confidently be stored on a external 2.5"HDD.
Nevertheless, the front of the device has to take flak. The panel, which covers the front ports, could have been incorporated more high-grade in to the case. As is, the panel seems a bit rickety even when closed.

Besides, the device gives little to complain about and the quality of the product is overall high-grade. The CTFDINPC-1 is now available at CarTFT.com for 1189.00 EUR.

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