

Compress video files with this gadget

By Ian Tan

THE locally-designed Snazzi VideoMaker is a remarkable feat of engineering.

Not much bigger than a wallet, it looks so plain you could be forgiven for thinking it is a paperweight.

The only giveaways are the USB 2.0 socket and two other sockets for audio and video cables.

No one would guess at the sheer amount of computer horsepower contained within the brushed silver casing.

Plug any video source into it (camcorders, DVD players or televisions) and it will instantly convert the video into various types of media files.

It can save the source video in formats like VCD, DVD and the latest DivX MPEG-4, which offers near-DVD quality at smaller file sizes.

That sort of video compression effort usually requires a high-end video card or a Pentium 2.4Ghz computer to do the number crunching.

So what, you ask.

The VideoMaker is a boon for laptop users and people who hate the hassle of conventional video-editing.

For example, laptop users who need to quickly send some business footage home can just use the VideoMaker with their camcorders.

And you do not even need to plug the VideoMaker into a wall outlet.

It powers up the minute you connect it to a USB port on your computer.

Using the VideoMaker, I transferred some home videos, as well as some scenes from a Steve Martin DVD to my computer.

Saved as MPEG-4 files, they were less than half the size of a DVD file and still looked very watchable.

You can compress them even further and then send the files via e-mail easily, but of course, they will look more pixelated.

With the bundled Intervideo WinDVD Creator 2 program, any computer idiot should be able to put together a decent DVD complete with menus.

The VideoMaker is not meant for serious enthusiasts who edit in native digital formats or the broadcast industry.

But for everyone else, it could well change their view on video-editing.

Look out for the Snazzi VideoMaker at the ongoing IT Show (Suntec Exhibition Halls, 12-9 pm, until Sunday), where it is going for \$249 with a free 8-port network switch worth \$59.