# STORAGE

## CONVAR BytePac

★★★★

**£34 inc VAT**
**From http://shop.convar.com**

Hard disk enclosures are usually made from metal or plastic, but BytePac's enclosure is 100 per cent recyclable cardboard. It's designed as an environmentally friendly way to archive data-filled internal hard disks while ensuring that they are still ready for use in a matter of seconds.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that BytePac's enclosures were flimsy, but the multi-layered cardboard feels surprisingly strong. The enclosure is sensibly designed, too. The power and SATA socket is hidden beneath a little flap, there's a specific area for labelling the drive, and a flap at the bottom folds out and is used to prop the box up at an angle to give you easy access to the ports. This flap also reveals coding holes for the hard disk. However, the sleeve isn't secured to the disk caddy inside, so your hard disk could slide out on to the floor if you don't hold it correctly.

All the cables you need to connect to your PC or Mac are included. You can connect over eSATA, and the kit comes with a USB adaptor. Convar also sells a SATA-to-IDE adaptor for £14 to let you use older hard disks. An all-in-one connector caters for both data and power connections to your hard disk; plug the AC adaptor and the data connection to your PC into a breakout box, which then plugs into the power and data connections on the back of your hard disk.

There are various pricing models, but £34 (or £45 for USB3) gets you three empty BytePac boxes and the connection kit, three sleeves and label kits, and a 2½in adaptor for SSDs or laptop hard disks. You can also buy three empty boxes (without the connection kit) for £12. You can buy boxes with different designs; there's a range of colourful boxes on Convar's website, and you can put together a custom design if you get in touch with the company directly.

The trade-off for versatility is speed. We installed a 120GB Patriot Pyro SE SSD (see Editor's Choice, below) and we felt performance took a hit, even over eSATA. When connected directly to our test machine, the Patriot wrote and read large files at 165MB/s and 301MB/s. When connected by the BytePac adaptor, large file write speeds were unchanged, but large file read speeds dropped to 234MB/s.

The gap was closer in our small file tests, but the BytePac still slowed the Patriot down. The Pyro SE originally wrote and read files at 74MB/s and 54MB/s. Over the BytePac's eSATA connection, write speeds were again unchanged, but read speeds dropped to 51MB/s. When using the USB adaptor, we saw large file write and read speeds of 31MB/s and 32MB/s, and small file write and read speeds of 16MB/s and 20MB/s, which is standard for USB connections.

Speed, therefore, is not the BytePac's strong suit. Still, its neat design should appeal to video and photo professionals who need to archive large amounts of data and still have it easily accessible.

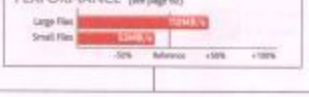
*Mike Jennings*

**SUMMARY**

VERDICT **The BytePac is a well-designed and environmentally conscious way to store and use hard disks, although it's not particularly fast over eSATA**

EXTERNAL HARD DISK ENCLOSURE
eSATA/USB/USB3 interface, 196x132x39mm, five-year RTB warranty
PART CODE BytePac
DETAILS http://shop.convar.com

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)




# FAQ

**Q Is it worth buying an SSD cache drive?**

**A** Intel's Z68 chipset included a technology called Rapid Storage Technology, or IRST, which is designed to take advantage of falling flash memory prices. The premise is simple – use both a low-capacity SSD and a traditional hard disk, and the chipset will learn which files you frequently access, keeping them stored in the SSD so they load quicker.

SSD manufacturers are now releasing small capacity drives specifically for this purpose – caches are limited to 64GB – and while they're cheaper than full-size SSDs, they still cost quite a bit: Crucial's Adrenaline 50GB is at least £80, Intel's 20GB 311 Series drive costs a similar amount, and the 64GB OCZ Synapse is tricky to find for less than £100.

This is an expensive way to get a performance boost, but there is one big advantage over using a small SSD as a boot disk. Windows sees only your larger standard hard disk, so you have much more room for programs that insist on being installed on the C: drive.

**Mike Jennings**
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## EDITOR'S CHOICE

### IOMEGA Prestige Mobile

★★★★★

**£83 inc VAT**
**From www.amazon.co.uk**

The Prestige Mobile is a stylish-looking portable hard disk that's also very fast, thanks to its USB3 connection. In fact, it's one of the fastest portable hard disks we've seen. As well as offering stellar performance, it comes with a comprehensive software bundle, including anti-malware and backup utilities. It's also fantastic value, too, at 17p per gigabyte.

PORTABLE EXTERNAL HARD DISK 500GB capacity, USB3 interface
PART CODE 35192
DETAILS www.iomega-europe.com
FULL REVIEW Aug 2011


### SYNOLOGY DiskStation DS212j

★★★★★ COMPUTER SHOPPER BEST BUY

**£150 inc VAT**
**From www.pixmania.co.uk**

The DS212j is the follow-up to our favourite NAS device, the DS211j, and comes with a larger, quieter 92mm fan. The web interface is a dream, thanks to its icon-driven interface. A download manager lets you download files straight to the NAS device from FTP and BitTorrent, a UPnP and iTunes media server and the Surveillance Station IP camera monitoring software. It's the best NAS device there is.

NETWORK STORAGE ENCLOSURE 3TB+3TB hard disk, 10/100/1000Mbit/s Ethernet, 3x USB2 ports, UPnP media, iTunes, print, USB disk, web, FTP servers, two-year warranty, 165x100x225mm
POWER CONSUMPTION 11W standby, 24W active
PART CODE DS212j
DETAILS www.synology.com
FULL REVIEW Apr 2012