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PunkThis: An Android and ARM PC Inside Your SATA Bay

It's a rare user indeed whose every computing need can be satisfied optimally by a single operating system, which is why there are a growing number of [dual-boot](#) -- and even [quad-boot](#)-- options out there.

I myself dual-boot Ubuntu Linux and Windows, but I'm intrigued by the new "PunkThis" module from [CUPP Computing](#) that effectively lets you add a second PC -- based on ARM and running Android 2.3 -- to your current X86 laptop or netbook computer. The result is that you can choose which computing scenario you want to use based on the task at hand; the PunkThis ARM alternative is a low-power option that offers much longer battery life, the company says.

Sound too good to be true? With planned pricing below \$200, it's on display at [Computex 2011](#) in Taipei this week running in an [Asus](#) Eee PC 1015PN.

Check out the video below to see for yourself.

Low-Power Performance

The PunkThis module fits into a standard 2.5-inch SATA bay in place of the standard hard drive, creating what's essentially a hybrid x86/ARM computer. A simple keyboard command lets users toggle back and forth between PunkThis's Android operating system and Windows--or whatever their base operating system is. [Ubuntu](#) is also supported, CUPP says.

The ARM processor included is a TI OMAP DM3730 at 1GHz with 512MB of RAM, and it's designed to be an unlocked system so users can modify the operating system and functionality to suit their own needs.

The Wifi-equipped device also features a Mini PCIe SSD to replace the host PC's storage and shared memory serving both systems. Two USB connections, meanwhile, provide additional flexibility for accessing and sharing data.

Regarding battery life, the module will provide more than 20 hours of computing in a standard netbook or 40 hours with a low-power screen such as from PixelQi, CUPP says.

A Stand-Alone Enclosure

Wiring kits will allow solder-less installation of PunkThis into a number of PC platforms. The Asus 1015PN is the first of these, and a wiring kit for that model is due in mid-July--as is the PunkThis module itself. Additional platforms will follow after that, CUPP says.

Meanwhile, the company is also working on allowing PunkThis to be used to create a stand-alone computer using a desktop enclosure created for that purpose.

The resulting machine will offer an instant-on, low-power system well-suited for checking e-mail and surfing the Web; it could also serve as a media center, terminal or connected device, CUPP notes. For developers, a stand-alone PunkThis machine could offer a way to target the ARM v7 code base in a desktop environment.

Pricing on the PunkThis enclosure has yet to be determined, but it's expected to become available in September.

At the end of last year I [predicted](#) the rise of dual-boot options over the course of 2011, and it's great to see offerings like this present users with more and more choice every day. After all, one size rarely fits all in other aspects of life -- why should it in computing?