

# 250 GB SimpleDrive Deluxe, by SimpleTech

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4 out of 5 Mice



Vendor: [SimpleTech](#)

Type: **COMMERCIAL**

Reviewer: [Bill Catambay](#)

Class: **HARDWARE**

## Overview

Backing up has always been critical to businesses, but these days, it's just as important to the home computer user. With all of your music digitally stored, as well as home videos, email, documents, and everything else that you've discovered to be easier to store on your computer, so much important data now resides on a hard disk. Always keep in mind that, at any given time, your internal hard disk can fail and not be recoverable. If you do not have the data backed up, than you lose everything. Nowadays, it's a must to have an external hard drive for backing up your critical data. External drives also offer extra storage for those who are running low on disk space and have no options for adding additional internal disks. Whether used for back-ups or extra storage, external disk drives continue to emerge with larger storage capacities, lower profiles, and lower prices per gigabyte. One such offering is the 250GB SimpleDrive Deluxe from SimpleTech. The SimpleDrive Deluxe is a combination USB 2.0 and Firewire external disk drive.

## Vendor's Description

Engineered for performance and reliability, SimpleTech's high-speed, high capacity SimpleDrive Deluxe external hard drive is ideal for any storage need, including digital music, movies and photographs. Every SimpleTech SimpleDrive Deluxe comes with a FREE copy of StorageSync Professional Edition Automatic Backup Software so full or incremental backups are fast and easy every time.



- Plug n' play installation (no tools required)
- One-click backup with StorageSync Pro \*\*
- High-speed USB 2.0/Firewire
- Hot swappable
- Free and unlimited technical support
- Compact, space-saving design

\*\* Backup software is Windows-only, so for Mac users, you will need your own backup software.

## Specifications

- SimpleTech Part # STI-U2F36/250
- Capacity 250 GB
- Data Transfer Rate 35 MB/sec
- Hard Drive Height 3.5
- Rotational Speed 7200 RPM
- Buffer Size 8096 KB
- Operating Shock 55 G
- Non-Operating Shock 350 G
- Warranty 3 Years
- UPC Code 705487113310

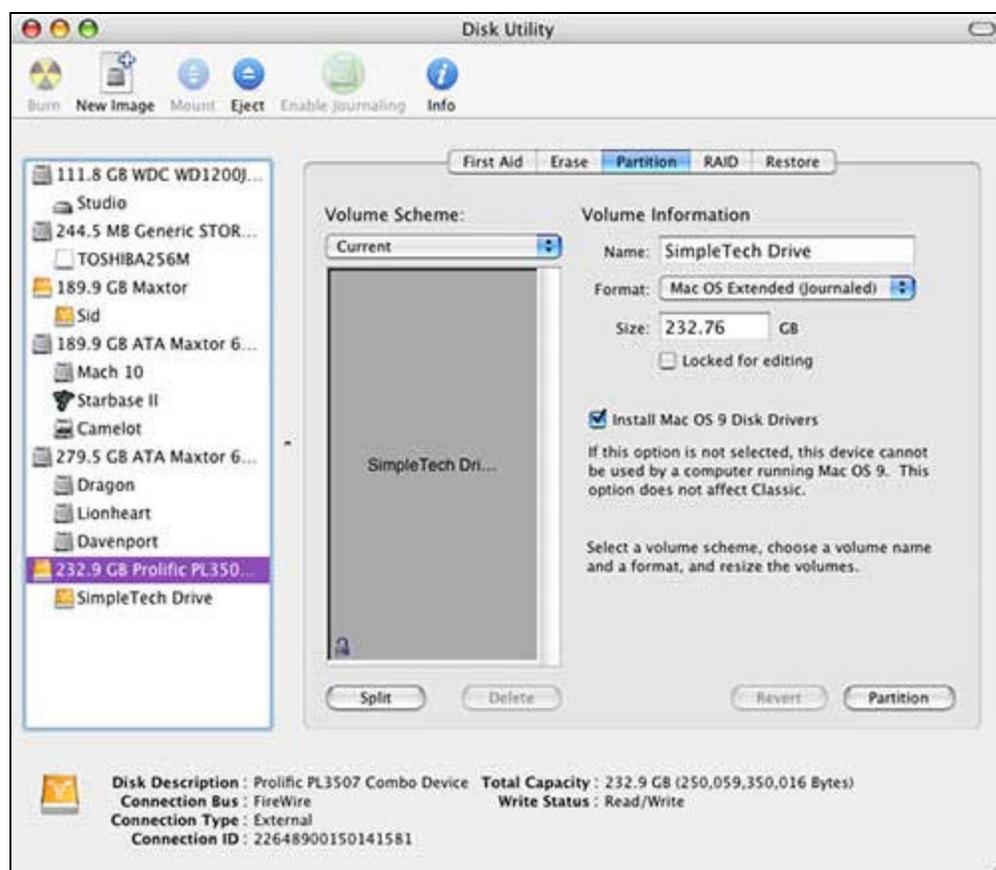
## Price

\$207 (Street Price range is \$180 - \$240)

### Set Up

Hooking up the hard drive is a no-brainer. Just plug in the power supply, connect the firewire cable from the hard drive to the firewire port on your Mac, and then flip the switch on. You can alternately use the USB connection instead, but I prefer firewire, and this will review will be on the firewire functionality.

Once the drive is connected and powered on, the drive will show up on your desktop - no software or drivers required. The SimpleDrive is DOS formatted at the factory, so although it can be used right out of the box, the instructions recommend (as do I) that you reformat the drive before using it. Just run Disk Utility, and reformat the drive as Mac OS X Extended (Journaled) for the most compatibility with OS X. Under this formatting scheme, the drive capacity is 232.76 GB. If you need the drive to work with PC's as well as Mac's, then you will want to leave the drive as DOS formatted.



*Formatting the SimpleDrive for Mac OS X*

### Design

The SimpleDrive sports a sleek and slender design (see picture at top of review). It's very light weight, and includes two black boots to sit the drive in. The drive runs very quiet. There is no noisy fan, and yet it does a decent job of containing the drive heat (it's warm to the touch). The case is mostly silver, with a long V-shaped translucent cap on the front. Within this area are the drive LEDs, a red light for indicating that power is on, and a very subtle green light for drive I/O activity. In the back is the power port for the drive's power adapter, one USB port, one Firewire port, and an on/off switch.

The design is excellent, but there were two noticeable flaws. While it makes sense that there would be only one USB port, there should be two Firewire ports. Firewire is a chaining protocol, meaning that you can chain firewire devices all to a single firewire port. I rarely see an external firewire drive with only one port, and this is one of the exceptions. Without that 2nd port, I cannot hook up another firewire drive, or any other firewire device, unless I have an additional firewire port available on my Mac. That is not always convenient to get to, and in some cases, the other ports are already in use. I have my iSight plugged into one port, and I keep my firewire disk drive chain on the other port. If I wanted to hook up another firewire device, such as my Sony digital video camera, I would have to unplug one of my drives, or the iSight, to plug in the device. It would be a tremendous improvement and convenience to the consumer to have a 2nd firewire port added.

The other issue I had with the design of the drive was the power plug. The AC plug on the power adapter had a very unusual shape. The plug was designed such that the wire goes to the side of the plug instead of dropping down (see picture below). The only situation I believe this design accommodates is plugging it into the top outlet of a wall jack. However, I think it is far more typical for most home computer users to use surge protected power strips for computer devices, and on a power strip, the plugs are typically aligned such that the prongs are all parallel. All 5 of my power strips are designed in that fashion. That means that the SimpleDrive plug not only covers more than one outlet (even on the oversized outlets), but the wire goes off to the side, interfering with anything to the left of it. The work around is to simply plug it into the outlet at the far end of the power strip, which is not a big deal in this case, since this is the only power plug I have that is designed like this.



*The power plug blocking another outlet even on my oversize outlets*

Both of these design flaws appear to be oversights, and easily fixable. The plug issue has a simple work around, while the lack of a 2nd firewire port is a little more frustrating. Neither of these issues, however, interfere with the use or the performance of the hard drive. Despite these flaws, I really like the overall design of the SimpleDrive. It looks good sitting next to my Mac, and does not take up very much space on my desk.

### **In Use**

The SimpleDrive looks nice, but how well does it transfer data to and from my Mac? I'm happy to report that the drive does not compromise on its functionality. It performed perfectly in all my tests, and provided fast and reliable data transfers. In one test, I copied 48GB from my internal hard drive to the SimpleDrive, and it copied in less than 30 minutes. Of course, the number of files you copy will impact the speed of the transfer as well. The 48GB was a balance of small and large files. In a separate test, I copied 15GB that was made up of over 90,000 files, and it took about the same amount of time to copy as the 48 GB. Overall, I was quite impressed with the speed.

After several weeks of use under close scrutiny, the drive performed reliably and consistently. Data transfers were always accurate, even on the large copies. I was very pleased with the performance, and developed confidence in the drive, which is important when you are using the drive to back up precious data files (such as pictures, home videos, or your music library).

One of the selling points of the SimpleDrive is the "One-Click" backup, but the software that comes with the drive for doing this only runs on Windows. For us Mac users, we are on our own in terms of what software to use for performing backups. In other words, to make the SimpleDrive "One-Click" on the Mac, you will need to find and purchase your own software, and learn how to do it on your own. Fortunately, I own Retrospect backup software, and I schedule my backups to run automatically, so I have "No-Click" backups. Retrospect had no problems backing up data to the SimpleDrive. Still, I would have liked to have seen an offering for Mac users that provided the "One-Click" functionality all in one package (since not everyone has Retrospect). The Maxtor One Touch drive is a good model that has one-click action for Mac Users, as it comes with Retrospect Express (and also includes a drive button to trigger it).

One test I always perform on an external device is seeing how the device behaves when I shut down my Mac. This is always important to me, because when I shut down my Mac, I want everything to shut down. I don't want to have to worry about other devices that I need to remember to power off. There are some firewire devices that do not power down with the Mac. I'm please to report that when I shutdown my G4, the SimpleDrive happily powers off. That means I don't have to manually turn off the drive. That is definitely a big plus.

### **Support**

Drives have a tendency to go out, and so I was also pleased to see that this drive comes with a 3-year warranty (much better than Maxtor's one year warranty, especially since two of my Maxtor drives died on me after, both about one month after the warranty expired). In addition to that, SimpleTech provides free and unlimited support for their products. Using the drive is pretty darn simple, but it's still nice to know that if you had issues with the drive, that you could get support for it.

### **Summary**

The SimpleTech SimpleDrive is an external Firewire/USB hard drive that has a lot going on. It gives you a lot of Bytes for your Buck, and the 250GB size makes for an excellent storage drive and/or backup device. It comes in a stylish and low-profile design, so it looks good next to your Mac, and doesn't take up too much desktop space. Hardware features include a Mac savvy power bridge and an on/off switch. Over weeks of testing has proven the drive to be not only consistently fast, but very reliable. The drive does have a few drawbacks. It only has one firewire port, it does not support the Mac platform with the "One-Touch" software, and it comes with a funky power plug. None of these drawbacks, however, are showstoppers, and when you factor in the price and 3-year warranty, this drive is definitely worth a look. Whether you're looking to expand your storage, or you want to start backing up important data such as pictures, music and video, I highly recommend the SimpleDrive.

### **Pros**

- Excellent price per GB
- Stylish design includes on/off switch
- Mac savvy power bridge
- Stable and fast I/O
- 3 Year Warranty

### **Cons**

- Only one firewire port
- "One-Touch" action not included in package for Mac users
- Awkward designed power plug

**Overall Rating:**

4 out of 5 Mice