Ultrabox (EB311SC)
$64.99
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Some of the best hardware isn't always the fastest, the smallest, or the most powerful. Sure, no one doubts the next Intel Extreme Edition CPU will be terrific. The next TITAN will surely be titanic. But these are known quantities. Sometimes, the best hardware is hardware that surprises us, the components that have a few tricks up their sleeve. This is why ENERMAX's new Ultrabox (model EB311SC) storage drive docking station is so intriguing.

You could take one look at the Ultrabox and think, "Well, here is a thing I can use to repurpose my old hard drives." Technically, you wouldn't be wrong, but that's the kind of mentality that will have you flipping to the next page instead of sticking around to find out what makes the Ultrabox so ultra.

Before we get to the good stuff, we should nonetheless examine the obvious. The Ultrabox is a two-drive docking station that connects to a PC over a USB 3.0 connection. (The Ultrabox does happen to be backward-compatible with USB 2.0, so it will play nice with legacy systems if

you need it to.) Internally, the Ultrabox uses a 6Gbps SATA connection (though again, 3Gbps and 1.5Gbps drives have a home here, too), which means that the limiting factor, as far as overall throughput is concerned, will be the external USB 3.0 connection. Hard drives and solid-state drives of any capacity will work with the Ultrabox, and they'll be hot-swappable, too. Just press down on one (or both) of the Ultrabox's eject buttons, and it will kick out any current drive(s) in service.

If all you ever use the Ultrabox for is a docking station for your spare internal storage drives, we think you'll get your money's worth. But, as we said, ENERMAX has built the Ultrabox to do more than shuffle data between the hard drives and your PC. There are also a pair of quick-charge USB ports that are designed to gas up connected smartphones and tablets extra fast; you'll find them on the back of the unit. The killer app, though, is the Ultrabox's Clone button. When two drives are inserted into the Ultrabox, it can mirror the contents

of the drive installed in the HDD1 port to the drive installed in the HDD2 port, provided the HDD2 drive is equal or larger in size to the HDD1 drive. The Ultrabox dispenses with any kind of drive imaging/disk cloning software.

To clone a drive, disconnect the Ultrabox's USB 3.0 cable. Then, pop the drives in. Hold in the Clone button until the front LED begins to blink. Release the button and press it again, and the Ultrabox is off to the races. Status LEDs on the Ultrabox indicate when the cloning process reaches 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%. When all the LEDs are lit, your drive is cloned. Power off the Ultrabox and remove the drives. At the risk of sounding like an infomercial, it's that easy.

For any enthusiast who's accumulated a small stack of storage drives over the years, the Ultrabox can recommission them into your fleet. With its quick-charge and disk-cloning capabilities, though, the Ultrabox is so much more. ∎

BY VINCE COGLEY

Specs: Drive support: 2.5-inch or 3.5-inch SATA; Internal interface: 6Gbps SATA; External interface: USB 3.0; Maximum theoretical throughput: 5Gbps; Dimensions: 2.7 x 4.8 x 5.6 inches (HxWxD); OS support: Windows 7/8/10, Mac OS X 9 and higher