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## Your Computer May Be Exposed

### *Build a wall around it with Ashampoo Firewall!*

There are no unlockable doors, but this doesn't make me leave mine opened just because somewhere on this planet lives a guy (or maybe even a chick, who knows?) able to break into my apartment. This is the same reason for having a firewall, an antivirus and an antispyware tool on your computer instead of nothing, although there's always a small chance for something evil to pass through...I never trusted firewalls and I still don't, but I enjoy reviewing good programs, and today one of them happens to be a firewall. Add the fact that's a free one too, and you get a good idea about it already... The name of my subject is Ashampoo Firewall, recently born under the version label 1.0. As I said, this is a completely free program, but you have to register on the producer's website to receive a free registration code. The installation package weighs 3.7MB and the setup process is easy to perform for everyone. Now, to walls!The interface of this program is a real eye candy, as the rest of the Ashampoo products, being very easy to use at the same time. There are six tabs inside the main workspace, and I'll take them down one by one, as usual. The program has also a menu bar with five menus, but there's nothing special about most of them, apart from the fact that I spotted an item called Skins inside the Settings menu...but unfortunately there is only the default one available at this time. Ok, let's move on now and begin our scouting mission!The Main Menu is the place where you start your experience with this program, but before that, it is possible to face some queries about certain programs trying to connect to the Internet. Depending on the program, you should know what to do better than me, so I'll leave that behind. In the current area, you can enable or disable Learning Mode, Block All connections (this has pretty much the same effect as cutting your network cable...), edit existing rules or add new ones, check statistics or start one of the four tasks available here. Wow, so many things to do!I'll move on and get to one of the items mentioned earlier, the rules. Inside the second area of this program you will find the existing filtering rules. For each of them you have three possible choices - allowing or disallowing all traffic and using custom rules, depending on the port used for the connection. Each of these rules are set for existing programs, and Ashampoo Firewall can also compute MD5 checksums and compare current one with the checksum recorded when the program was detected for the first time. You can also clean up the list and automatically remove rules set at a previous time for programs removed from your computer since then.The Statistics tab has only one purpose, to keep you informed. Here, you can check client, server, local and LAN connections, as well as most allowed and blocked ones. The only action that you can perform instead of watching is to reset the existing statistics, so it's time to move further, to the Logs area... ...and I guess that you weren't expecting anything impressive here! The good part is that you can export the activity log to a HTML file for keeping or for other purposes.Next, we have the Configuration area. Here you can notice the status of the major program settings and, of course, change them all. The good part is that you have a wizard here to help you, called Configuration Assitant. All you have to do is follow its steps, and you'll find the way. At last, we have four useful tools inside the Tools area, and this can even make me dare to call Ashampoo Firewall an all-in-one tool without being wrong too much...The Autostart Manager helps you manage programs started automatically by Windows, the Process Information's purpose should be obvious, while the Internet Cleaner can help you remove your online activity tracks. At least, the IP Spam Blocker stops desktop popup spam sent using the internal Windows messaging service ("Your computer is at risk!Go to...and download the latest security patch!" - most of you should have seen this at least once...).This is it, and I must say it's quite impressive for a

free program, don't you think? **The Good**Ashampoo Firewall is small, easy to use; its interface is a real eye candy and really does its job, despite some small issues. The additional features can only be an excellent addition, especially when thinking about the fact that we're talking about a free program here! The on screen Help system and hints are great, and the configuration wizard is another tool built to make this kind of program accessible even for absolute beginners. **The Bad**While using it, the program crashed three times, but I have nothing bad to say about its traffic filtering capabilities. Other than that, everything worked just fine for me. **The Truth**There are no good firewalls for me, I still hang onto that, but Ashampoo's one is getting close, and if it's almost good for me, then it should be an excellent product for everyone else! Go ahead and grab it now, don't wait any longer! *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*