BOOTING TO MAVERICKS OSX ON AN EXTERNAL SSD DRIVE

by Michael Paine http://users.tpg.com.au/aoaug/mac_osx.html

The latest Macs have built-in Solid State Drives (SSD) that make them fast and reliable. You can breath new life into an old Mac by creating a bootable external SSD drive. This is also handy if the internal drive is failing.

Hardware

1. Any Intel Mac
2. A Goflex adapter to suit that Mac (Firewire 800, USB3 or Thunderbolt) and cable. USB2 is not recommended.
3. A "bare" SSD card like the Samsung 840 EVO (250Gb)

Here is a picture of my setup, using a Goflex Firewire adaptor connected to a 2009 iMac. The SSD card plugs straight into the adapter but you might want to put it in an empty Goflex case first (see tips overleaf).

You can, of course, pay a lot more and buy an external Thunderbolt SSD drive.

Mavericks installation

It is best to create a Mavericks OSX installer on a USB stick. The steps are described by Tom Nelson here:

http://macs.about.com/od/macoperatingsystems/ss/Create-A-Bootable-Version-Of-The-Os-X-Mavericks-Installer-On-A-Usb-Flash-Drive.htm

Once you have the installer the steps for installing Mavericks on an external SSD drive and migrating an existing system are described by Robin Monks here:

http://robinmonks.com/2013/10/speed-up-your-mac-with-an-external-ssd/

I just went through this process with a 2010 iMac using a Goflex Firewire adapter.

The only extra step I found was that I had to sign in with my Apple ID in order to verify the Mavericks installation.

Migrating an existing system

The OSX installation process asks you if you wish to migrate an existing system to the new bootable drive. You can choose a drive with OSX installed or a Time Machine backup.

I had difficulty migrating from a Time Machine backup and so I tried instead migrating straight from the old internal hard drive and it worked well. However (as expected) the migration assistant reported that the destination drive was too small. It then allowed me to de-select some items such as music, photos and movies (oddly this de-selection option only appears after the program has determined that the destination drive too small).

The system then booted normally (but much faster) and I could manually set iTunes and iPhoto to use the files on the internal hard drive. You could use an external hard drive for this as well, of course, meaning that the internal drive was unused (handy if it is unusable anyway).

After the installation process the SSD drive becomes the default for booting the Mac.

Using an old Goflex portable drive enclosure

If you have a disused Goflex portable drive you can easily disassemble it and swap the original drive for an SSD. "bychaw" has a video of this process: http://bychaw.blogspot.com.au/2011/12/how-to-take-apart-your-seagate.html

The picture shows my Macbook (portable) setup, using a Golflex case and Goflex Thunderbolt adapter.

Disclaimer: This is my record of the process and it may not work for you. Always back-up your system first.