GR 96 P 1244 P

Description

Front cover for a computer housing

The invention relates to a front cover for a computer housing according to the features of the preamble to claim 1.

The front of computer housings is usually covered by a front panel made of plastic. This front panel has, inter alia, recesses for the installation locations of disk drives, as well as an immobilizing lock, pushbuttons for switching on and off, indicator lamps, possibly an LCD display element, and much more.

The increasing opportunities for the use of a personal computer, particularly in the area of multimedia applications, have produced a series of additional components, and there is very often insufficient space available on the front panel for their connection elements. In order to satisfy the respective customer requirements with regard to these additional components to a sufficient extent, as comprehensive an offer as possible would essentially have to be provided. On the other hand, for space reasons, preference would also have to be given to fitting equipment on an individual basis. However, this would then inevitably require the front panel to have a different layout depending on the equipment of the personal computer, an extravagance which cannot in itself be justified in view of the high tool costs.

The present invention is therefore based on the object of finding as cheap a solution as possible for the problem indicated.

This object is achieved on the basis of a front cover for a computer housing of the type mentioned in the introduction by means of the features of claim 1.

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Advantageous developments of the invention are specified in subclaims.

The following text gives a more detailed explanation of an exemplary embodiment of the invention with the aid of the drawing.

The figure shows a perspective view of a front panel 1 which can be fitted onto the front of a computer housing (e.g. tower design) and has, in its upper region, a rectangular recess for installing disk drives. These installation locations may possibly be protected against unauthorized access by means of a sliding panel. In addition, pushbuttons, indicator lamps and possibly an LCD display element are incorporated in the front panel. One of the two longitudinal edges of the front panel 1 has a function strip 2 integrally formed on it, which function strip can be equipped optionally with a number of application-specific accessory modules, such as smart-card readers 3, plug connections, connection sockets 4 or the like. Instead of the connection sockets 4 for loudspeakers, headphones or a microphone, an infrared receiver may also be provided, for example, for the remote control of the personal computer working in multimedia mode. An immobilizing lock 5, which is normally provided in the front panel 1, may also be accommodated in the function strip 2. In order to cover the individual components in the function strip 2, the invention provides a multifunctional panel 6 which extends in the manner of a cover and whose individual shape is matched to the respectively chosen equipment in the function strip 2. When adding or changing components in the function strip 2, it is then only necessary to replace the previously used multifunctional panel with a new multifunctional panel adapted accordingly. The larger front panel 1 can continue to be used without being changed, however.

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Expediently, the multifunctional panel is detachably mounted on the function strip by means of latching elements. Furthermore, on its inner face pointing toward the front panel 1, the multifunctional panel may be provided with a recess or a guide slot for laterally guiding a sliding panel which can move in front of the disk drives.

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Patent claims

1. A front cover for a computer housing of desktop or tower design, using a front panel having a number of installation locations for externally accessible disk drives, characterized in that a function strip (2) is provided on at least one side edge of the front panel (1), in that this function strip (2) can be equipped optionally with a number of application-specific accessory modules, plug connections, connection sockets, infrared receivers or the like, and in that a multifunctional panel (6), matched to the respective equipment, can be fitted onto this function strip (2).

2. The front cover as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the multifunctional panel (6) is detachably mounted on the function strip by means of latching elements.

3. The front cover as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the multifunctional panel (6) has, on the inner face pointing toward the front panel, a guide slot or a recess for a [lacuna], provided on the front panel, for a sliding panel covering the front panel (1) in the region of the disk drives.

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