

**Aug/
Sept 2006**

**Volume 19
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Founded 1987

**Chairman's,
Editor's &
Secretary's Notes
Contact Details**

NewsBytes

**Windows Vista
Beta 2**

Acer D150 Sat/Nav

**Ulead Video Studio
10 Plus**

**Ulead DVD Movie
Factory 5**

**Pinnacle Studio
Plus 10 Titanium
Edition**

**Book Review "MS
Windows Vista
Unveiled"**

**ROM is issued
six-times
a year to
members of the
Guildford PC
User Group
All Contributions
to the Editor
Tony Hawes
(details on page 2)**

ROM

Newsletter of the Guildford PC User Group

Editor's Bit

Like a London bus, reviews seem to come in waves, this is why we have reviews of two new Video Editing suites this month, Ulead's Video Studio 10 Plus by Laurence Fenn and your editor's review of Pinnacles latest, Studio Plus 10 Titanium Edition. With Camcorder prices dropping like a stone and with affordable software, if you want to dabble in the world of making and editing your own videos, now's the time, and looking ahead to September, the meeting will cover in a very informative way how to do your own DVD Home Moviemaking.

In this issue you'll also find my review of Microsoft Windows Vista. As demonstrated at the last meeting it has a lot going for it, but disappointingly the lack of driver support from some of the major hardware and software manufacturers dampens my initial views on an operating system set to be a milestone in computing history. However with six or seven months to go before launch, or if the rumour mill is to be believed add a few months on top of that, there is plenty of time for fixes and suitable (and working) drivers to be developed in time for the launch next year.

The late July announcement that AMD (CPUs) have taken over ATI (Graphics cards etc), is welcome news as at present the ATI graphics card in my Laptop just won't work properly with Windows Vista, even with the beta ATI Vista drivers

from the ATI site, so fingers crossed things will improve!

The late July announcement by AMD/Intel of the slashing of CPU prices makes it pretty obvious that anyone in the market for a new computer will need to think carefully before spending money on a new machine. Once the real effect of reduced prices has filtered down into the market place, would you really want to buy a new computer with an 'old' operating system like XP, or would it be better to await the launch of Vista? I know what I'll be doing — I'll hold on to my money and wait until the new year.

Secretary's Notes of Meetings — June & July 2006

12 June 2006 — OCAD

On Monday 12 June we had something rather different. Mike Bay, a long time member of the Club, gave us a talk on orienteering and the creation of maps used in the sport. He explained that orienteering was a sport where competitors navigate their way, by compass, between control points marked on specially drawn maps. It originated in Sweden about a hundred years ago but did not come to the UK until about 1960 and there are now local clubs throughout the country. The events usually cover an area up to about 10km. The special maps used are drawn to a large scale, 1:50,000 or even 1:10,000, and an internationally agreed set of

(Continued on page 2)

**ROM is now only available as a full-colour .pdf download from the Group web page at:
www.guildfordpcusergroup.co.uk**

**NEXT MEETING — Monday
14th August 2006 at 7.45 p.m.**

Bring Your Computer to the Club Evening

The one evening in the year when you can bring your computer to the club to show us what's new or get our experts to diagnose those troublesome computer problems. As a side show your editor will bring his notebook to show how well Pinnacle Studio 10 Plus Titanium Edition performs.

Spread the word and please bring a friend — coffee, tea & chocolate biscuits are free.

**Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday
of each month at 7.45pm at the
Stoughton Youth Club and Community
Centre (opposite "The Royal" — Pub)
Worplesdon Road (A322), Guildford.**

Forthcoming Meetings

Monday 11th September at 7.45 pm
DVD Home Moviemaking — A
practical guide for beginners.

Monday 9th October at 7.45 pm
Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 —
Paul Kuzmin will give a practical
demonstration of the latest version
of Nuance's acclaimed speech
recognition program.

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symbols and colours used. They use coordinates based on magnetic north rather than a national grid or true north. Using OCAD-The Drawing Program for Cartography Mike showed us how such maps can be prepared and the symbols applied. Information on OCAD is available on www.ocad.com and copies of OCAD 6 for Windows, an older version, is freely available for download.

Mike explained how such events were planned and organised. An interesting evening

July Meeting — Windows Vista

As reported in the June/July 2006 ROM, Windows Vista, the new Windows operating system, which it is expected to be finally launched around January 2007, will be available in a number of versions. A beta 2 of the 'Ultimate' version was demonstrated by Tony Hawes at the July meeting of the Group.

Vista comes as either 32-bit or 64-bit versions, Tony demonstrated the 32-bit version. He had previously installed Vista on a blank HD on his laptop and reported that installation was relatively quick for such a large program. He stressed, however, that although this beta version had more drivers than previously and the update website provided even more, many programs and much hardware do not yet have the necessary drivers to make things work properly. Tony mentioned the absence of some well-known antivirus programs from the major security vendors (Norton and McAfee in particular do not yet have products available to take advantage of the new OS). However it appears that Czech company Alwil's AVAST antivirus program is designed to work with Microsoft Vista and as a bonus is available free to home users. Similarly CA's EZ Antivirus has a Vista compatible version which is free to use for one year. Another example Tony mentioned that whilst Nero 6 works fine, Nero 7 does not (!). Similar anomalies exist with other programs he has tried to load and use; not surprisingly Office 2007, the next version of Office that will replace Office 2003 does work. He mentioned that his particular bugbear is the absence of suitable and stable drivers for his ATI Radeon Mobility X700 graphics card; although ATI have posted beta drivers for Vista, but they are very flaky at the moment and definitely need more developer input to get them to work in a stable manner.

The beta version Tony showed expires in February 2007, but he mentioned that a recent visit to the Microsoft Vista website stated that Beta 2 now expires in June 2007, signs of a further delay perhaps?

Tony showed the various changes that have been made to the Start Up interface with a different start button in the shape of the Vista icon. When the icon is clicked you are presented with a list of recently used programs together with some common tools. By clicking on All Programs you see the rest of the installed applications. The Control Panel is similar to that of XP with various presentations. A new concept, the Library, contains an index of all your media files so that information can be found quickly. Windows Defender, part of the Security Centre, includes a version of AntiSpy-

ware and an improved firewall. Security is enhanced, especially with the 'BitLocker' feature that allows a hard drive to be encrypted. One security feature Tony said he dislikes is the rather intrusive 'User Approval Control' box continually asking permission to do something, that in earlier versions of the OS would be allowed without question.

For the first time a very useful Calendar is available. A Photo Gallery is provided to edit and manage digital photographs and videos. An interesting new application is the new Windows DVD Maker that allows you to author DVD discs, with menus, chapters and other features. Internet 7 with a phishing filter is included but Outlook Express is gone and has been replaced by Windows Mail which has a few worthwhile improvements.

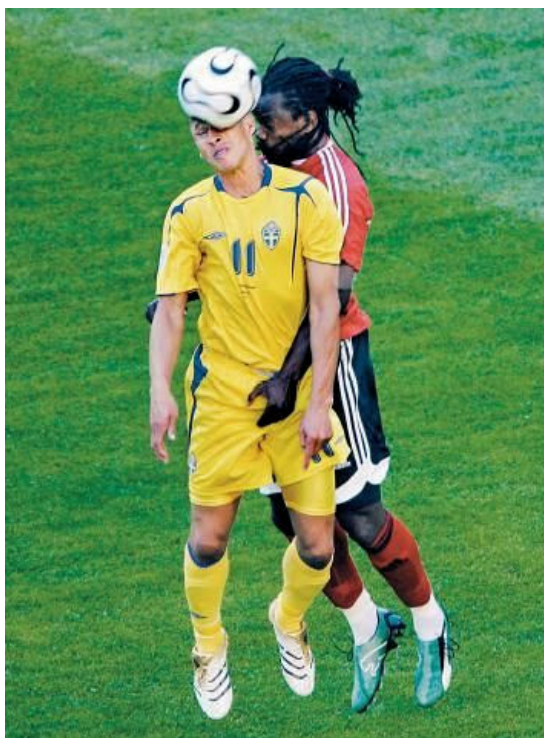
Backup: Tony ended his demonstration by showing some of the enhanced backup and recovery facilities. He brought along an external USB Hard Drive which he used to show how backups, which with earlier versions of Windows could only be made to recordable CDs, could now be made to high capacity DVDs, and even better still to external Hard Drives with gigabytes of space. Individual files could be backed up or if required the whole contents of a drive, he showed how his external 250GB HD had easily backed up the whole of Vista which makes recovery if things go wrong a simple task. The evening ended with the showing of a 20 minute video illustrating some of the other aspects of Vista. In conclusion Tony mentioned that with seven months or more to go before launch, Microsoft and the program makers have time to develop and refine the still unfinished or undeveloped features to make Vista a 'must have' operating system.

Microsoft Windows Vista is indeed an interesting operating system and from what we saw from Tony's demo Vista has much to offer.

(Your editor's review of Windows Vista Beta 2 starts on page 5).

World Cup

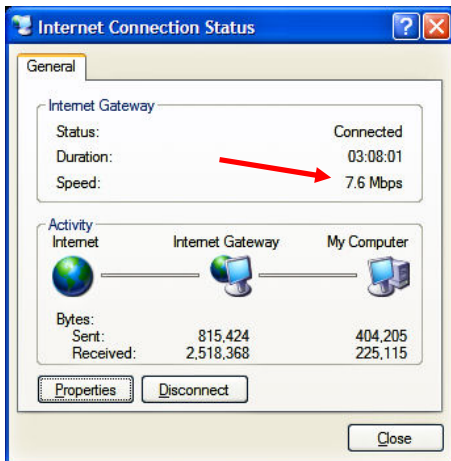
I followed our demise in the World Cup with a certain degree of sadness. But at least I got one good laugh out of it — see the photo below of an African apparently getting a little too amorous with a member of the Swedish squad! — Ed.



... I just love you hunky Swedes!

NewsBytes

The big news as far as your editor is concerned is that at long last Plus.Net have upgraded my ADSL connection to 8Mbps, well 7.6 actually, and what a joy it is, huge downloads just flash down, it's marvellous,



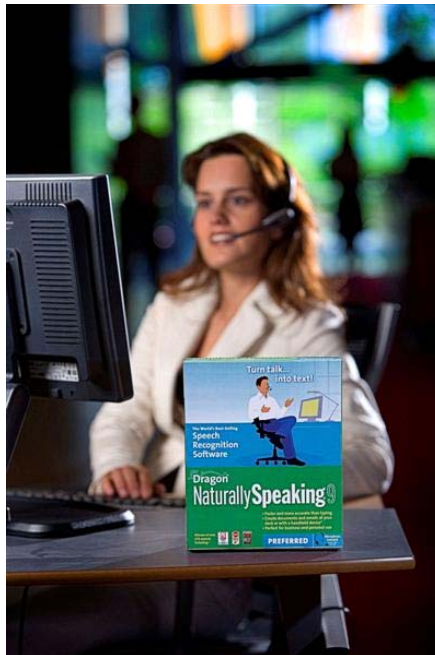
and to think that in the early 1990's I was delighted to upgrade from an Amstrad modem communicating at 2.4kbps to one that communicated at 9.6kbps and considered that fast — how times change!

Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9

In Mid July Nuance Communications introduced Dragon Naturally Speaking version 9, a new release of the world's best selling speech recognition solution for Microsoft Windows. The new version promises to transform the way people use their PCs, moving accuracy levels to near perfection and becoming the first desktop speech recognition software that truly eliminates the need for training.

"For more than a decade, industry leaders have forecast the day that speech recognition would become as valuable as the keyboard and mouse in using the PC, even becoming a primary way for creating documents and controlling applications," said Paul Ricci, chairman and CEO of Nuance Communications, Inc. "To a great extent, version eight of Dragon NaturallySpeaking finally delivered the accuracy levels needed to move speech recognition into the mainstream. Today, with the new release, we have overcome the final obstacles to adoption and made speech as seamless as the keyboard and mouse, creating a superior, more productive experience that will introduce new generations of users to speech recognition."

Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 allows people to perform nearly any computing task by speaking with their PC. This innovative software supports almost all Windows applications and instantly turns the natural voice into text or commands at speeds up to 160 words per minute with accuracy as high as 99 percent — which is faster and more precise than typing. Dragon

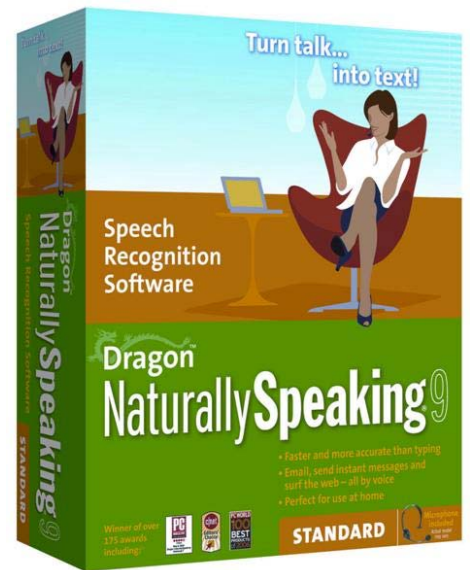


NaturallySpeaking 9 delivers significant improvements for existing users, as well as new features designed to expand the use of speech recognition beyond the millions of professionals, enthusiasts and people with disabilities who already use the software.

Dragon Naturally Speaking 9 delivers on what matters most in recognition products, providing accuracy levels that are unrivalled in desktop speech recognition: 20 percent higher than the previous release, resulting in total accuracy of a near-perfect 99 percent. Dragon NaturallySpeaking users gain the added benefit of completely avoiding typing and spelling errors, making speech a more natural and satisfying experience than typing.

The new release also removes one of the most significant issues that has caused many people to resist even trying speech recognition — training or enrolment. In historical implementations of speech recognition, users were faced with the time-consuming requirement to read specific scripts, allowing the speech recognition to "learn" the voice of the user. Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 is the first-ever desktop speech recognition product to eliminate training while still delivering highly accurate results.

Dragon NaturallySpeaking also improves its accuracy as it is used, learning and honing its precision with every dictated word. By removing the need to specifically train the product users can start realizing the benefits of Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 more quickly than ever before. Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 includes a full library of re-designed on-screen tutorials that significantly reduce the time it takes to become an every-day user of the software. Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 also includes support for Bluetooth headsets and microphones, as well as Tablet PCs and a number of new



mobile devices, giving people the freedom to dictate wirelessly or on-the-go with a PDA or digital recorder.

A Breakthrough in Speech Recognition for Microsoft Windows

Dragon NaturallySpeaking makes speech recognition available for every user, from the novice to the PC expert. The Dragon NaturallySpeaking family includes different versions specifically designed for varying levels of PC user: Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional for busy corporate professionals or organizations; Dragon NaturallySpeaking Preferred for the PC enthusiast or home office worker; and Dragon NaturallySpeaking Standard for the casual home PC user.

To help users achieve an increased level of productivity and unparalleled levels of accuracy, Nuance has added a number of key capabilities to Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9:

Key Benefits

- **Most Accurate Ever** — Significant improvements to the Dragon NaturallySpeaking recognition system has yielded an accuracy improvement of more than 20 percent over the previous release, and more than 50 percent over version 7 — resulting in speech recognition accuracy levels as high as 99 percent.
- **First to Eliminate Training** — Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9 is the first desktop speech recognition solution to truly remove the time need to train the software — and still deliver accurate results.
- **Speech Seamlessly Integrated** — Simply install Dragon NaturallySpeaking and you have added speech input and control to virtually all of your Microsoft Windows applications. The new release includes specific integration with Microsoft Office, Outlook and Internet Explorer, as well as Corel WordPerfect and Mozilla Firefox

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

and Thunderbird New-found Mobility, Portability – New support for Nuance-approved Bluetooth headsets gives users the freedom to dictate wirelessly, without being tethered to a PC. In addition, users can capture dictation with mobile devices such as digital recorders, Palm Tungsten and Pocket PCs for automatic transcription by Dragon NaturallySpeaking when synched with the PC.

Pricing: Expect to pay around £135 for the Preferred version and £72 for the Standard version. (Late PS: Nuance have the Preferred Version on offer for only £89.99—see: <http://www.nuance.com/orderdns9/uk/>).

We will be reviewing / demonstrating it at the October Group meeting, a forthcoming Group meeting.

ACER

Acer has showcased the latest line-up of models from the Acer family of computers. Of particular interest to me as the owner of a Ferrari 4000 were the two new notebooks in the Ferrari series, the new full-size Ferrari 5000 and a mini-version in the shape of the Ferrari 1000. Of more general interest are two models aimed at the education/student market where cheapness allied to a first-class specification counts best.

Ferrari 5000 and 1000

The Ferrari 5000 and Ferrari 1000 like the earlier 4000 series comes with a carbon fibre casing which conceals the very latest dual-core technology.

The Ferrari 5000 and Ferrari 1000 are based on the latest AMD Turion 64 X2 Mobile Technology. This combines the power of the latest dual-core technology, with the added performance of intelligent power management features. The 64-bit architecture delivers leading-edge power and provides a taste of the performance gains promised by future 64-bit applications.

Ferrari 5000

Crafted with a thin and light carbon fibre casing – styled in black and with the exclusive ‘Ferrari red’ go-faster stripe — this comes with a 15.4” screen which places it firmly in the desktop replacement segment of the market.



Acer Ferrari 5000

Performance: the AMD Turion 64 X2 processor delivers the best power output for heavy-application users seeking for a notebook to keep peace with today’s data processing needs.

Communication: coming bundled with the handy Acer VoIP Bluetooth phone, the Ferrari 5000 also exploits the potential of visual communication with Acer Video Conference solution that comprises Acer Orbicam, a 1.3 megapixel web camera mounted at the top of the LCD panel. Sporting every kind of wired and wireless connectivity option, it comes complete with WLAN (with Acer InviLink 802.11a/b/g* Wi-Fi CERTIFIED solution, supporting Acer SignalUp wireless technology), WPAN with built-in Bluetooth 2.0 module, LAN connection with Gigabit Ethernet cards and standard connectivity through the integrated 56K ITU V.92 modem.

Storage capacity: the Ferrari 5000 offers a generous HDD (up to 160 GB) and the choice between a slot-loading DVD-Super Multi double-layer drive or the last generation HD-DVD drive**. In addition a card-



The Ultra-Mobile Acer Ferrari 1000 reader can read five types of memory card.

Ferrari 1000

The Ferrari is an ultra mobile notebook that comes with an AMD Turion 64 X2 processor, a 12.1” screen and long battery life. Its 12.1” Acer CrystalBrite widescreen display presents stunning visuals thanks to the ATI RADEON XPRESS 1150 chipset supporting up to 512MB Hyper memory.

In its 1.7 kilos, it expresses superlative performance and seamless wireless and wired communication. In addition, the Acer Orbicam positioned on top of the LCD panel allows real-time face-to-face communication.

All notebook functions can be efficiently managed with Acer Empowering technology, an intuitive interface that gives users easy control over their notebook’s security, performance, settings and communication

with a single touch of the Empowering Key.

Surprisingly the Ferrari 1000 is spoilt by not having a built-in CD/DVD drive, this means you’ll need specify an optional external Ferrari DVD rewriter, which is a pity.

Expect to pay around £1,700 inc VAT for the F5000 and £1350 for the F1000.

Both Ferrari series comes with Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition or Microsoft Windows Professional Edition preinstalled. Additional installed software includes Adobe Reader, Norton AntiVirus and CyberLink PowerDVD or CyberLink Power Producer, Acer GridVista and Acer Arcade Software Suite.

All Acer notebooks come with a standard one-year Carry In (International travellers warranty - ITW) which can be extended to 3 years cover with the Acer Advantage service that also covers accidental damage to the notebook.

* Or 802.11b/g

** When available

New Aspire 5100 and 3100 notebooks

Back to school with the best of multimedia. Acer has launched new Acer Aspire 5100 and 3100 series, two completely new and fully-functional multimedia notebooks from Acer’s Back-to-school line.

Acer makes it easier for students to embrace technology by equipping all notebooks with Empowering Technology, a user-centric software that helps users efficiently manage all notebook functions through an intuitive interface that gives easy control over the notebook’s performance, communication and security settings with a single touch of the Empowering Key.

To exploit all the potential of contemporary IP-based communication and create a highly flexible communication environment, both Aspire series are equipped with Acer Video Conference solution that features an integrated Acer Orbicam mounted on top of the LCD panel for effortless Video and Voice over IP capabilities in addition to the optional Acer Bluetooth VoIP phone for seamless IP telephony.

For the fastest connectivity, both Aspire 5100 and 3100 notebooks feature a complete range of connectivity options to maintain constant connection to the Internet, e-mail or to the home network thanks to the Wake-on-LAN ready Fast Ethernet card, the integrated data/fax software modem and Wireless connection through the IEEE 802.11 b/g standard supporting Acer SignalUp wireless technology.

Both series feature the exclusive Acer Arcade software suite that provides full control over all multimedia functions, simplifying audio and video playback and making it easier than ever to manage CD and DVD burning and film editing. The Acer Arcade suite includes the exclusive Aspire CinemaVision™M video technology that optimizes reproduction

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Windows Vista — Beta 2

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

A Little Bit of History.

Is hard to believe that it is now eleven years since the first really useful version of Windows came along in the form of Windows 95, launched in August 1995 with an enormous amount of hype. I remember well the late August evening in 1995 when Microsoft took journalists to a swanky club in London's Leicester Square for the UK launch to see and hear what was new in Windows 95. We marvelled as we were shown how straightforward networking could be, had a touch of "Ooh La La" when we saw the easy to use graphical interface and said "Wow!" when told of the bonus of being able to use long file names. For consumers and home users' Microsoft promised better entertainment, with desktop games and multimedia. The Windows 95 CD included a couple of music videos "Buddy Holly" by Weezer and Edie Brickell's "Good Times" to show off the trendy new multimedia features, Edie Brickell's performance was so good I went out and bought the album!



Figure 1: Edie Brickell "Good Times" Video

The presentation started with the opening bars of the Rolling Stones 'Start Me Up', licensed by Microsoft for the occasion for a reported £5 million; which led to the introduction by Bill Gates of his company's brand new operating system. For maximum publicity and to show that Microsoft meant business; on the day of launch The Times newspaper was free to anyone, courtesy of Microsoft, which paid for a print run of one and a half million copies, more than double the papers' average daily circulation.

Bill Gates addressed the world-wide audiences by satellite direct from Microsoft HQ in Seattle eulogising about the exciting new features promised by Windows 95. Jonathan Ross, Master of Ceremonies at the UK event and wearing his trademark purple suit, interviewed Bill Gates for about five minutes, about nothing terribly vital ISTR. However, when the link with Redmond was disconnected Jonathan commented about Bill's appearance that "money can buy you many things, but it does not necessarily buy you a decent haircut", which I still remem-

ber to this day!

WINDOWS VISTA BETA 2

Windows Vista Beta-2 preview version has been available in several versions:

As a free 3.5GB download from Microsoft's Vista website in both 32-bit and X64 (64-bit) versions.

Alternatively by direct purchase from Microsoft, for the latter you are supplied with two DVDs containing the standard 32-bit version and an X64 (64-bit) version for those who have computers with processors capable of 64-bit computing.

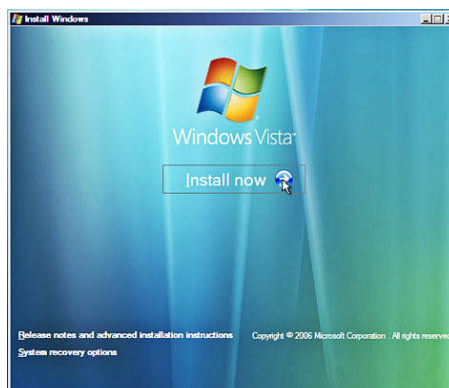
The public preview and registration list closed in the middle of July so if you haven't already got a copy, it's now too late to order one.

So what's Vista like? As we saw during my hands-on presentation of Microsoft Windows Vista at the last meeting of the group, Vista has many new and exciting features. So let's go through them.

According to all the hype from early tech pre-viewers, Vista heralds the biggest change in Microsoft's Windows interface since Windows 95 launched, replacing several schemes with new designs. The menu toolbar is gone and the applications, including explorer itself have been changed, so at first it's very confusing. However the "classic menus" as Microsoft terms them can be enabled for those who miss them and have a hankering for the "old" ways.

Installation

For my testing of Vista Beta-2 I did a 'clean' install of the operating system to a blank newly-formatted (NTFS) hard disk on my laptop. This meant I had no other features that could interfere with my review — I'd read on some newsgroups comments by reviewers who installed (upgraded) on top of a "Live" version of Windows XP, who had then run into terrible trouble with both XP or Vista not working properly. With no way of removing Vista once upgraded over XP, I considered it prudent to do a 'clean' install to a virgin hard disk thus avoiding the possibility of conflicts with existing applications/programs. I seem to remember it took



around the best part of an hour to install an Upgrade of Windows XP way back in 2001, so I was keen to see how long it took to install Vista; disappointingly it took the best part of three-quarters of an hour, even to a blank formatted (and fast) HD, however once installed I was immediately struck by the attractive new user interface followed by the new start menu.

FEATURES

Start Menu

One noticeable new feature of the Start menu is the search box at the bottom of the box. This allows you to search either on the computer, in a particular application or program or on the web for particular word or file or anything similar.

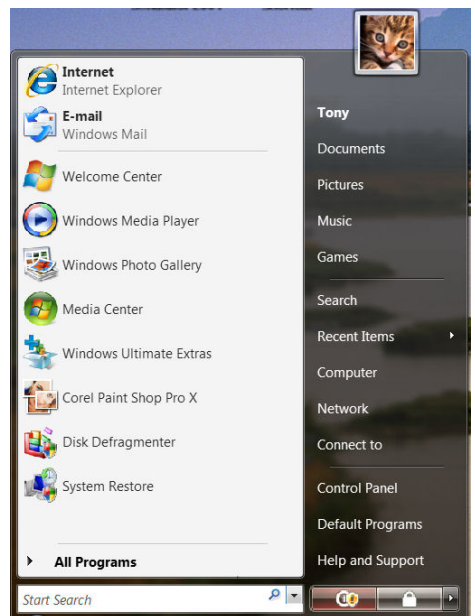


Figure 2: Start Menu

Vista's Start Menu replaces XP's Turn off Computer option with a Power Off button. This appears on the start menu on the bottom right, the default is to shutdown to Sleep mode where the OS takes a snapshot of the system at the time of shutdown and writes the contents of memory to a file on the hard drive. This allows for a quick restart to where you left off, whether in the middle of editing a word file, game or whatever. To access the other options such as Restart or Close Down as in XP it's necessary to click on the right-hand box and select the option what you want. See Figure 3.



Figure 3: Shutdown Menu

(Continued on page 7)



Figure 4: Welcome Centre

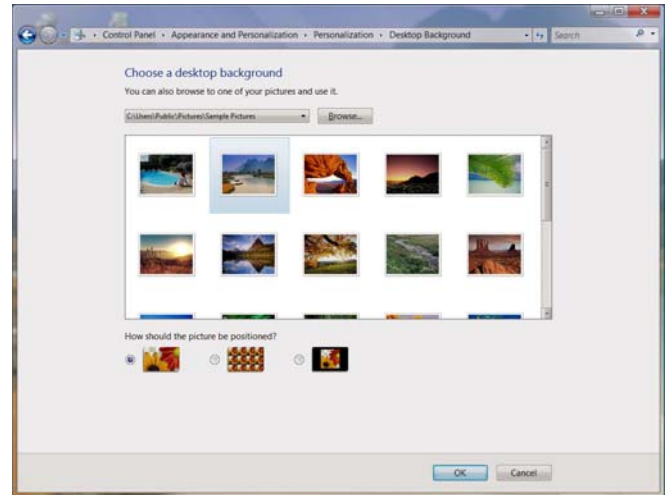


Figure 5: Personalise your desktop background

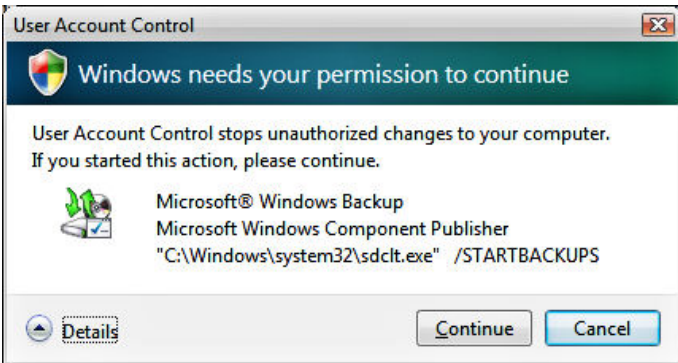


Figure 6: User Account Control



Figure 7: BitLocker Drive Encryption

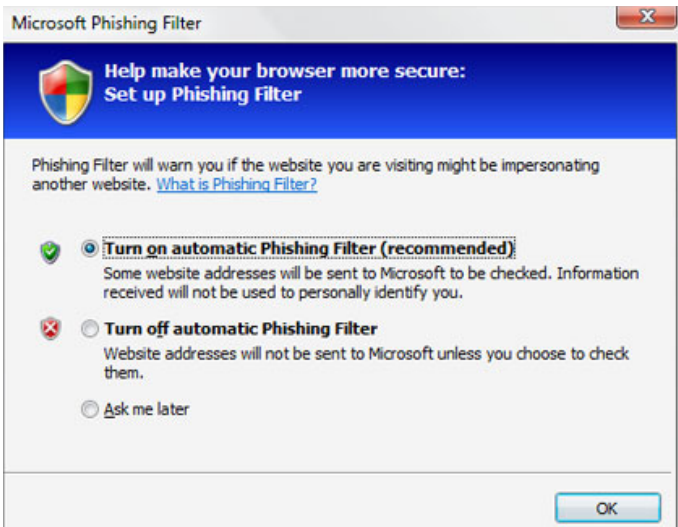


Figure 8: Phishing Filter



Figure 9: Hover your mouse over a task bar item to see what it is.

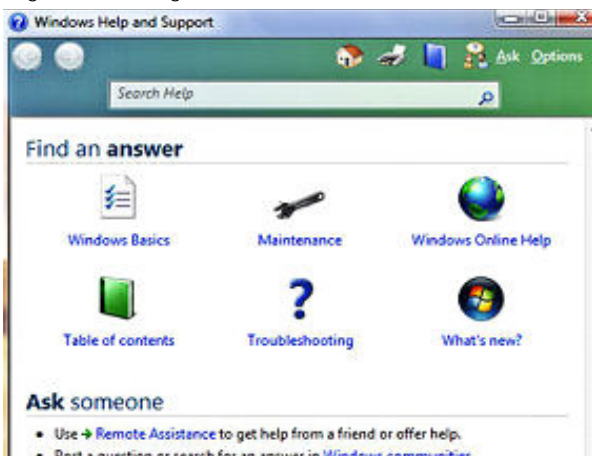


Figure 10: Find an Answer by Asking for Help

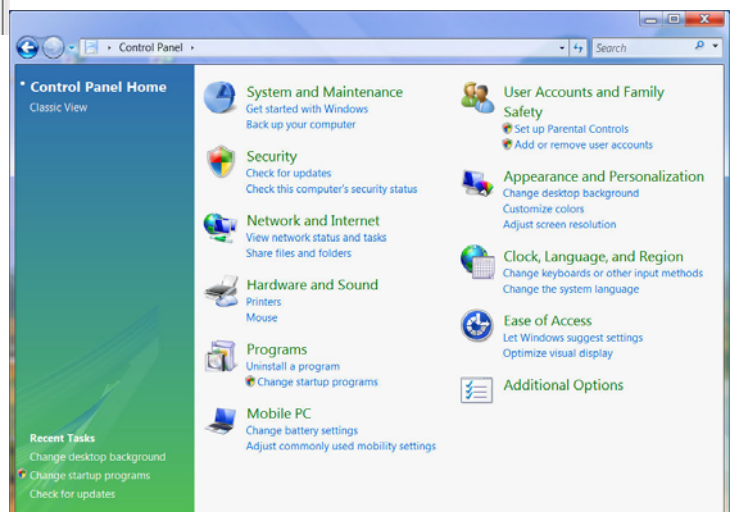


Figure 11: Control Panel

(Continued from page 5)

Welcome Centre

The next thing is that there is a brand new Welcome Centre which helps you get started with Vista. This allows you to setup devices to Personalise your version of Windows, including adding New Users, access to Windows Media Player, connect to the Internet, access the Control Panel, add a Printer, use Windows Easy Transfer (to transfer files and settings from one computer to another); Register your copy of Vista, and view your Computer Details including Hardware and Windows settings. See Figure 4.

Personalising Your Computer

When personalising your computer's user interface Microsoft have provided a selection of quite superb background wallpapers, you can choose one of these as your default wallpaper or alternatively if you have your own particular photo or picture that you'd like to use Vista makes it easy to browse to where it's located on your computer and use it as your preferred background. See Figure 5.

One feature that bugs me a little is the user account control the user can account control stops unauthorised changes to your computer, this pops up each time you want to do fairly standard things, if for example you want to delete a file, you're going to be presented with this user account control box stating a programme each your permission to continue. See Figure 6.

SECURITY FEATURES

Anti Virus

For some reason AntiVirus programs from some of the well known security vendors such as McAfee and Symantec refuse to install and at the time of writing Vista capable versions are not yet available. However the Czech company Alwil's AVAST antivirus program is designed to work with Microsoft Vista and as a bonus is available free to home users. Similarly CA's EZ Antivirus has a Vista compatible version which is free to use for one year.

BitLocker

A new and useful security feature is the BitLocker encryption facility. BitLocker Drive Encryption is aimed at protecting data on computers that have been lost or stolen. The hardware-based system encrypts the entire Windows system volume using 128-, 192- or 256-bit AES. You can use the computer locally but unauthorised users will be blocked, even if they try to use password cracking programs to start your hard disk on a different computer. This is a useful security tool which is ideal for the busy executive who travels a lot with a notebook stuffed full of confidential information who is paranoid about theft. See Figure 7.

Phishing Filter

Phishing is still a problem, but to make your browsing more secure Microsoft have included an automatic phishing filter, that helps to block Web sites that might be impersonating another. See Figure 8.

Windows Defender

Windows Defender, part of the Security Centre, includes a version of AntiSpyware and an improved firewall.

Viewing Open Applications

If you have several programmes running at once (for example you may have your e-mail program running at the same time as a PowerPoint Presentation you are compiling together with your graphics editing program and you want to see what each of these running applications are doing, it's only necessary to hover the mouse pointer over the program's taskbar button and Vista displays a live thumbnail image of the associated screen. Quite handy if you want to see what is actually running on each of your open applications. See Figure 9.

Help and Support

Help and support has been improved. As well as the usual Help menus a new feature has been added called the "Find an Answer" facility; type in your question, click the Find an Answer Box, this takes you online to allow you to get remote assistance from one of the Windows community to help resolve your problem. See Figure 10.

Control Panel

The Control Panel can display icons in the "classic" manner similar to earlier versions of Windows, or display a cut down version with icons for the various categories which when clicked display links to specific features. This is easy to use and hides until clicked many of the icons available in the classic display. The choice is yours. See Figure 11.

Internet Explorer 7

Vista comes with Internet Explorer 7. IE7 now includes tabbed browsing, but even better it has "Quick Tabs" with live thumbnails of tabbed pages so that you can have five or six pages actively running as you browse the net, all that's necessary to bring up a favourite page is to just click on the tab and it will immediately bring that page into the forefront — simple and easy and it seems to work quite well. See Figure 12 (Next page).

(A beta copy of IE7 is available as a download from Microsoft's Internet Explorer website if you want to trial it using Windows XP).

Calendar

At long last Microsoft provides a decent calendar; this seems to have been borrowed from Outlook and is very simple and easy to use. See Figure 13 (Next page).

Audio — Sound Recorder

Sound Recorder has been improved. No longer is it limited to one minute of WAV audio as featured in Windows XP and earlier OS versions. Sound Recorder now has the ability to record to Windows Media Audio (WMA) a compressed format which is reasonably compatible with many devices and allow users, depending on available HD space, to record an unlimited length of recorded sound. A very useful addition. See Figure 14 (Next page).

Audio — Volume Controls

Most of us have speakers connected to our computers and Vista now provides individual volume controls for each of your audio devices. This means if you're using Windows media player you can set the volume you normally like, if you want the various sounds as you access and exit applications they too can be set to a predetermined sound and on top of that you have a main volume control that controls your overall sound volume. See Figure 15 (next page).

Windows Mobility Centre

For notebook and laptop users Vista has a new feature called Windows Mobility Centre. This shows an overview of information about the state of the controls on your notebook: such as whether you are connected to the net, battery charge status, whether your speaker volume is muted or not, brightness of your display and so on. See Figure 16 (Next page).

Photo Gallery

For photo and video editing users Microsoft have included a useful Photo Gallery to edit and manage your digital photographs and videos. Sadly Microsoft Photo Story 3, which we saw earlier in the year as a very useful add-on feature for Windows XP, is no longer available (and refuses to install when I downloaded it and tried to install it). However in mitigation Microsoft have improved their Windows Movie Maker application which allows you to use some of the features of Photo Story 3, but not all, which is a pity. Also included is a new DVD Maker feature allowing you to author DVD discs, with menus, chapters and other features.

Windows Mail

Outlook Express is no more, it's now called Windows Mail and for the first time includes a new junk e-mail filter, a feature similar to that in Microsoft Outlook that detects and consigns spam automatically to the new junk e-mail folder. See Figure 17 (Next page).

Backup

At long last Microsoft have included a useful backup facility, with earlier versions of Windows backups could only be made to recordable CDs, which with their 700-800 MB size limit was a pain. Now it's possible for backups to be made to high-capacity DVDs,

(Continued on page 9)



Figure 12: Internet Explorer 7 — Tabbed Pages.

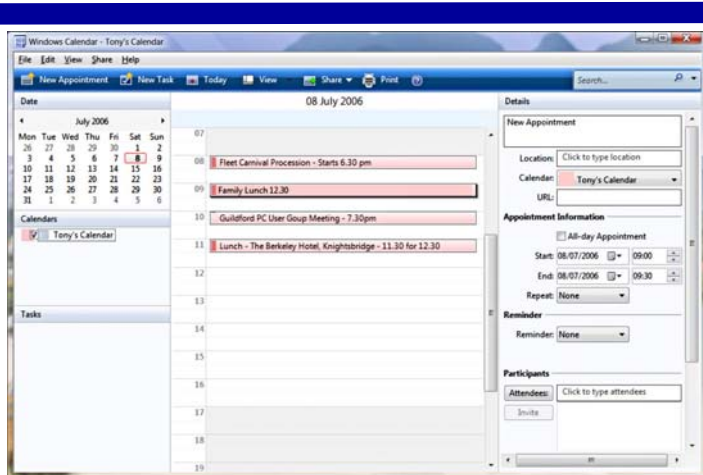


Figure 13: A Really Useful Calendar at last.

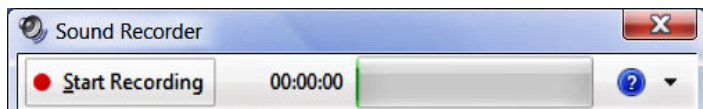


Figure 14: Sound Recorder. Now record for as long as you want.

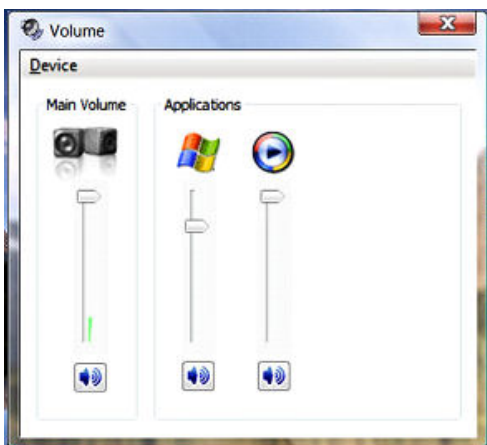


Figure 15: Individual Volume Controls.

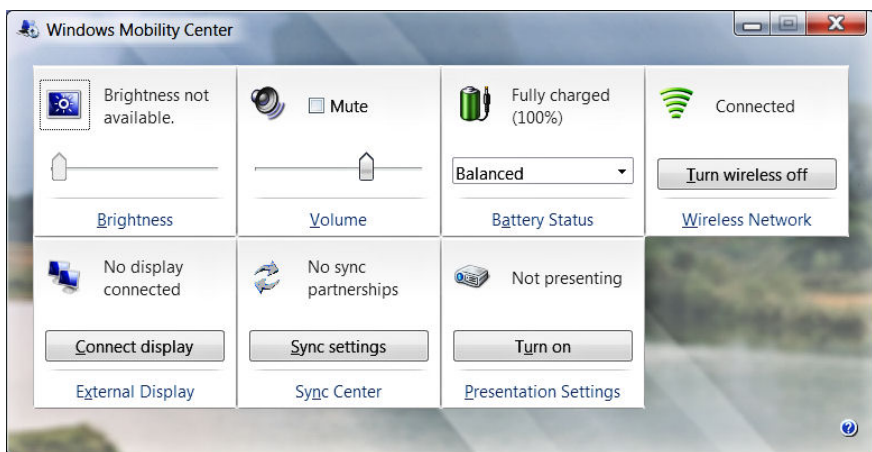


Figure 16: Windows Mobility Centre — Showing Details of your Laptop.



Figure 17 (left):

Windows Mail — no Longer Outlook Express

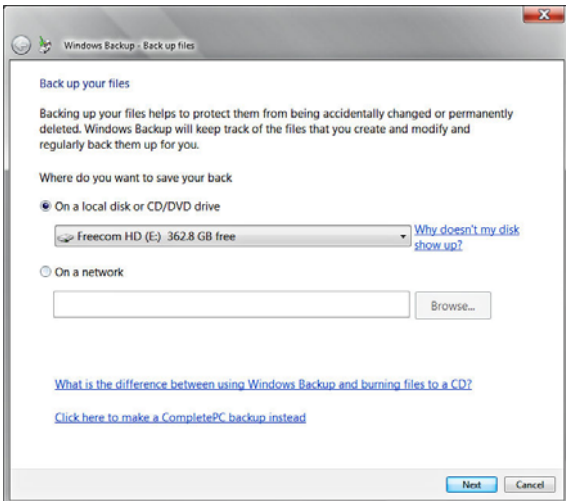


Figure 18a (left). Backup to CD/DVD, Network or External HD and Even Backup your Complete PC!

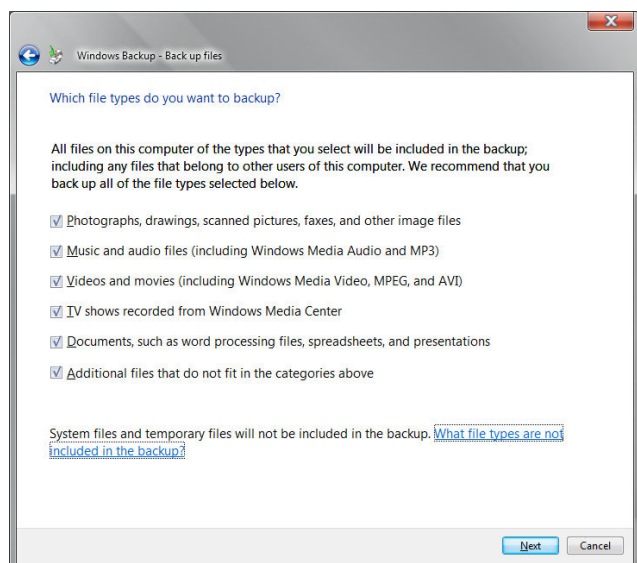


Figure 18b: Choose files to be backed up — Photos, Music, Videos, Documents etc.

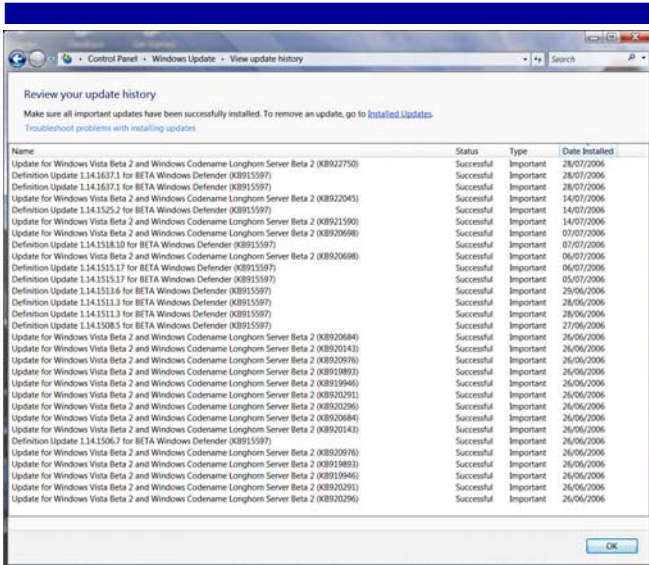


Figure 19: Microsoft Updates Vista Regularly.

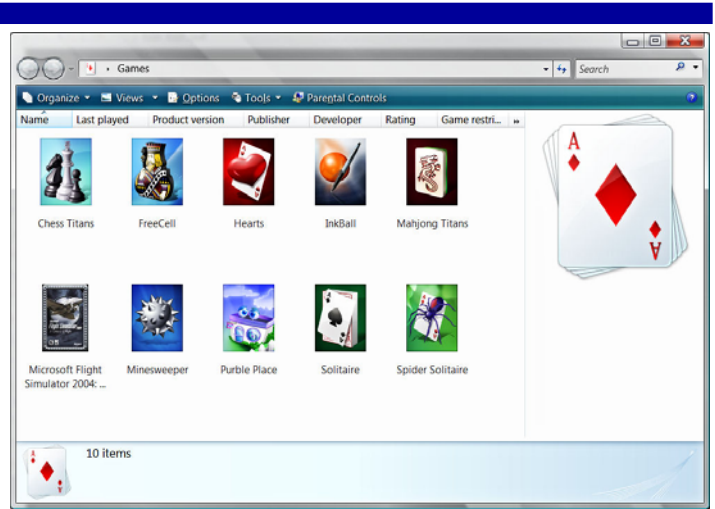


Figure 20: Familiar and updated Games are included.

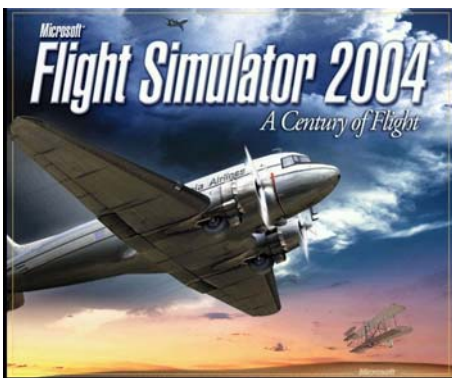


Figure 21: Flight Simulator runs fine on Windows Vista — no complaints here!

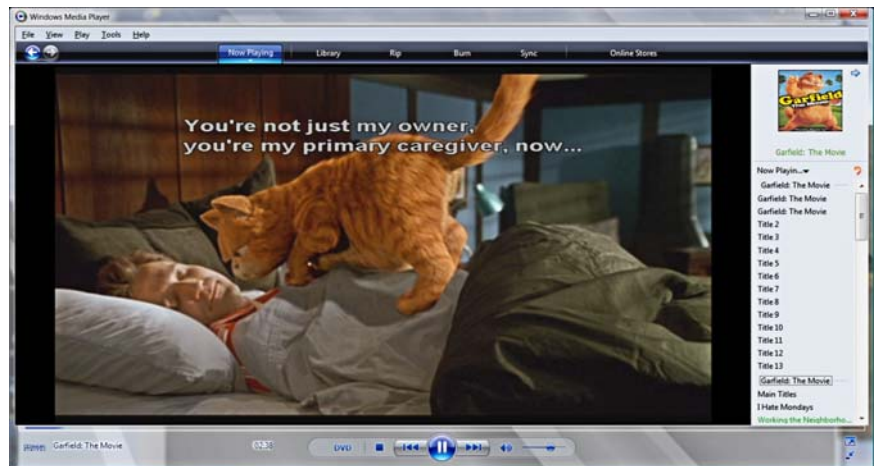


Figure 22: Using Windows Media Player to play commercial DVDs was a pain. When I did get it to play “Garfield-The Movie”, it showed the English subtitles constantly.

(Continued from page 7)

or even better to external high hard drives with gigabytes of space. Individual files can be backed up or if required the whole contents of a drive. I tried this with a 250GB USB2 external hard drive which easily backed up the whole of my PC including Vista, which makes recovery if things go wrong a relatively simple task. However there is no facility for making time saving incremental back-ups, it's only possible to make a full back-up of your hard drive/s which is time consuming and wastes disk space, which is a pity. See Figure 18a & 18b.

Updates

Connected to the internet and Microsoft updates the system regularly. See Figure 19.

Games

Most of the standard Windows games are included, but most have been given a makeover to make them look nicer. The only game I use regularly, MS Flight Simulator 2004 runs perfectly well on Vista. See Figures 20 & 21.

Playing DVDs

I had the greatest trouble playing a commercial DVD using Vista's Media Player, not sure why but and there wasn't anything in the help file to explain why, so I consider

this to be a problem still to be sorted. See Figure 22.

Drivers

Many legacy programs and some hardware, printers and scanners in particular, are not yet Vista capable. Epson, HP and Canon have Vista drivers for my scanner (Epson 4990 Photo) and Printers (HP LaserJet 12000, and Pixma iP6600D) and these work well, but checking on Epson's web site for drivers for my son's four-year old Epson Stylus Photo 950 inkjet printer, Epson say they have no plans to provide drivers or to support his printer under Vista.

So when to deciding whether to install Vista check whether your older legacy hardware and software — perhaps three to four years old — will work OK by downloading Microsoft's Vista checker that checks whether your hardware and software is Vista compliant.

Graphics Card Problems

Using my Acer Laptop for the review threw up some problems. The graphics card is an ATI Radeon Mobility X700. Although ATI have posted beta Vista drivers for this card on their web site they are currently very flaky and definitely in need more developer input to get them to work in a stable manner. The absence of reliable drivers

for this card is a pain.

Conclusions

With seven months or so to go before release any faults can be excused, It's still “work in progress”. The major ones I experienced during this review: lack of drivers and lack of support from the major AntiVirus vendors can't be blamed on Microsoft, so overall 7/10. I'll keep monitoring and let you know how I get on.

Release Date

My beta version shows it that it will expire in February 2007, but a recent visit to the Microsoft Vista website stated that Beta 2 now expires in June 2007, so I'm wondering whether Microsoft anticipate a further delay perhaps?

LATE PS

DO NOT install Cyberlink's Power DVD on a computer running Vista. Once installed it doesn't work and can only be removed by highly technical means or a System Restore — you've been warned!

In this connection create a System Restore point regularly (System Restore works much quicker under Vista) and especially before installing programs that you're not 100% sure will run successfully with Vista — you know it makes sense!

Acer D150 Portable Navigator

Reviewed by John Childs

Introduction

This device from Acer is primarily a satellite navigation device (Sat/Nav) but also acts as an MP3 player and photo viewer.

Installed on an SD card are detailed maps of Great Britain and Ireland with main routes in Europe. MP3 music files can be downloaded onto the spare capacity of the SD card or onto a fresh SD card, but this means that you cannot then use the Sat/Nav function whilst playing the music files on the new card, likewise with photos. However, I did not test these uses of the device, concentrating on its function as a Sat/Nav. It has a 9cm screen which is touch sensitive.

In Use

A stylus is provided to assist with the touch sensitive screen, but no slot is contained in the body of the device to hold it when not in use. This is surprising as there should be plenty of room in the rather bulky body.

I was unable to attach this device to the windscreen of my car as the (plastic?) sucker that would be used for this purpose was missing from the review sample. The device is capable of being used outside the car as it contains an internal rechargeable battery.

For in-car use, a lead to connect the unit to the cigar lighter is supplied. The voice is loud enough and the screen seems clear enough. Had been able to attach the device to my car windscreen, it would have been much bulkier than my current Medion model because as well as the body being quite bulky, you have to attach a cradle between the sucker and the body, thus making it bulkier still.

The Acer does not have dynamic routing, whereby it could select alternative routes depending on traffic reports. Nor does it seem able to accept downloads of locations of speed cameras (GATSOS).

I liked the method of inputting addresses using a facsimile of a computer keyboard (see illustration).

One can also input full postcodes and I found this worked very well indeed. I think the methods of entering destinations, whether by postcodes or addresses or by points of interest is very user friendly and better than on any Sat/Navs I have reviewed so far.

One thing that I found dis-



concerting was the facility for the device to warn you that you are driving at over the speed limit. I found that in a 50 mph area, say, I would be driving at 43 mph and the device kept warning me that I was speeding! I lost count of the roads where the device thought that there was a 30 mph limit when it really was 40 mph. The warnings were so inaccurate that I switched off the facility and never used it again.

The unit was sometimes slow in picking up GPS signals to enable it to operate. For example, I left a car park in the centre of Guildford and it only picked up the GPS signals half way along the Hogs Back.

When I chose to ignore the unit's recom-

mended route, it would spend a lot of time telling me to do a U turn before it would recalculate the route. This delay was much more than with my current Sat/Nav.

My current Sat/Nav tells me to "take the second exit from the roundabout onto the A 325" for example. The Acer unit merely tells you to take the second exit without confirming which road you will be travelling on. And after a while the request to take the "ird" exit from the roundabout grated on me.

In all cases the unit took me to where I wanted to go. Overall, it differed by not much from my current Medion unit, which was not too surprising since both had maps supplied by Navteq on board. This meant that overall I was quite happy with the routes it calculated for me.

Conclusions

This is a basic unit which performed its basic Sat/Nav functions quite well. Entering the destination was particularly easy and was better than any of the previous units I have tested. I would not buy it though because I like the reassurance of a unit telling me the name or number of the road it was guiding me onto after a roundabout.

However, if you are looking for a basic unit then the Acer should be on your shortlist to consider.

Pricing and Availability

From your local stockist for approx. £194 plus VAT



When inputting addresses you use a facsimile of a computer keyboard

Ulead Video Studio 10 Plus

Reviewed by Laurence Fenn

Introduction

The latest version of Video Studio comes in two versions, the plus version and the non plus version. Initially the program doesn't look that different from version 9, but extra features have been added. You can now capture, edit and output HD Video with an HD camcorder, you have support for Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound, MPEG-4 support for exporting video for playback on iPods or Sony PSP players, and future support for HD DVD and Blu-ray DVDs. This last option was to be included in the program, but a slip of paper in the small manual (and I literally mean small in size, it's just a little bigger than an A6 sheet), states that as the specifications of the formats have not been established at the time of authoring, all those features have been removed. Presumably an update via the auto update feature will add those features, but as yet there have been no updates to the program.

In Use

Once installed, VideoStudio 10 Plus gives you three options to begin with. VideoStudio Editor, Movie Wizard, and DV-to-DVD Wizard. The Editor is the full program and the option most people will want to use.

You can also choose whether to edit in standard 4:3 aspect ratio or the widescreen 16:9 format.

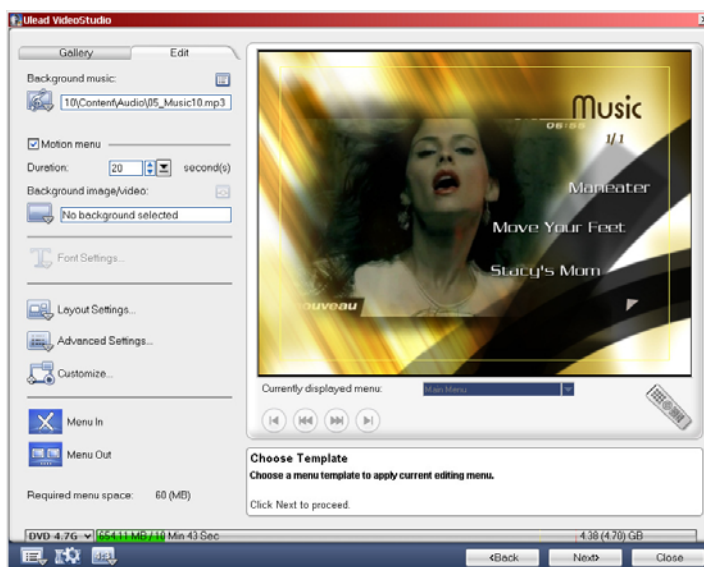
These are quite common features now, but VideoStudio uses Smart Proxies to help edit HD video. HD video files can be enormous, and many older PCs will struggle when trying to edit them (Ulead recommends a 3.0GHz processor for HD work). When you turn this option on, VideoStudio automatically creates lower-resolution versions of the HD video files, allowing you to edit the low-res files without slowing down your PC too much. When you're finished, the program will automatically apply your changes to the original HD files while you go off and do something more interesting than staring at a progress bar.

Surround Sound

It's possible to use the new surround sound mixer to control the placement of sound effects simply by using the mouse to move the audio indicator around on the mixer display to create your surround sound effects. However, the 5.1 mixer only allows you to mix audio from the first two video tracks, the narration track and the music track. You can pan your audio around the surround image, but the only way to animate this is via live mixing.



There are plenty of new editing tools as well; the most important being the ability to add five extra video tracks to the program's editing Timeline - giving a total of seven video tracks in all. This makes it possible to create complex montages and picture-in-picture effects. The preview of these effects can be very slow but the final result will be fine. There are also several new effects filters, such as Fish-eye and Anti-shake - the latter can stabilise clips shot on a hand-



held camera.

The online help files have an annoying habit of listing features without clearly explaining how they work. The manual doesn't fair much better and the small black and white pictures are not that clear.

InterVideo WinDVD Player

Ulead has recently merged with InterVideo, who made WinDVD player and version 7 is included as a bonus on the bonus CD. I did not install this but have seen reports that upgrading older versions lead to problems that can only be fixed by removing the old version first. Other bonus software programs include Cool 3D, which allows you to create eye-catching, animated 3D titles for your movies and Pocket DV

Show which can be used to burn DVDs straight from your camcorder.

Ad Zapper is a new feature that automatically scans a video file recorded from TV and finds what it thinks are the ad breaks, making it easy to delete them. Curiously, you can only use Multi-trim with videos on the first track, but most people are not likely to multi track recordings from television.

Ulead has also changed the UI arrangement. Four presets are provided, with a less dominant preview window than in previous versions and more space for all the tools. For disc authoring, with DVD Movie Factory 5's engine built-in you get much more design control. SmartScene menus and menu transitions are available, and you can now resize, position and rotate buttons and text. It's a shame that elements you edit in the menu cannot be aligned to each other or to the grid that you can display, like DVD Workshop 2 (which still offers the most flexibility for DVD Menu creation out of all of Ulead's products).

Even though the program has support for many different file types, it did have trouble converting them using the Batch Convert function. I wanted to convert some QuickTime trailers and although the video was fine and no errors were reported, the final video had no sound. I had to convert the QuickTime MOV files to uncompressed AVI files and then convert them to MPEG files. This may have been due to the codes used in the files, but it always gets me that if the Quick-

Time player can read the files, then why can't the video editing programs?

Conclusions

The Plus version is definitely worth the extra cost if you want HDV support, Smart Proxy, Ad Zapper, Video Distortion (which was available in VideoStudio 9). 5.1 surround sound support, export to Apple iPods and Sony PSPs, MPEG-4 support Win DVD 7 Silver and Pocket DV Show.

Pricing and Availability

Ulead Video Studio 10 Plus will cost around £53 inc VAT and delivery from Amazon.co.uk. An upgrade is available for user's of earlier versions, expect to pay £35 for this, again from Amazon.co.uk.

Ulead DVD Movie Factory 5

Reviewed by Laurence Fenn

Ulead's DVD Movie Factory 5 is the latest version of their disc creation software. As a regular user of DVD Workshop 2, I was interested to see how good this software would compare. Unfortunately, some bugs made this software particularly difficult to work properly.

Smart Menus

The smart menus look good, but there are only five templates. The titles of the clips are added from the filenames minus the file extension, but if the title is too long to fit in the space allocated by the menu template, carriage returns are put in. It doesn't split

can select several objects and move them together, but you can't line them up as in DVD Workshop 2. You can display a grid, but there is no snap to grid option.

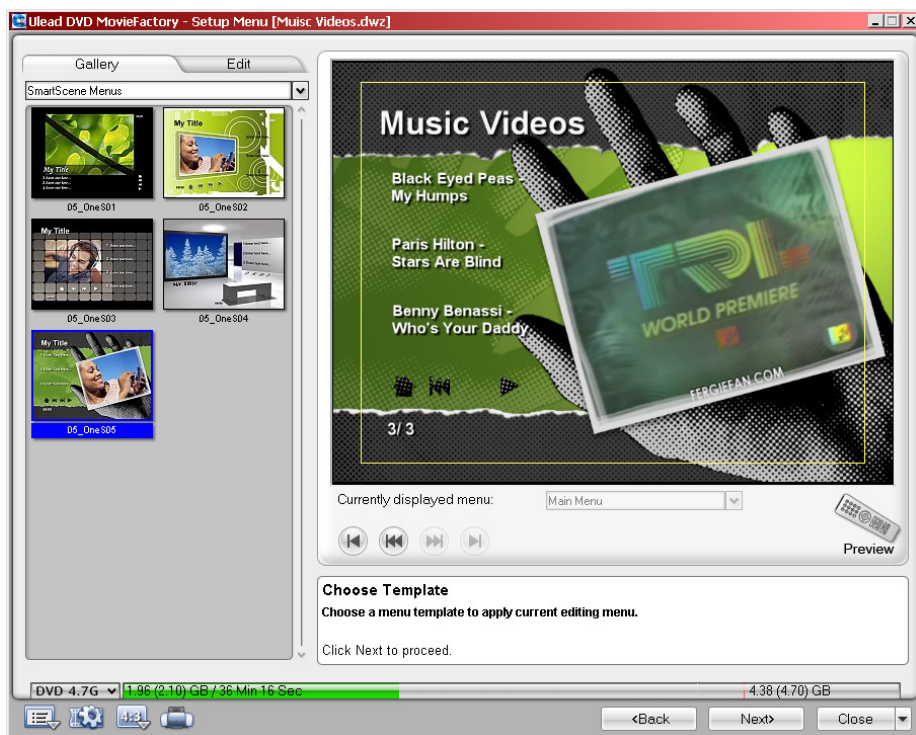
Menus

When I saved my project I had hidden some elements on the menu. You can't delete objects, only hide them. When I reloaded the project, it didn't remember the menu template and displayed the menu from the first default menu. This meant that I had to re-edit the menu every time I loaded it.

Even though there were 21 clips on the disc, and the project was set to play the next clip, the previous and next buttons were not enabled. I could fast forward and see that the next clip would play when one finished, but I could not skip to the next clip. When creating another disc I clicked the option to play all the clips before the menu. This was the collection of trailers, but the disc did not play all of the clips, stopping after a few and then going to the menu.

No Blu Ray

There is an addendum about Blu Ray slipped into the manual. Like VideoStudio 10 Plus, a note saying that as the format specifications had not been fully decided, the features relating to it had not been included in the software, and so it said to ignore the references. A leaflet included in the box quoted VideoStudio 9 and DVD MovieFactory 4 as



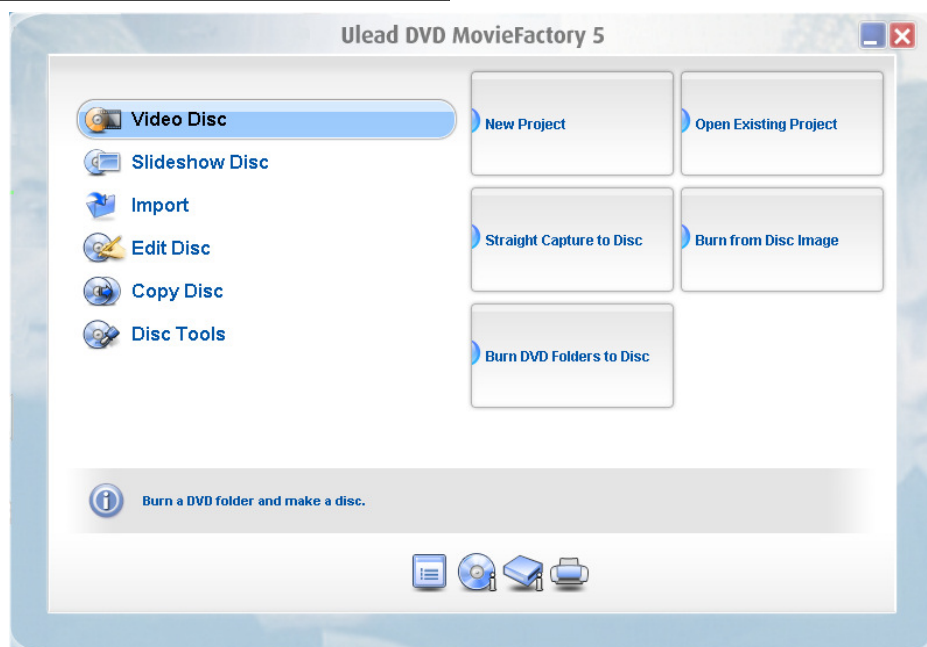
I found that widescreen clips do not display correctly when the disc is rendered. They appear letterboxed on screen, but when I played the final disc they were stretched to fill the screen. I was testing this with a DVD player connected to a projector which coped with widescreen films fine.

Music DVD

When creating a music video DVD, even though 95% of the clips were DVD compatible (some were VOB files, which are mpeg files in the DVD format) it still took two and a half hours to produce the disc. The total running time for the disc was just over an hour. One file was NTSC instead of PAL, and it did a pretty good job of converting it.

Normalise Audio

As the disc was a compilation of music videos from various sources, I ticked the normalise audio option. This had two effects. Firstly, it added a half hour to the time it took to make the disc (and this is not setting the two pass option to improve the quality of the videos). Secondly, instead of making the volume of all the clips the same, as it should have, it made some clips silent.



the title by the word, so a bit of re-editing was needed. Of course, you can edit the titles of the files when you import them, but this is a strange way of coping with long names. Automatically reducing the font size would have been a more suitable way. Also there is no align objects option. You

the latest versions of the software! Ad Zapper is also included in this software, which does it's best to remove advert breaks in TV recordings. This is also in VideoStudio 10, and the cross over of features means that you wouldn't need both pieces of software.

(Continued on page 13)

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Interface

The interface looks the same as previous versions of Movie Factory, which means it looks nothing like any standard Windows program. Like other Ulead programs, this piece of software tries to do other things as well. VideoStudio 10 Plus edits videos and includes DVD menu creation (the same engine as this program) and likewise Movie Factory 5 allows basic editing of the video. The menus it creates can be very sophisticated, with transitions for the menu in and out from the clips you intend to put on disc.

Launcher

The launcher that you go through to start the program still has the annoying habit of appearing again when you close the program, but at least if you launch a project and the clips have changed (because you have recreated them in another program or deleted them) the relink wizard automati-

cally lets you pick a new file if one is missing and warns you if the file has changed. The thumbnail that you select (if you haven't chosen the motion menu) will be the same, which was helpful when the menu template was not kept. The launcher has been redesigned from version 4, and the window is now semi transparent, although I can't see why.

Disc Creation

Creating another disc with MPEG2 files took only a few minutes. All of the files were created in VideoStudio 10, so this may have flagged them as compatible. The Smart Rendering technology used is supposed to speed up the creation of discs by not re-rendering videos that comply with the project settings. This seems to be a bit of a hit or miss affair as files that are DVD compatible seem to be rendered when creating a DVD, and other files are left alone. No filters or titles were added to the files (which would cause them to be re-

rendered) so I couldn't understand why one compilation took a couple of minutes and another took several hours.

Menus — Good & Bad

You can create great looking menus using this software, especially with the Smart Scene menus, but this is offset by the lack of flexibility and functionality. The extremely long rendering times despite using compatible clips and the widescreen problem was a bit of a concern. Even more annoying was the fact that when I tried to update the program the auto update program didn't recognize the software and so did not attempt to update it. It's a shame but because the menu settings were not saved with the project I could not use this software if I was going to create a menu that was complex or likely to take more than a day to design.

Pricing and Availability

£27 inc VAT and delivery from Amazon.co.uk

Pinnacle Studio 10 Plus — Titanium Edition

Reviewed by Tony Hawes

Introduction

I looked last looked at Pinnacle's Video Editing program Studio 8 about four years ago and Studio 9 around two years ago.

My conclusion then was that Studio 9 had a lot going for it but it was beset by a multitude of problems that made it unstable, a view shared by many other users. Having taken note Pinnacle issued a set of major patches/updates so that about six months after launch Studio 9 was a viable product. I commented that although aimed at novices Studio 9 had all the features necessary to allow those with video editing aspirations to advance beyond the novice stage.

Earlier this year Pinnacle launched Studio 10 and a couple of months later ago a feature rich version titled Pinnacle Studio Plus Titanium Edition (TE). My review will cover this version.

Studio 10 Plus Titanium Edition — New Features

Pinnacle Studio Plus v.10 Titanium Edition combines the ease of use of an intuitive three-step movie creation process with a powerful engine to quickly capture videos from all popular video devices, including recent HDV, DivX and DVD camcorders. Adding to user-defined keyframeable real-time effects, like HD Pan-and-Zoom, Picture-in-Picture (PIP) and Chroma Key (green screen) are 25 new video effects from RTFx vol.1 collection, making a total of 45 effects that can be mixed for endless creativity. New output options allow for different ways of sharing home movies beyond traditional DVD players: DivX



videos, the Web and mobile video players such as Apple Video iPods, Sony PSP.

- New Library of 25 Video Effects - Studio Plus Titanium Edition comes now with 25 additional effects (RTFX vol.1), raising the creative options up to 45 effects that can be combined and mixed for almost unlimited creativity.
- New Mobile Video Formats - Record your videos straight to your Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP), Apple's video iPod, DivX video players or any other popular mobile video device.
- Faster than Ever! - Studio Plus Titanium Edition includes new Studio Plus version 10.5 for enhanced performance Simplicity and Ease-of-use - The intuitive user interface with simple three-step process effortlessly guide you

through the: 1) Capture, 2) Edit and 3) Share steps and make learning and using Studio Plus literally a breeze.

So Pinnacle Studio Plus Titanium Edition combines the award winning Pinnacle Studio Plus with the latest functionalities of v.10.5, as well as Pinnacle RTFX Vol 1 package, a set of 25 additional video effects.

This latest 10.5 version also provides several enhancements, making Studio Plus even faster and more powerful. It lets users capture footage from popular video devices, including the latest HDV camcorders, as well as MPEG-4 or DVD camcorders, and edit with professional TV style effects like Chroma Key (green screen), Picture-in-Picture (PIP), HD pan and zoom, and more.

This makes Studio Plus Titanium Edition definitely one of the most creative video editing software available on the consumer market.

Video Editing — the Basics

Basically you use editing to manipulate your video footage to produce a final presentation quality video. Editing allows you to trim, order, add audio (narration, background music and appropriate sound effects), add titles, add transitions, add still photos and process your clips. With practice good editing can transform dull and uninteresting footage into an interesting final result.

Edits are not done randomly. Both theory and practical know-how are necessary, the process involves dedication and attention to detail; be prepared to spend a lot of time editing your video. If really dedicated it often takes up to one hour of work to put together a

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couple of minutes of good completed footage, but with experience this ratio will reduce dramatically. The more you work with video and learn to edit, the more you'll understand why a 100-minute Hollywood film can often take a whole year to produce, shoot and edit. However for basic home movie editing the time necessary to put together a worthwhile video depends on how much you want to put into the project and this depends on three vital factors:

1. The length of the original footage
2. Extras to be added to the project such as audio, titles, transitions, still photos etc
3. The planned length of the finished movie

One thing I noticed is that assembling and editing can be an addictive process; I find I always want to improve on what I've already done and the time involved in editing can go through the roof as you strive for that finished masterpiece!

Video Editing Techniques — What's Involved?

1. Capture the video. From video camera (digital video or analogue), VHS, TV, or import digital video saved to your hard disk.
2. If not captured direct from your camcorder's output socket convert the video to VCD, SVCD, DVD / MPEG video.
3. Edit the MPEG video by adding and arranging clips, trimming and rearranging as necessary. Add transitions, still pictures, sounds and DVD menus.
4. Burn the authored video, usually directly after authoring in step 3.
5. Play the burnt video on your DVD Player.

EDITING WITH PINNACLE STUDIO 10 PLUS

When you first run Pinnacle Studio Plus the intro screen gives you the option of opening the program or running an expert ten minute tutorial which shows how to use the program.

Once you open the program the Pinnacle interface is simple. The Album view (Figure 2) is a place for loading video, still image, and audio files —the basic assets of your project which are collected into separate tab-selected folders before integrating them into your projects. There are three tabs:

1. Capture: Capture is simple and is where you import your video footage from DV camera or file for editing
2. Edit: Edit accesses the editing screen
3. Make Movie: The Make Movie tab is last and is used once you've finished the edit and are ready to burn your project to DVD, CD, Tape or File.

Studio 10's Album screen is where the



Fig. 1. The capture from Camcorder screen. When using a FireWire cable to connect the camera to the computer the on-screen mini controls control the camera — fast forward, fast back, play etc.

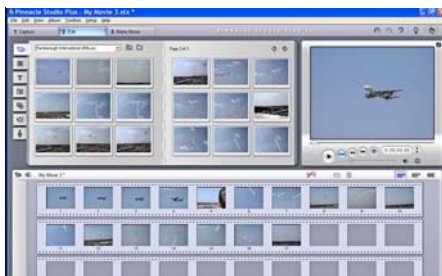


Fig 2. The Album view. The tabs along the top for "Capture," "Edit" and "Make Movie." Imported and detected clips top left and centre. The clip being previewed top right, and below the Storyboard with clips that have been dragged down for editing.

editing takes place and is shown above (Fig 2). The imported clips which Studio has automatically split using scene detection appear as thumbnails at the top left and centre; top right is the preview screen of the currently running clip and below is the Storyboard showing clips you've dragged down from the imported clips at the top.

Once you've finished videotaping and transferred footage to your computer, you're ready to start editing your work. The first step of this process involves splitting and trimming video into discrete clips. These edited clips are the building blocks for constructing your final video. Most modern video editing programs offer some type of automatic scene detection during capture. When importing DV footage from your DV camera, scene detection allows your computer to automatically split your footage into individual scenes, in particular Studio 10, automatically detects the breaks where you pressed the record button on your video camera.

The Album

Once you've done this Studio presents your imported clips in the Album (see Fig 2). The Album is an integral component of Studio's interface: The Album also contains tools for transitions, titles, and menu-effects. The Album isn't a true bin or library, like those found in some programs that saves the imported assets in a project file, Studio's project file only records the file locations of the assets used and accesses these as necessary to compile your video. The Album simply displays the files

available in the currently selected directory.

In my case I've imported eight minutes of footage of The Red Arrows and Airbus's massive A380 shot at the Farnborough International 2006 Air show late last month. The individual clips show where I pressed the camcorder record button. Had I imported a video .mpg file Studio would have detected large changes in colour or brightness in adjacent frames to determine where to split the video into usable clips. This method is not foolproof, but I'm more than happy to let Studio produce a large number of splits at fairly arbitrary locations. Always when you import your footage into Studio there will be many clips that include scenes you don't want as well as the ones you want to use in your video. Trimming this material down into usable clips needs a firm resolve; discard any obviously flawed parts and shots that simply make no visual sense. Don't aim for final quality at this point. The goal here is to discard the obviously bad shots and reduce the video to usable pieces.



Fig 3. Transitions dragged and dropped between clips to smooth the transition from one scene to the next.

Transitions

Transitions are effects placed between video clips to help smooth the transition from one scene to another. In films or on TV, for example, when the screen fades to black at the end of a dramatic scene, then fades back in from black to the next scene, it's a fade transition. When two scenes blend together for a moment before the second scene appears clearly, it's a dissolve as shown in Fig 3. The most frequent transition is a cut, which is actually the absence of a transition, or the instantaneous jump from the last frame of the first clip to the first frame of the second. Studio provides a large collection of transitions, most are useful, others very pretty to look at but not the sort of thing you'd use in everyday life — they're just too flashy. Try them by all means, but reflect for a moment, when did you last see such a transition being used, whether in a Hollywood movie or a TV program on the box?

Video Effects

Studio has two classes of video effects: curative effects, which fix underlying prob-

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lens with the video and artistic effects, which modify or enhance the footage.



Fig. 4. Using the Colour Correction filter.

Curative filters include brightness and colour adjustments, while artistic enhancements include the ability to convert your video to black and white so it looks like an



Fig 5. Create your own title. It's easy to create your own title by adding your own photo as a background (like my Red Arrows title above), inserting the text in various formats and colours, including "rolling" titles where the text rolls up or down the screen like the credits at the end of a film or a TV program.

old film, or create slow-motion or fast-motion effects.

Title Editor

Studio's Title Editor can quickly and easily produce attractive titles. For all video productions, DVD or otherwise, the Title Editor (Fig. 5 above) creates full-screen titles, positioned on the Video track, that introduce the movie or new sections, or show final credits. Plus you can create DVD menus and buttons, merging video editing and DVD authoring into one interface and simplifying DVD production immensely. The Title Editor also produces the menus needed to navigate through and around your DVD titles. The Title Editor can produce Overlay titles, positioned on the Title Overlay track, which display over your videos. These are useful for adding logos or descriptions to enhance the video.

Audio

Many viewers will tolerate grainy, postage-stamp-size video, but let the audio break once or twice, and satisfaction

quickly wanes. That's why streaming technologies from Apple, Microsoft, and Real Networks all prioritise the delivery of audio over video.

Studio offers three audio tracks:

1. Original audio
2. Narration
3. Background music.

There is also a tool for ripping audio CD tracks and recording narration. However, Studio's audio feature set is special in two respects. First it comes with SmartSound, which produces "themed" background music of any customisable length, there is also a collection of .wav files for special sound effects such as bells, animals, humans, music accompaniments and so forth, it's the same program Adobe includes with Premiere Pro, a professional video editor that costs hundreds of pounds more. If these sound effects are not to your liking,

the program makes it very easy to grab audio files from an audio CD or any audio files, you've installed on your hard drive. Also excellent is Studio's Volume tool, a real-time mixer that lets you customise audio volume on all tracks simultaneously. Together, these tools let you easily create and integrate professional-quality audio into your productions.

Creating Digital Files

When you click the Make Movie tab, (Fig. 6), Studio has nine options for creating digital files (AVI, DivX, iPOD Compatible, MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG-4, REAL Media, Sony PSP Compatible and Windows Media) for playback on your hard disk, copying to a CD-ROM or DVD, sending via e-mail or posting to a Web site. Choosing between these formats is simple; if outputting for disc-based playback on a domestic DVD player or CD-ROM distribution, choose MPEG, which with its excellent compression without losing detail, has largely supplanted AVI files as a distribution format. If posting your files to a Web site or sending via e-mail, use a lower quality and smaller file-size streaming format.

DVD Authoring

The problem with video is that it can seemingly take forever to create a 30-minute video from your four hours of holiday tapes, and then you still can't quickly find that delightful bit where little Sally and cousin Johnny were holding hands, watching Punch and Judy.

The beauty of DVD is that once you've created a DVD menu it's pretty much infinitely linkable, allowing you to find the most important scenes quickly. And, though you can dress your videos up as



Fig 6. Make Movie in progress.:

much as you like, you can also choose to break them into scenes (or let scene detection do the work for you) and create a menu with links to the good parts. It's a dream: simple, fast, and better than VHS quality, with tape-like playback simplicity. Just open up the drive and pop the disc in. With DVD recordable drives and media prices dropping every time you buy your daily newspaper, it's also temptingly inexpensive.

Conclusions

Without doubt Pinnacle Studio 10 TE is a vast improvement over the first incarnation of its predecessor (Studio 9). In early August prior to my review I visited Pinnacle's web support site and downloaded the latest free upgrade (a 48Mb download). I'd read on the Studio user forums that some users had problems with the earlier versions of Studio 10, but for me my first use of the program with the latest drivers went like a dream and left me feeling impressed. That being said there are beta drivers for a new patch to V 10.6 (90Mb download!) on Pinnacle's support site so any remaining problems are likely to be addressed when its released.

What I Like: Studio 9 is a relatively easy to use video editing program with a host of features that work in most circumstances. It comes with a multilingual "Quick Install Guide" to get you up and running, and an excellent and profusely illustrated 294-page manual. After my frustrating experience with Studio 9 a few years ago I was pleasantly surprised with Studio 10's performance. It worked much better than I expected on my short 8-minute long Red Arrows video project, which incidentally took around 45-minutes to edit, so I thoroughly recommend Studio 10 Plus Titanium Edition for its ease of use and extra (free) included content.

Pricing and Availability

From the usual high-street suppliers or online. Amazon.co.uk have it listed at £57 inc VAT and free delivery, with an upgrade from previous versions for £32 inc VAT.

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of 16:10 & 4:3 video formats without distortion, and Aspire ClearVision™ that dynamically enhances contrast and increases definition of even the smallest detail.

Aspire 5100

Featuring impressive entertainment capabilities, this dual-core notebook is based on AMD Turion 64 X2 Mobile Technology meaning it is ready to support tomorrow's 64-bit operating system and applications.

In addition to the excellent performance guaranteed by two processing cores, the Aspire 5100 series comes equipped with a bright 15.4" Widescreen TFT display with Acer CrystalBrite technology and native 16:10 aspect ratio and 16ms response time managed by the powerful ATI MOBILITY RADEON X1100 graphics card with up to 128MB of shared system memory.

Aspire 3100

Based on the Mobile AMD Sempron processor, the Acer Aspire 3100 takes full



Acer Aspire 3100 & 5100 share the same chassis/housing/screen.

advantage of AMD PowerNow! Technology by offering solid, dependable power for demanding home multimedia applications and high appeal for budget-sensitive users.

With up to 1GB of DDR2 memory, the Aspire 3100 series also offers great storage capability with a large hard disk drive (up to 100GB), DVD-Super Multi double layer and a 5-in-1 card reader for super-quick and easy

data transfer.

The Acer Aspire 3100 blends entertainment and style through the exclusive 'folio design'. Its bright 15.4" CrystalBrite Widescreen TFT display is managed on the PCI Express bus by the powerful ATI Radeon Xpress 1100 integrated 3D graphics, with up to 256 MB of shared system memory.

The Windows Vista Capable Acer Aspire 5100 and 3100 notebooks come with Genuine Windows XP Home Edition or Windows XP Professional x64 Edition preinstalled. Additional installed software includes Adobe Reader, Norton AntiVirus and CyberLink Power Producer together with Acer GridVista — an innovative software utility that can divide your screen into four different windows each associated with a different application and the Acer Arcade Software Suite.

Depending on specification, expect to pay around £600 inc VAT for the Aspire 5100 and £500 inc VAT for the Aspire 3100.

Detailed information on Acer products and a catalogue with prices in PDF format are available on Acer's website (www.acer.co.uk)

Book Review — “Microsoft Windows Vista Unveiled”

by Tony Hawes

Windows Vista Beta 2 doesn't come with a manual. There is useful help file, but that's it. Online it's possible to download from Microsoft's Vista web site a 300-page long Vista Beta 2 Product Guide in MS Word format (download is 60Mb). This covers many of the topics covered in the book under review but any on-line document is never as useful and easy to use as a well indexed printer manual. OK it can be printed out but the economics are not favourable when compared with a published book.

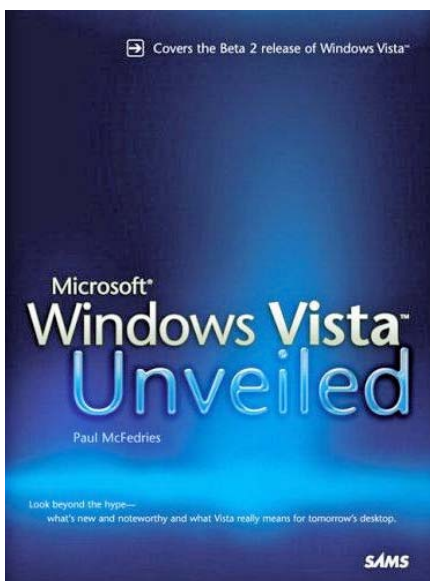
Microsoft Windows Vista Unveiled

This book aims to give the reader an in-depth insight into the new and updated features incorporated into Microsoft's new operating system, Microsoft Windows Vista. The author Paul McFedries is a very prolific author who writes about a range of subjects but seems to specialise in writing about Microsoft's operating systems and related applications.

300-pages long profusely illustrated with screen shots (albeit in black and white) and split into ten chapters the author aims to give the reader an in depth guide as to what is included and how to use Vista's many new features that are to be found in the Public Preview version (Beta 2).

Chapters cover the following subjects:

Chapter 1. An Overview of Windows Vista. In this chapter some of the basic concepts are covered, ranging from the development of Longhorn through to its naming as Vista, what's new under the hood, new programs and tools and how it will affect the user.



Chapter 2. Moving to Windows Vista. System requirements, upgrade, installation process including easy transfer tool. Administrator accounts.

Chapter 3. The Vista interface. Aero Glass theme, Flip and Flip 3D, Gadgets and the Windows sidebar.

Chapter 4. File system improvements, desktop searching with Windows Search, Grouping, Stacking and Filtering with Metadata. Shadow Copies and Transactional NTFS. Reverting to a previous version of a Volume, Folder or File.

Chapter 5. Vista Performance and Maintenance. Vista's performance improvements, stability improvements, new diagnostic tools, Windows Backup.

Chapter 6. Security Enhancements in Windows Vista. New Security Centre Features including Control Panel Security Settings, Vista's Bi-directional Firewall, Windows Defender AntiSpyware, IE7 security features, User Account Controls and User Privileges, Windows Mail Junk Filter.

Chapter 7. Mobile Computing in Windows Vista. Mobile PC Control Panel, Vista Mobility Centre, power management, presentation settings, Windows SideShow, Tablet PC Features.

Chapter 8. New Networking Features. Network Centre, common Network tasks, Windows Meeting Space, The Sync Centre.

Chapter 9. Digital Media in Windows Vista. Easier AutoPlay defaults, Windows Photo Gallery, what's new in Windows Media Player 11, new Media Centre features, digital audio in Windows Vista, DVD authoring.

Chapter 10. Windows Vista and Gaming. The Game Explorer, ESRB Game Ratings, Parental Controls for games, gaming and WinSAT, DirectX 10.

Index. Finally there is a very comprehensive 25-page long, easy to use index that allows in-depth searching.

The author's writing style is easy to understand, is not patronising and covers so much more about Vista that I found using the book an education. The index is a joy to use and makes it easy to find the section in the book where you need guidance. Recommended.

Order Details

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