

Speech Recognition the Next PC Innovation

The freshly-launched Windows Vista has the ability to read users' emails in order to familiarise itself with their commonly-used vocabulary – a facility that will ultimately allow users to 'talk' to their computers more easily. This speech recognition feature is being hailed as the beginning of new breakthrough in the computer industry.

Speech-controlled devices have hitherto been confined to the world of science-fiction, but the Vista feature brings the technology a step

closer to the user. Microsoft executive Jim Allchin is quoted as saying "You can dictate a letter to Vista, but it is not like the Vista really understands what you're saying. That will be the next revolutionary step." Machines that can actually understand human speech will represent the industry's next big innovation.

Among the many innovative features in Windows Vista is the ability to combine several photos of the same scene, taking the best elements from each to create one perfect image. Microsoft acknowledges the 'explosion in digital content' has driven this feature – an estimated 270 billion+ digital photos were created in 2006.

Indeed Vista offers amazing graphics capability – sure to appeal to PC gamers – as well as a quick search facility (partly to encourage users to adopt Microsoft's search tools rather than Google). Another notable feature is the 'aero' interface which helps keep navigation simple by presenting menus in 3D.

As you'd expect, there are a number of parental control filters built into the system, 11 in total, which range from subtle to severe: disabling access to the PC at certain times of day through to a complete block on downloading any material from the net.

In general, Windows Vista has been well received although there has been some concern over the UK price which, at £100 for the basic version, is almost twice the price of the same package in the US. Most new machines will come pre-installed with Vista and some experts are advising those of us who are happy with our current computers to hold back until the inevitable bugs are ironed out.



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