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A new, free service for readers

Beginning with the Jan. 29 issue of Brian's Buzz, I'll send you a very short, plain-text update to notify you if your ISP or corporate e-mail server starts "eating" newsletters that are sent to you. This free service is designed to help the many of you who've reported to me that your ISP or corporate server is deleting or "filtering out" some legitimate messages without informing you of this fact. In addition, if you've entered an alternate delivery address on your preferences page, I'll use your alternate address to send you an identical copy of the newsletter you missed.

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TOP STORY - info you need to make Windows work

New technology shines at CES

By Brian Livingston

LAS VEGAS - The International Consumer Electronics Show (CES), which assembles every January in this gambling and entertainment capital, has become one of the world's most important venues where new technology products are introduced.

With more than 110,000 registered attendees this year, CES has eclipsed the computer industry's own Comdex show, which is held here in November. Comdex officials have said their most-recent event attracted only 50,000 people. That's a fraction of the 225,000 who reportedly attended at Comdex's height in 1999, although its sponsors say today's non-crowds include a higher percentage of the big technology buyers that exhibitors covet.

CES, partly because of its sheer size, has now become an occasion for computer companies as well as audio and video entertainment giants to announce their new products. With an entire hall devoted to dealers who compete to see who can deliver the loudest car-audio systems, CES is a tough place to unearth serious new computer technology. But if you look carefully, high-tech gems can be found.

To give you an overview of where technology is heading - both in computers and in consumer electronics, two digital industries that are converging - I've summarized two of the many "Best of CES" lists that have come out. For my "Best of the Best," I've selected the awards announced by TechTV, a cable channel focused on computers, and CNET.com, a tech-review site. Please note that their awards don't require that a product is actually shipping (or even feasible), just that a working model of it was shown in public at CES.

TechTV's Best of CES Awards



In the computing category, TechTV's judges liked the **OQO Ultra Personal Computer** (left). The product, which the company says will ship in the fall of 2004, is only 4.9" x 3.4" x 0.9" (12.4 x 8.6 x 2.3 cm) but is expected to have a 1 GHz Transmeta Crusoe CPU and run Windows XP.

The uPC's 800 x 480 widescreen display and its tiny, thumb keyboard won't make it very effective as a desktop replacement, although it *will* dock to a full-size display, keyboard, and mouse.

But its forte is expected to be as a portable audio/video player. For a list price of around \$1,900, that's an expensive little TV/radio, but if your company needs super-small PCs, this might be just the ticket.

For its Best of Show prize, which takes the top honors across all 10 of TechTV's award categories, the cable



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Top 10 Bestselling Windows Books This Week

1. [Windows XP for Dummies](#), Sep 2001, List: \$21.99, Price: \$15.39
2. [MCSE Self-Paced Training Kit: Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Core Requirements, Exams 70-290, 70-291, 70-293, 70-294](#), Sept 2003, List: \$199.99, Price: \$139.99
3. [Mastering Windows Server 2003](#), Apr 2003, List: \$59.99, Price: \$41.99
4. [Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Administrator's Pocket Consultant](#), Mar 2003, List: \$29.99, Price: \$20.99
5. [Microsoft Windows XP Inside Out](#), Oct 2001, List: \$44.99, Price: \$31.49
6. [How to Do Everything With Your iPAQ Pocket PC](#), May 2002, List: \$24.99, Price: \$17.49
7. [Windows XP Hacks](#), Sep 2003, List: \$24.95, Price: \$17.47
8. [Windows XP Annoyances](#), Oct 2002, List: \$29.95, Price: \$20.97
9. [Microsoft Windows XP Plain & Simple](#), Oct 2001, List: \$19.99, Price: \$13.99
10. [Microsoft Windows 2000 Scripting Guide](#), Nov 2002, List: \$49.99, Price: \$34.99

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channel liked the **Denon NS-S100 Network Multimedia Server** (left). This device is one of an emerging category of devices - media servers - that accept almost any form of analog or digital content and stream it to other computers, TV, and audio players in a home or office.

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The NS-S100 has ports for cable and satellite tuners, two TV and two FM tuners, three analog inputs for VCRs and the like, two ports for coaxial and optical cables, and two for analog audio devices. The server streams any of these sources to Denon's NS-C200 client devices over wired Ethernet. The clients then feed the signals to ordinary TVs, stereos, and the like. This is another expensive setup, with the as-yet-unannounced list price of the server expected to be between \$3,000 and \$5,000, and each of the clients about \$1,000. But those figures should fall as competition in media servers heats up. If you need a way to deliver a variety of analog and digital media to various places in a building, this is the technology to get.

The other TechTV winners, most of which are in the field of audio/video entertainment, are:

- **Creative Nomad Zen Portable Media Center.** This \$500-600 device is based on Microsoft's Media Center interface and will provide 20, 30, or 40 GB of hard disk space for audio and video playback.
- **Sony Cyber-Shot DSC-T1 Camera.** A super-thin, 5-megapixel camera that captures VGA-resolution video at 30 frames per second, the DSC-T1 ships later this month for a list of \$550.
- **Alpine Electronics IVA-D300 Mobile Multimedia Station.** This flat-panel display has raised ridges so you can feel the edges of "keys" as you run your fingers across the screen. Designed for expensive car-audio control panels, it lists for \$1,500.
- **Z-Wave HomeSeer Starter Kit.** Control all the devices in a home or office remotely using any Web browser, with this affordable \$299 hardware/software combination.
- **Apex Digital ApeXTREME PC Game Player.** Drop a PC-based game into the ApeXTREME and you can immediately play it on an ordinary television. With six USB ports built in, plus Ethernet and a modem, and the ability to play DVDs and support DVD+/-R/RW discs, the \$399 unit aims to steal some interest from PlayStation2, Xbox, and GameCube.
- **LG Electronics TU-60SZ31 60" HDTV with Digital Video Recorder.** What would CES be without the introduction of new big-screen TVs? This rear-projection unit has 1,280x720 progressive-scan resolution, immune from burn-in, and a 120 GB hard drive that supports its DVR capabilities. Pricing will be an equally gigantic \$4,000 to \$6,000, but who's counting?
- **Meridian G68 Surround Processor.** For extreme high-end audiophiles, the G68 (\$9,000) packs a digital surround sound processor, a video switcher, and an AM/FM tuner into a single box rather than a tangle of cables. It also has Room Correction, which eliminates undesirable audio resonance.
- **DeCORP FlatWire Ready.** DeCORP's patented paper-thin cables are only 4 to 10 thousandths of an inch thick (0.1 to 0.25 mm), less than a business card. The company offers flat 15 and 20 amp power cables, Category 3 data/voice cables, CATV wire, and speaker wire that can be affixed to a wall and painted over to virtually disappear without cutting into any walls.

For more information on the above prize-winners (with links to each vendor), see TechTV's [Best of CES 2004](#) page.

CNET's Best of CES Awards



The biggest winner related to Windows in CNET's top 10 was the **Sony Vaio X505** ultra-ultralight laptop. It's shown at right in the photo, with the Vaio TR2 subnotebook on the left for comparison. Weighing only 1.7 pounds (0.77 kg) and a mere 0.86" (22 mm) at its thickest point, the X is for Extreme. CNET calls it "the most compelling notebook at the show." It's currently selling only in Japan or at Dynamism.com, a specialty import site that offers it for \$2999 after rebate.

Another Windows-related winner was the **Creative Zen Portable Media Center**, the only item on the CNET list that also won one of TechTV's awards (see that list, above). This portable media player was held up as cool new technology by Bill Gates during his CES keynote address.

The other items on CNET's list are more audio-video entertainment oriented than computer oriented, but any one of CNET's winners might be the perfect thing for an unanswered need in your office or home:

- **Sharp Aquos LC-45GD1U.** At 45" diagonal (114 cm), this is the largest LCD flat-panel TV on the planet, CNET says. The unit's 1920 x 1080 display will allow HDTV programming to be displayed at its native resolution and enable important corporate PowerPoint presentations to look, well, important. The monitor's big-ticket price tag is expected to be double that of a plasma screen of similar size, however.
- **DirectTV HD DVR.** With a 250 GB hard drive, two satellite tuners, and two ATSC (terrestrial) tuners, this TiVo-driven unit will be able to record two high-definition programs at once.
- **Samsung HT-DB390 Home Theater System.** Using Bluetooth, the rear amplifier gets its audio signals without any wires running across the room from the main receiver. About \$500, it's expected to be available within a couple of months.
- **Panasonic PV-GS200 Digital Camcorder.** The most portable three-CCD camera, according to CNET. It's expected to list for under \$1,000.
- **Panasonic SV-AV50 D-Snap Multi AV Device.** Like a Swiss Army knife of multimedia, this slick little baby weighs only 4 ounces (0.55 kg) but is a camcorder and camera with 2-megapixel resolution, an MP3 and AAC player, a voice recorder, and a VCR with a 2" (5 cm) foldout screen.

• **Roku SoundBridge.** A digital audio receiver that connects to a PC using Ethernet or 802.11b. Models list for \$250 to \$500.

• **Archos Gmini 220.** A tough competitor to the new Apple iPod Mini, the \$350 Gmini has a 20 GB hard drive and can archive digital files onto CompactFlash cards without a PC.

• **Toshiba 0.85-Inch (2.16 cm) Hard Drive.** This runs head-on against Hitachi's 1-inch 2 GB and 4 GB drives, but should make waves because even the small difference of 0.15 inches can be important in the development of tiny devices.

For more views on CES's best - and all the rest - visit CNET's [CES 2004 report](#).

I myself collected lots of background information on Windows-related stuff at CES - including some unannounced products that I can't talk about yet. I'll clue you in on these in future issues of Brian's Buzz. In the meantime, to send me more information about the above topics, or to send me a tip on any other subject, visit BriansBuzz.com/w/contact.

RECOMMENDED READING - my book reviews of tech topics



Introducing WinFX

WinFX is a set of development tools and methods for, among other things, the forthcoming operating system code-named Longhorn (Windows 2005 or 2006). Microsoft collectively refers to this technology as "managed code." It's what more than 7,000 Windows programmers were on hand to learn about last October at Microsoft's Professional Developers Conference in Los Angeles. (See the [Nov. 6](#) issue of Brian's Buzz for a report.)

The author of *Introducing WinFX*, Brent Rector, is a writer for Microsoft Systems Journal, Windows Developers' Magazine, and others, and takes you on a tour inside managed code. For example, XAML (Extensible Application Markup Language) allows developers to write the logic of a program while graphic designers separately define the appearance and placement of the program's icons, buttons, and other presentation-level stuff. You may not be 100% committed to Microsoft's software direction, but if your company develops programs to run on Windows, you should at least know the basics about the subjects covered in this book. [More info](#)

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HERE'S A TIP - you'll get a better newsletter if you choose the paid version

You're reading the free version of Brian's Buzz on Windows

Subscribers to the paid version receive additional information in each issue. Some of the extras this week are:

- **How to recover deleted photos from a digital camera.** A reader provides a simple but clever save for those irreplaceable memories.
- **How to rename multiple files in Windows XP.** It's easy but not necessarily obvious.
- **A free way to enable and tune ClearType.** If you haven't "tuned" ClearType for the best display on your flat-panel screens, one reader recommends a series of free Web pages to do it for you.
- **Microsoft renews support for Windows 98 and Me.** Based on user outcries, the Redmond giant has made a rare about-face and decided to continue the support that was scheduled to end for these operating systems. Find out how this will affect you.
- **Critical ISA Server patch.** A flaw Microsoft rates as "critical" affects Voice Over IP and other functions of ISA Server.
- **Data Access Component and Exchange Server.** New patches affect both of these aspects of Microsoft Windows.

Readers who upgrade to the paid version receive these stories and others immediately. In addition, you'll receive the next 52 weeks of the paid version of Brian's Buzz (24 issues) *and* complete access to all past paid content.

The amount you choose to contribute in order to upgrade is determined by you. If you make a contribution before Jan. 28, 2004, you'll be sent the full, paid version of this week's newsletter, as well as the other benefits. To upgrade to the paid version, please visit BriansBuzz.com/w/upgrade. Thanks in advance.

BRIAN'S BOOKSHELF - new e-books from the author



Spam-Proof Your E-Mail Address

This 27-page e-book in PDF format gives you step-by-step instructions that can eliminate 97% of the spam that would otherwise clog your e-mail account. You could call it "Brian Livingston's Spam Secrets." The book is the result of months of experiments and tests I conducted, and I now receive little or no spam to the addresses I used as guinea pigs. These tests show that you can actually reduce your volume of spam to practically nothing, not just battle an unstoppable and ever-growing flood. The methods I describe work with Windows, Apple, and Linux and don't require any filters or block lists - but you can use those in addition to the book's techniques, if you wish. [More info](#)

WACKY WEB WEEK - playing for you the Internet's greatest bits



Mapping Peer-to-Peer Networks

Much of what happens on the Internet is invisible to the naked eye, so it's nice to see a site that reveals the hidden structure to us visually.

The picture at left is a tiny fragment of a visualization by Minitasking.com, a site in Berlin, Germany, that's run by an artistic research and design group called Schoenerwissen (literally,



"beautiful knowledge"). Depicted in this fragment is the number of people at Microsoft, IBM, Sun, and elsewhere who are using the Gnutella peer-to-peer network to share songs by the alt-rock group The Cranberries.

I found this map and numerous other fantastic visualizations of the Web at Cybergeography.org/maps, a "Map of the Month" page run by the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis at University College London. The visualization I show here is from the most recent example on that page, "Mapping Peer-to-Peer Networks," but you'll also enjoy "Mapping How People Use a Web Site" and "Network Weather Maps." My thanks to reader Keith Kingsland for his help with this topic. [More info](#)

CLOSING REMARKS - the best is yet to come

In this section, I provide links to columns I've published recently that you might find useful.

eWeek: A Giant Leap for VOIP

A year from now, your company could be making long-distance telephone calls without paying per-minute charges to any telephone carrier. The reason? A little-known telecommunications service that has quietly begun operating in New York. [More info](#)

Datamation: Request Permission to Spam, Sir!

If you thought spam was a big problem last year, wait until you see the spam problems you'll have now that Congress has passed the CAN-SPAM Act. The law's new conditions for mass e-mail give companies of all sizes a reasons to examine the new provisions carefully. [More info](#)

BRIAN'S BUZZ ON WINDOWS is edited by Brian Livingston, co-author of [Windows 2000 Secrets](#), [Windows Me Secrets](#), and eight other books. Research Director: Vickie Stevens. Program Consultants: Sean Downing and Ben Livingston (no relation). The newsletter is published every other Thursday (except for breaks in August and December) by Secrets Pro LLC, 300 Queen Anne Ave. N. #456, Seattle, WA 98109 USA. Vendors, please send no unsolicited packages to this address (readers' letters are fine). Copyright © 2004 by Secrets Pro LLC.

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