A Hard-Core Computer Enthusiast's View of Windows Vista

This book is designed to be like no other Windows Vista book you've seen. Some books try to cover every feature in Windows Vista, including often-rewarmed leftovers such as Paint and WordPad that haven't been exciting since— ever? Others are aimed at explaining basic features to technology newcomers. There's nothing wrong with books like these (and I've helped create a few of them as a contributing writer and technical reviewer). However, if you're an experienced Windows user, you're looking for something more. You're looking for a book that looks under Vista's hood, kicks the tires, and test drives the new and different features in Windows Vista.

In other words, *Maximum PC Guide to Microsoft Windows Vista Exposed* is a member of that all-too-rare class of technology books: a critical examination from a veteran technology enthusiast without an axe to grind. Like the magazine it's patterned after, this book is designed to tell the truth about Windows Vista. What features work? Which ones need work? Which features make your technology life easier? Which ones make it harder? You'll find out here.

Unlike many Windows Vista books, this one is based on actual production Windows Vista editions. That's important, because some Windows Vista features and installation methods were not known until retail product was available. This book uses the same Windows Vista that you can buy, so you know the issues, solutions, and workarounds discussed apply to your situation.

Whether you are already using Windows Vista, trying to decide whether to send in a Vista upgrade coupon, buying an upgrade version for your existing PC, or planning a computer purchase for yourself or your company, this book will help you choose the right Vista edition and get the most out of it.

How This Book Is Organized

This book contains 15 chapters, divided into four sections. Sure, you *can* read it cover to cover—and if you're still on the fence about Windows Vista (or if you want to stroke this author's ego), you should. But, if you're already using Windows Vista, make the most of this book by jumping directly into the sections that answer your most burning questions:

♦ What makes Windows Vista different? Better? And which Windows Vista edition is right for me? See Part I, "Introducing Windows Vista," for the answers.

♦ What's the best way to get started with Windows Vista? Discover how to install it, configure it, and use it to manage files, hardware, and contacts in Part II, "Getting to Work with Vista."

♦ What's new in media and gaming? What's happening with networking? It's time for Part III, "Windows Vista at Play: Entertainment, Internet, and Networking."

♦ How can I protect my Windows Vista system, safeguard the data it contains, and fix problems? Part IV, "Keeping Windows Vista Safe with Backup and Troubleshooting Tools," has the answers you need.

Special Features

If this book reminds you of a very large special edition of *Maximum PC*, the magazine, there's a good reason: It's designed to read like it! We've added lots of special features to make your reading enjoyable, useful, and on-task:

♦ Lots of figures, including annotated and overlapping figures, help you discover Windows Vista's most significant new features.

♦ Tips, Cautions, and Notes are sprinkled liberally throughout the text to help you find shortcuts, watch out for potential problems, and learn more about a particular topic.

♦ Sidebars provide focused discussions of topics that might not appeal to every reader, but provide extra information that may be essential to you.

♦ Feature ratings, using the venerable thumbs up/thumbs down method (hint: it's a lot older than that movie-rating TV show), help you discover what works—and what needs work.