

Active Blog
Vista

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Long list of Vista bugs that will keep me off Vista

By George Ou

After a grueling week of intense Vista RTM testing, I still can't get Vista stable on my primary computer yet even though I've swapped out all the bad memory. This same PC has worked with and continues to work with Windows XP just fine. Even with the good memory in the computer, it locks up every hour or two and forces me to hard shut the system to reboot. Apparently I'm not the only one with stability issues since reader DAC-Tech who's a Systems Engineer with a big company was having issues with his brand new ASUS based motherboard.

I've informed Microsoft almost a week ago of this along with all the other nagging issues I list below and I have not heard back from them. If Microsoft wants to clarify anything in this blog they're always welcome to do so and I'll put their responses on this blog. My other server that I built out of scrap parts laying around is stable but there are still too many issues for me to want to use Vista. The way it stands now, I can't or won't use Vista on any of my computers full time until these serious issues have been fixed. Here is a list of grievances that I tested on my stable Vista system and some of these bugs were pointed out in my RC2 review.

DVD playback in Windows Medial Player or Media Center will only play in interlaced mode making it VERY ugly.

If I replace the MPEG-2 DVD codec with K-Lite Cinepack codec, the interlacing issue goes away but it conflicts with Media Player's translucent controls and delivers low frame rates with slow screen paints that are especially noticeable when the entire screen on the video moves. Windows Media Player Classic will work smoothly though it forces Aero to shut down temporarily and it can only play one file at a time making in impractical for full DVD movie playback. I'm not sure if the slow playback has something to do with the inability of an old codec to paint an Aero 3D screen efficiently or not but I wouldn't have this problem if the built-in Microsoft DVD codec would de-interlace the video properly.

Media Player screws up captured 1080i HDV playback by playing it in a tiny window until you click on the movie to force it to play back at 50% size. While that's not a problem with a mouse, not sure how you would deal with this on an HTPC. Not everyone will know they're suppose to click on the movie to make it play back at 50% size.

1080i full screen playback in general is a problem even with content captured digitally from OTA Over-the-air HDTV broadcasts. The exact same hardware (NVIDIA GeForce 6200 or ATI 9600 Pro with a Pentium 4 2.4 GHz with hyperthreading) that works fine in Windows XP on HD playback at full screen but NOT in Windows Vista. Even though this isn't Microsoft software, it doesn't change the fact that I can't use this server as an HTPC for my living room big screen HDTV.

Media Center crashes when library browsing some folders which is totally unacceptable. This might be caused with a bad interaction with the DivX and XVID CODECs from the K-Lite mega pack, but it doesn't change the fact that I still need to be able to play those videos. Media Center can't play DVD folder rips on the Hard Disk Drive which makes it worthless for DVD library playback. I can't believe this isn't supported. What's the point of having an online DVD



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library? [UPDATE 5:21 PM - The explanation I was given was that there are DRM implications in playing back ripped DVDs. I guess this means Media Center is crippled to the point of being useless until I can find a hack to play ripped DVDs. I own the DVDs, I just don't want to have to swap disks. This is like not being able to play ripped MP3s of CDs you own. Last time I checked Zune lets you play MP3s.]

Movie Maker HDV preview is shifted downwards until you toggle widescreen preview. Minor bug but I mentioned something about this in my RC2 review.

Movie Maker only lets you retrieve entire HDV tape, not selections like the old Movie Maker in Windows XP. These last two issues I warned about in my RC2 review and they've not been fixed yet.

The "open with" feature is gone. When I use to right click on a data file, you can click "open with" and choose a new program to open the file or pick something on the list of applications you've used before. That list of recent applications for opening data files is gone which is very frustrating.

Power save settings are hidden in a deep mess. Tweaking the settings don't always stick. Default hybrid sleep mode (explanation here) is very annoying if system crashes because on the next reboot, it takes minutes to reload a gigabyte from hard drive and it stays that way until you shut down properly shut down Vista. I had to struggle with the UI to turn off this feature and change the power button in the start button to off mode and to get my settings to stick. The fact that my main PC is crashing didn't help the situation, but it would be nice if MS could ask if you want to boot normally instead of trying to recover the previous state. For most desktops, going from 150 watts idle to 145 watts in sleep mode just doesn't make any sense. I have yet to find a Desktop PC that can go in to sleep state level 3 which only uses a few watts of power.

Minor changes in hardware will sometimes prevent Vista from booting up. So much for the great driver independent imaging model I'd been hearing about though I haven't tested Vista deployment tools yet. I had read that Vista was suppose to be able to adapt to different hardware but maybe I just haven't found that feature yet.

IE7 embedded Windows Media Video playback won't support anamorphic video and forces the video to play in 4:3 mode as oppose to widescreen 16:9 mode. I had complained about this to Microsoft two months ago under Vista RC2. Example here.

While I've read from Jim Allchin that audio features have improved and Polycom is telling me about the new multiple Mic feature that allows you to pin point voice out of a noisy room, some things seem to be missing that shouldn't be missing. Windows XP allowed you to set separate Audio and Voice input/output preferences. That means voice applications like Skype will use one set of speakers and microphone while games will spit out sound from a different sound card. That feature is now gone and you only get to set one set of record and playback preferences. Maybe this is less confusing for beginner users but it's an unacceptable dumbing down of Vista. [UPDATE 5:21 PM - Vista adds the ability to set sound levels per application. But the ability to have two audio profiles where hardware is defined is gone. I'm trying to clarify if this means that applications in Vista can also have a custom hardware profile or not.]

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That's all I can think of now though I'm sure there were other grievances.

[UPDATE 5:21 AM - Forgot to mention that web-based media players like Flash used in YouTube or certain news sites has poor frame rate performance even on really good hardware. If I right click somewhere on the flash box the video will pause for a split second. Any heavy IO activity on the hard drive will also cause the video to skip. Video card is the ATI x800 unlocked to x850.] Does this mean I don't like Vista? No there are still security features like IE7 Protected Mode and UAC which beats having to log out and back in to do any administrative tasks. I really want to make Vista work but these types of serious bugs simply means that Vista RTM isn't ready yet. At this point in time I'm going to give up on using Vista as my primary operating system and wait for fixes on at least most of these problems to go away

If you require additional information or assistance with this item, please give us a call.