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Digital Focus

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Dave Johnson

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In This Issue:

*** Feature: Digital Photo Goodies in Vista ***

Five years ago, around the time that Digital Focus launched, Windows XP appeared on the scene and replaced Windows 98, Me, and 2000 on many desktops. Windows XP didn't have many features especially for digital photographers, but that's not too surprising. Digital photography was still in its infancy in those days.

Today, digital photography is all grown up, and Windows Vista--Microsoft's new operating system--has been designed accordingly.

This week I'm giving you a peek at the bits of Vista that cater to photographers like you and me. (Full disclosure: I work as a user assistance writer for Microsoft.)

By the way, Vista is slated for release within the next few months; read "Vista Delivery Date to PC Manufacturers Slips" for the latest estimate:

[IDG News Service report](#)

Getting Photos Onto Your Computer

Let's start at the beginning. Downloading photos from your digital camera will be a lot easier in Vista thanks to what amounts to a two-click photo-import wizard. Here's how it works: Plug your camera or memory card into your PC, and wait a moment for AutoPlay to appear. Click Import Pictures using Windows, and you'll see the Importing Pictures and Videos dialog box:

[Importing Pictures and Videos](#)

What's that "tag" field, you ask? Well, if you want to, you can add descriptive keywords to your digital images, just like in Flickr, Adobe Photo Album, and a host of other tag-loving apps. When you import your files, the same tag is applied to all the photos in the batch, but you can fine-tune your tags later.

Click Import, and all your photos are automatically copied to a new subfolder in the Pictures folder. You can also click a check box to delete all the pictures from your camera when the import process is complete.

More goodies: If your camera has an orientation sensor (so it knows how you were holding the camera when you took the pictures), Vista automatically rotates your photos as they're imported. And even if you don't delete the photos from your camera, Vista is smart enough not to import the same images more than once.

Finding Your Photos

After you import your photos, Vista automatically opens Windows Photo Gallery, a photo organizer similar to Microsoft Digital Image Suite. Here's what the interface looks like:

[Windows Photo Gallery](#)

Here you can see the value of tags--you can add any number of tags to your photos, and then quickly organize and find photos using these descriptions. One way to search by tag is to type one into the search box at the top of the screen. When you do that, the main window automatically filters the view to display items that have that word in the file name, tag, or caption. Alternately, you can click a tag in the list on the left side of the screen--instantly, you'll only see the files with that tag. You can also nest tags in a hierarchy, so it's easy to see all your family photos or just shots of your cat:

[Tag list](#)

You might like the idea of tagging your photos, but dread the thought of all that typing. Well, fear not: You need only create a tag once. From then on, just drag pictures from the main window onto the tag in the list. In fact, you can select dozens or hundreds of pictures at once and drag them to the relevant tags. I have about 10,000 pictures on my hard disk, and I managed to get all my photos tagged in one weekend. This is huge. I've been advocating the use of metadata like tags and keywords to organize photos for years, and now this ability is about to be baked right in to the Windows operating system, instead of slapped on top with a third-party photo organizer. How cool is that?

There's a lot more under the hood. Tune in next week for a peek at the remaining digital photo features, including a real photo editor.

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