

Adventures with Vista

Today I bought two new servers from Currys. They are Acer something or others with triple core Phenoms which I believe is some form of barbiturate, triple gigs which are things which our band does not do often enough and a stonking great disk and screen all for 400 quid. Splendid stuff. Unfortunately, they had something odd on them called Windows Vista Home Premium Sliced or somesuch. As I carried the boxes into the car park with a sales person hanging on to each leg begging me to buy Norton something or other 'to make it secure', I tried to explain that I was going to add the best security add-on of all – Linux – for the simple reason that trying to understand anything to do with Vista is beyond any wit I have.

For a fleeting moment last week after grappling with a Vista laptop in our office, I thought I understood Vista Access Control. The documentation appeared to confirm this but it didn't do what I expected. It never does what I expect. For those of you who are still with XP, Vista Access Control is there to prevent legitimate users using their machine whilst continuing to allow scammers and so on, back doors into your machine.

I discovered several things. First, the “run in XP compatibility mode” simply does not work but it makes you feel slightly better. Second, the machine is sensitive to being shouted at. If I right-click and “run as administrator”, it works slightly more often than if I shout at it first. I had not realised that advances in Artificial Intelligence had reached the point of being able to produce a machine that sulked.

And back to the servers. I unpacked them and booted. In spite of trying to stop me, I showed Vista no mercy and finally sneaked past it into the BIOS to give my DVD drive precedence on boot and stuck a version of Linux on each one. They have behaved impeccably, are extraordinarily fast, don't get in the way and I'm delighted with them.

I'm told that Windows 7 (I think) is much better. Well, it could hardly be worse.