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By:

[Microsoft Plays Russian Roulette with Longhorn](#)

With a 5 bullet loaded gun

Every time I hear another announcement on what Longhorn will implement or what new tricks it will learn to perform, I have the feeling that I'm watching a show where the magician pulls rabbits out of a hat. Microsoft's strategy of releasing bits of information on Longhorn is understandable considering that December 2006 is far away and that hardware producers, software developers and users must be kept alert. This strategy's downside is that at some point Microsoft might give the impression of being unsure of what exactly is expecting from the software. If you read all the announcements made by Microsoft so far regarding the functionalities implemented in Longhorn, you'll start thinking that somewhere in one of the laboratories from Redmond, someone is constantly looking for the coolest technologies on the market and is integrating them in the next operating system, whether they were in the plan or not. Microsoft's ambition of developing an operating system that will last as long as Windows XP and even more is normal, but the way in which it will achieve this is somehow uncertain. .RAW format support, a new graphics interface with 3D effects, a new search engine similar to Apple's Spotlight, RSS integration, support for 64 bit processors, a better integration with the notebooks' hardware, integrated Web service, a new Windows Media Player, these are just a few things Microsoft agreed to admit about the Longhorn operating system. With Apple's Mac OS X, which Longhorn owes a lot, and with Google, which is clearly doing a better job at desktop and Web searches, Microsoft is starting to look like a roulette player that is gambling on all numbers and colors hoping that he will win the big pot. If the new graphics interface is not successful (the old one is also integrated, just in case), that's ok, maybe RSS and Simple List Extension will. No one will use the integrated security features? Maybe they will appreciate Windows Media Player 11. All the features announced by Microsoft are extremely popular and demanded right now. The RAW format is starting to be adopted by more and more photographers, Longhorn announces the support for it. Notebook sales exceed desktop ones, Longhorn promises access to certain functions, such as music playback and calendar without having to turn the notebook on. Google and other online advertisement providers study the possibility of including ads in RSS feeds, and two weeks after that Microsoft promises that Longhorn will be best friend with RSS, although Internet Explorer doesn't even know the concept. Microsoft has made the right decisions with these features, but Longhorn is taking too long to develop and I'm not sure it will be able to handle them properly. I might be mistaken of course and perhaps Microsoft has a very good plan about all these, but from the speeches held by company officials at conferences one would think otherwise. I am not questioning Microsoft's ability to integrate all these technological wonders into Longhorn, but at what cost? Stability? Hardware requirements? Price? Hard to say! Microsoft is facing a tremendous challenge: how to make an operating system that provides all the features a user wants without having to buy a server to be able to run it. The amount of resources required has always been Windows's problem and the fact that Longhorn already requires 512 MB of RAM is a clear indication that one will probably need 1GB of RAM to be able to run Longhorn in proper conditions. Why is Microsoft now in the position of gambling everything on Longhorn? Today's IT world is nothing like the '90s, when Microsoft supremacy was starting to shape and although there is someone up there who is aware of the market trends, he somehow fails to see the whole image. Microsoft is actually paying now the price for all its precautions. The company from Redmond was never an innovator. Each time a new technology appeared, Microsoft preferred to wait and only after the practical value was proven, Microsoft went ahead and bought it, or created something similar under license. For years now Microsoft has ignored

the fact that PC is no longer just an interface between user and applications, but a tool used to access sites, online games, chats, e-mails, Web services and many other online resources. By employing practices which we will not discuss here, Internet Explorer has become the main browser, but this didn't mean Microsoft learned to innovate. Although the competition coming from Mac OS X and Linux distributions no longer worries the software giant, its own products might become Longhorn's worst enemies. Windows XP has been doing its job for quite some time now, and Microsoft will have serious problems convincing companies and users to switch to Longhorn, which will obviously be more expensive and with more demanding requirements. Windows XP is already complex enough, but considering what is known about Longhorn so far, Microsoft is planning an operating system that will be exponentially more complex than XP. And as we know, the more complex a machinery is, the higher the likelihood of one component to break down and cause the whole equipment to malfunction. Microsoft has already announced that it will give up on some components originally included in Longhorn, so to me it's pretty obvious they are trying to implement more than the system is able to handle. We will see what Longhorn is capable of once the first beta versions of the operating system are released, but Microsoft's involvement in several collateral projects- Windows OneCare for the PCs security, Metro (a replacement for PDF), Acrylic (an alternative to Photoshop), the spam offensive (MSN PostMaster and Sender ID) -point out that Longhorn is not the main project. In a few weeks we will probably have the first beta Longhorn. And I sincerely wish it won't be a big disappointment. **SPECIAL RELATED LINKS**[Standing-up for Longhorn](#)