xp advisor

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Media mogul

Windows Media Player has simplified tricky tasks like burning your own CDs and editing video. Now the Media Center edition of XP looks set to take multimedia to the next level

One of the most engaging features of Windows XP, aside from its reassuring warm blue livery and curvy edges, is Windows Media Player. An MP3 and CD player with built-in web radio tuner and basic image and video-clip editor WMP has come a long way since it first appeared in Windows 98.

WMP 9.0, due for release shortly, introduces some useful new features, which we'll investigate over the next few pages. We also have customisation and file management tips to help bring order to your PC-based audio collection, ensuring you never again lose track of a favourite album or ruin a CD by recording in a format your hi-fi can't read.

While you're exploring the delights of this software-based entertainment centre and rediscovering just how good radio can be thanks to its reincarnation as a web-based medium, Microsoft is already preparing to wow you with even more home entertainment goodies. It's created a special version of Windows XP called the

Media Center edition which will add DVD playback and the ability to record and pause live TV broadcasts, much like Tivo and other hard disk recorders.

Microsoft says existing Windows XP users will be able to upgrade as long as they've installed XP service pack 1, but

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it really wants us to buy into its fantasy of the PC as the heart of your home entertainment setup and purchase it with a dedicated multimedia PC. So you won't find Windows XP Media Center edition available as a separate OS option.

Non-XP users who fancy these arresting-sounding features should look out for PCs launching from around February in the UK that come with Media Center edition preinstalled. ■

Favourite feature

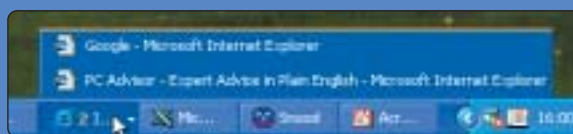## Tiling programs on the Taskbar

The more programs you open, the more crowded your Taskbar becomes. XP has a nifty way of grouping multiple open folders and Explorer windows so they take up just one space on the Taskbar, leaving more room for other aplications.

↑ Right-click the Start menu and choose Properties

↑ Put a tick in the checkbox marked 'Group similar Taskbar buttons' then click ok

↑ When the Taskbar gets crowded, buttons for multiple windows appear with a number beside them. Click on a Taskbar item in the usual way for a cascading list of minimised windows; right-click to close them all