

New Kid on the Block



Employee for Japanese electronics giant Matsushita Electric Industrial, Kazumi Tamamoto, displays the world's first 3CCD DVD camcorder, "DVD digicam VDR-D300", equipped with three 800,000-pixel CCDs on an image sensor and a 45.6 - 456mm/F1.8 - 2.8 zoom lens with image stabilizing system, enabling it to record 120 minutes of digital video images on an 8cm diameter DVD disk, at the company's showroom in Tokyo. Matsushita will put it on the market 01 February with an estimated price of 1,040 USD.

The Importance of Being Pretty

Internet users can give websites a thumbs-up or thumbs-down in less than the blink of an eye, according to a study by Canadian researchers. In just a brief one-twentieth of a second -- less than half the time it takes to blink -- people make aesthetic judgments that influence the rest of their experience with an Internet site. The author said the findings had powerful implications for the field of website design. "It really is just a physiological response," said Gitte Lindgaard. "So web designers have to make sure they're not offending users visually. "If the first impression is negative, you'll probably drive people off." In the study, researchers discovered that people could rate the visual appeal of sites after seeing them for just one-twentieth of a second. These judgments were not random, the researchers found -- sites that were flashed up twice were given similar ratings both times. But the results did not show how to win a positive reaction from users, said Lindgaard, a psychology professor at Carleton University in Ottawa. "When we looked at the websites that we tested, there is really nothing there that tells us what leads to dislike or to like." And while further research may offer more clues, she said the vagaries of personal taste would always be a limiting factor. "If design were reducible to a set of principles, wouldn't we find an awful lot of similar houses, gardens, cars, rooms?" said Lindgaard. "You'd have no variety."

Johns Hopkins University scientists are studying how we see objects in hopes of eventually developing neural prostheses. The question of how the brain sees, recognises and understands objects is one of the most intriguing in neuroscience, associate professor and paper co-author Charles Connor said. Vision doesn't happen in the eye, said Connor. It happens at multiple processing stages in the brain. Connor said the ability to see is one of the great evolutionary accomplishments of the human brain and understanding the process may lead to the development of neural prostheses -- artificial replacements for lost sensory, motor and perhaps even memory and cognitive functions. A team from the university's Zanvyl Krieger Mind/Brain Institute described their research in detail in a recent journal.

Seeing doesn't happen in the eye

