Sony to Build Wearable PC

Wired News Report

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Sony has signed on to manufacture a wearable computer, the Mobile Assistant IV, according to the device's developer, Virginia-based Xybernaut.

Intended for workers in the airline, manufacturing, and medical industries, the Mobile Assistant is speech activated and uses head-mounted displays for hands-free access to networked company information.

The unit is based on Intel's low-power-consumption "Tillamock" chip, a Pentium 233 MMX mobile processor that incorporates a high-capacity internal hard disk. Docking and communications abilities are also built into the device; manufacturing should begin this summer.

Sony is also reported to have just released the newest model of its "Glasstron" eyeglass-style, head-mounted display in Japan. At 150 grams, the US$580 PLM-A55 is half the weight of an earlier model and uses two 0.7-inch LCDs with 180,000 pixels each.

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Self-steering system guides car down any road: Next month an Italian research team will demonstrate the Argo, a self-guided prototype vehicle that will reportedly drive itself through Italy using an on-board computer.

Researchers say the car's electronic intelligence can determine its relative position in the driving lane, "extract" the geometry of the road, and locate upcoming obstacles. The car was developed at the University of Parma and overseen by the Italian National Research Council.

According to the university, the computer processes images acquired by a stereo vision system via windshield-mounted cameras.

The results control an electric motor mounted on the steering column. The visual processing system obviates the need for coordination with a road-based infrastructure, the university says. The researchers hope to show that the system's low-cost general purpose hardware can be used to safely drive a vehicle under different road and environmental conditions.

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