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Sony Unleashes Latest Version of Its Robot Dog

by Steven Hopstaken

Sit, AIBO, that's a good robot!

Sony has announced the latest addition to its entertainment robot family, the ERS-7, with new technology that makes the robo-mutt more lifelike, communicative and entertaining than ever.



The hound's onboard memory enables it to retain the 'personality' that it will develop over its lifecycle, and an improved design has refined its looks to give it a wider variety of emotions.

The company claims that, in autonomous mode, the dog can recognize its owner's face and voice as well as locate its energy station to charge itself.



AIBO® is Sony's Entertainment Robot. The name AIBO® is derived from the words "A. I." (Artificial Intelligence), and roBOt. Also, in Japanese, "aibo" means "companion" or "pal".

The ERS-7 is the latest AIBO®, a newly-developed, highly evolved, comprehensive product offering that provides the greatest degree of autonomous behavior and functionality yet to be achieved by Sony robotic engineers. It is supplied with a full range of accessories that allows for both the joys of raising a robotic pet alternative, as well as the satisfaction of useful functionality.

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"We've doubled AIBO's onboard memory and increased processor speed to 576MHz," said Sony engineer, John Deuir. "We have improved his overall design, including enhanced visual pattern recognition, organic touch-sensor technology, sound quality and motor/gear noise reduction."

But one of the most exciting additions is wireless LAN connectivity.

"Anyone with a computer with broadband access to the internet and a standard WiFi connection (IEEE 802.11b) can issue commands remotely to the ERS-7," said Deuir. "For example, you can remotely view pictures the ERS-7 takes or send e-mail commands to have the ERS-7 play pre-recorded messages and songs to others at home."

Deuir also added that the PC-based AIBO Custom Manager software (sold separately) will allow you to customize your ERS-7. For example, the start-up sound can be changed and game modes can be added.

In autonomous mode, the ERS-7 walks more fluidly, plays soccer with its Pink Ball, plays with its AIBOne, sits, lies down, rights itself, and even self-charges. The ERS-7 also uses its newly developed Illume-Face, tail, ears, lights, and MIDI sounds to express a wide variety of emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, dislike, surprise, anger) and instincts (play, search, hunger, sleep), to entertain you. The ERS-7 also now pays special attention to its owner thanks to new Owner's Face and Voice Recognition technology.

In an official statement issued in September, Nicolas Babin, Director of Sony Entertainment Robot Europe stated, "AIBO is evolving from a source of fascination and entertainment into a more functional, endearing companion.

"It opens up a world of possibilities for AIBO enthusiasts and it is a notable step in the development of artificial intelligence as well as domestic robots."

About the Author: Steven Hopstaken is a freelance writer based in Minnesota.

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