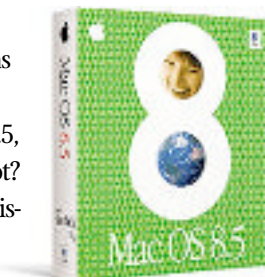


Happy New Year

Updates to 8.5 and iMac stories . . .

System 8.5

Here we are, three months after the introduction of Mac Operating System 8.5, is it a good upgrade or not? Well, ignoring the advertising hype promising a whole new Macintosh to those who upgrade, System 8.5 is a solid achievement.



Speed. My 266 G3 minitower has been given a small but noticeable speed boost. Older Power PC (PPC) based Macs experience a more dramatic improvement. Unlike Systems 8.0 and 8.1, which actually slowed down older Macs, 8.5 gives a 15% to 30% boost to Macs that use the 601, 603 and 604 processors. This improvement comes about because System 8.5 is tuned to the Power PC processor (that's why it will not work on non-PPC Macs like the Quadra and Centris models that 8.0 and 8.1 worked on). The G3 Macs get a smaller improvement because they're so *darn* fast to begin with.

Stability. Does 8.5 crash less? Many users are reporting improved stability with 8.5. My experiments with my G3 and a Performa 6116 show no difference compared to 8.0 or 8.1. All versions of System 8, however, are more stable than any System 7.

Ease of use. 8.5 adds very little that is different from 8.1. The best new usability feature is the "tear off" *Application Menu*. You should be familiar with the *Application Menu* (the last menu on the right side where all of the active applications are listed), this most useful tool can now be removed from the *Menu Bar* by dragging it down and away. Now, you can position it anywhere on screen and use it to instantly switch from one application to another. Neat!

Sherlock. My favorite new feature is *Sherlock* (the greatly improved *Find File* application). *Sherlock* searches for lost files just like *Find File*, but it can also search for text within your documents (What term paper did I quote the *Gettysburg Address*in?)

and find what you need on the Internet! Using *Sherlock* for Internet searches is like using *Yahoo*, *Alta Vista*, *Lycos* and half a dozen other search engines simultaneously (because that is literally what you are doing!) Since getting System 8.5, I've come to rely solely on *Sherlock* for my internet searches.

Recommended. My tests make me confident in recommending System 8.5.1 (yes, the .1 upgrade is here) to anyone using a Power Mac or Power PC Performa. G3 owners, who don't care about the new amenities, may want to wait for System 8.6 which is due in three to four months. The older your Power-Mac, the more you want System 8.5.1.

iMac

An iMac named *Baby* has recently joined our stable of Macintosh computers: *George III* (G3 minitower, 1998), *Fred X* (Mac IIcx, 1992), *Powie Mandel* (Powerbook 190, 1996), *Mr. Mac-O* (Macintosh Plus, 1986) and *Lisa* (Lisa, 1983). OK, so I'm a fanatic (*nut*)!



Baby is often used by Laurie and she couldn't be happier. She's delighted with the speed (I'm a bit jealous), ease of use and pre-installed software. "Other computers look kind of stupid," she notes. Also, she loves going from eleven cables and two surge suppressors to four cables and one surge suppressor, and the half desk that is now available for other uses. She doesn't miss having a floppy drive as she didn't use floppies with her previous Mac (a IIcx) and she can backup over our network. The USB connection to the Epson 1520 printer works fast and reliably. She even likes the much maligned, round mouse. All in all, a very positive report.

My experience with *Baby*, and nine customer iMacs, has been very positive. The only problems that I've found have related to Epson not providing the appropriate software with their printers and the need for more RAM (get at least another 32MB). *Highly recommended.*

MacWorld Expo

Every January. . .

Mac Madness descends upon San Francisco's Mosconi Convention Center. Hundreds of hardware and software companies set up their trade show booths to lure the attention and dollars of thousands of Mac Fans.

This year Apple was truly the star of the show.

Oddly, in past years Apple (whose party you would expect this to be) was overshadowed by the software companies, after all it's the software that does the work regardless of what Mac you have. This year Apple made sure that didn't happen.

The Apple Booth

After Master Showman Steve Jobs' opening address, where he introduced the new G3 towers and the candy-colored iMacs, the show floor opened to the largest and best designed Apple "booth" I can remember. Aisles lined with colorful iMacs ready for the public to play with. New G3 towers on turn tables with their revolutionary side access doors open for everyone to Oooo! and Ahh! over. New monitor designs at every turn and a large lecture/presentation area showcasing Apple technologies old and new.

The overall impression at the Apple booth this year was white, clean and spacious. Normally cramped aisles were wide and comfortable and employees and displays were not hidden away by being too closely set and buried behind crowds ten deep.

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Wow, those new G3s!

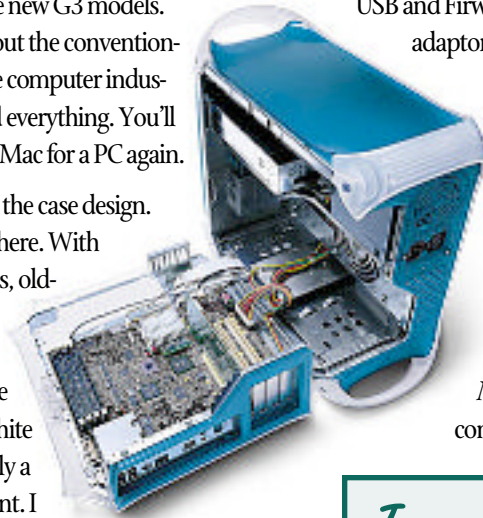
Apple is really taking the Think Different idea to heart with the new G3 models. They've tossed out the conventional wisdom of the computer industry and changed everything. You'll never mistake a Mac for a PC again.

Most obvious is the case design.

Quite a gamble here. With drab beige boxes, older Macs fit any office or home decor. The new blue and white G3s are definitely a fashion statement. I like them, but many folks don't, so it will be interesting to see if the radical case color is a help or a hindrance.

Beyond the color, the new cases are the best design of a computer case ever. Other computer makers can already be heard kicking themselves for not figuring out that integrated carrying handles are a great aid in setting up and moving a computer; that an access door on the side that allows upgrades and repairs to be done without tools is a nice idea, that clean, smooth sides are easier to keep clean and that the floppy disk is dead (see sidebar).

Of course, performance is amazing. These are the fastest desktop computers ever made and they can be upgraded with truly huge amounts of RAM, storage space and faster G3 and G4 processors (1000MHz, anyone?).



Performance is everything. This is why Apple has abandoned standard serial and SCSI for USB and Firewire, thus forcing the purchase of adaptors to use older printers, scanners and such. Another controversial idea that will make Steve Jobs a hero or a goat; we'll see.

There's much more to tell, but I'm out of space, so when January 2000 rolls around, and all of our PC using friends are choking on the Y2K bug, join me at *MacWorld Expo* where all of the computers run just fine, thank you.

January Tip —

Toss That Floppy!

If you ever try to use a floppy disk and it reports a disk error, don't try to reformat it and use it again. Throw it out!

If there is important information on the damaged floppy; send it to me and I will do my best to save the data (no guarantees, I'm afraid).

I'm delighted to finally see the day that floppy disks begin to vanish! With much more reliable back up and transportation systems like Zip disks, CDs and the Internet available, it is no longer necessary to trust the notoriously unreliable floppy with our precious data files.