

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

March 2002
Vol. V, No. 3

We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

The New iMac

First impressions mean a lot...

As Yogi said: "It's *Déjà vu* all over again." Last year at the January, MacWorld Expo, it was love at first sight with the new Titanium Powerbook. This year the new G4 iMac stole my heart. Here are my first impressions after a week living with the top-of-the-line 800Mhz iMac.

A long wait...

Five weeks on backorder and it finally arrived. (Demand has been so great that the backlog is now two to three months!) The shipping box seemed too small.

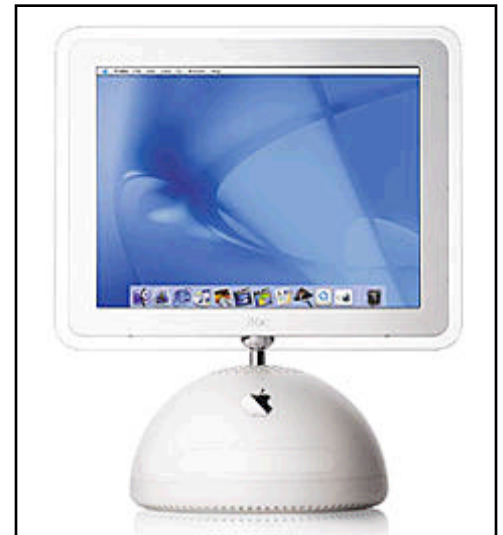
Opening the box reveals an amazing packing job and lots of cleverly formed styrofoam. (Careless shippers would have to work extra hard to damage a G4 iMac in transit.) The flat panel screen is already attached to the base, so to get it out of the box, I grabbed the stainless steel monitor arm and lifted (it weighs about 21 pounds).

The rest of setup is a snap. Plug in the keyboard (the same design that comes with all current Apple desktops only with white, not black keys), mouse, speakers and power cord. The power switch is located at the left rear and requires an intentional push to activate. A few seconds later, the standard Mac OS X start-up sequence begins.

The new iMac has OS X as its default operating system. Mac OS 9.2 is there too, so that you can chose it in the *Startup Disk Preference Panel* and use that instead.

Uh, oh. Problem...

If, like me, you take advantage of a free RAM memory upgrade from your dealer, you will find that the dealer will require that they install the RAM. In order to install the RAM, they have to be able to start-up the new iMac. To start-up Mac OS X, it is necessary to create a user account and there we find a nasty, little problem.



Your lovely, new G4 iMac starts-up under an account that isn't yours! The folks at MacZone did the best they could with this, calling the account *Preferred Customer* and the password, *password*. They included a photocopied sheet with instructions for changing the password to one of my choosing, but there is no way to personalize the account with my name. So, I created a new account and attempted to delete the original, but you can't just delete the original account (though it no longer appears to taunt you at start-up), it leaves its information in a folder named *preferre Deleted* (how ugly!). Ah, well.

If you do buy from a dealer that insists on installing the free RAM, try to persuade them not to do so (even pay the install fee, if you must) and I'll install it for you at no charge just to avoid this mess.

Back to the good stuff...

The 15" flat panel, LCD screen is beautiful! The iMac's screen is far better than the LCD screen on my Titanium Powerbook. The image is much brighter (I had to dim it down quite a bit) and super sharp at the native 1024X768 resolution.

Flat panel screens have a native resolution that is set in manufacturing (old-style CRT

screens do not). If you change the resolution, the image quality suffers very badly. I find the 1024X768 resolution to be just right on the 15" screen. Not only does the native resolution show you as much or more than a 17" CRT, but the image on screen is nearly identical in size to how your document will print.

The feature that made me fall in love is also related to the screen. The neck of the iMac (that stainless steel arm that connects the screen to the base), allows me to raise, lower, tilt and swivel the screen to almost any position that I could ever want (and, boy, do my bifocals love that!). The clear plastic halo around the screen provides a convenient handle on all four sides for grabbing and adjusting without touching and marking-up the sensitive screen itself. The screen adjusts so smoothly and easily that two fingers are all I need to make any change.

The base (where the computer actually lives) weighs about 15 pounds, so there is no way a bump or nudge to the screen could tip the iMac over or topple it from a table.

Add-ons...

Adding RAM or an Airport wireless networking card is easy if you have a Philips screwdriver. Four captive screws hold the cover to the base. Once removed, the RAM and Airport slots are fully accessible (no scuffed knuckles) and plainly marked.

But, that's it. Unlike a G4 tower Mac (and like *all* previous iMacs), you cannot add any other internal accessories. Even replacing the clock battery is a huge job that requires a trained technician and heat-sink goop (yuk!). With luck the clock batteries will last four to five years.

Other add-ons need to be external devices. The G4 iMac features three USB ports (sockets) for printers, scanners, digital cameras; two Firewire ports for hard drives, video cameras, iPod; one ethernet port for networking and high-speed internet (DSL, cable); one modem port; a special speaker port for the included Apple speakers; a headphone jack that can also be used with standard computer speakers and a video out port (special adapter needed) that allows you to connect the iMac to a TV, VCR, projector or computer monitor.

In use...

the new 800Mhz G4 iMac runs about 15% faster than my dual 450Mhz G4 tower. Because the newer Quicksilver G4 towers use a faster internal bus speed*, they run about 10% faster than the G4 iMacs, but cost considerably more.

I've installed and run my usual mix of OS X, OS 9, OS 8 and even some ancient System 6 software. Everything I've thrown at the new

* Bus speed measures how fast information travels around inside a computer.

iMac has run speedily and well under OS X and Classic, including *FileMaker Pro*, *Photoshop*, *AOL*, *Netscape Communicator*, *AppleWorks*, *Quicken*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Ready, Set, Go!* and the good old *Erik's Solitaire Sampler*.

So, if you...

have a Macintosh Performa, a sub-200Mhz PowerMac or a first generation iMac, I recommend the new G4 iMacs most highly! Just be sure to plan ahead!

March Tip—

Keep your desktop neat. In Mac OS 8 or 9, choose *View Options...* from the View menu and click on the *Always snap to grid* option. Now, choose *Clean Up* from the View menu. This will make your desktop icons line up in neat rows and columns. You can even alphabetize them by choosing *Keep arranged by name* from the *View Options...* dialog box.

California Computer Care

P.O. Box 9445

Santa Rosa, CA 95405

(800) 540-8989

help@calcompcare.com

Like an
auto club
for your
computer.