

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

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

This Old iMac

Way back in 1998, in the first issue of *CCC News*, I reviewed the just released, original version iMac. That particular iMac was my sister's. Now, six years later, Sharon has a new *Powerbook* and I have her old iMac.

Conventional wisdom says that a six year old computer should be relegated to the scrap heap. To heck with that! In the spirit of Bob Vila, let's see what we can do.

My goals were to get the old Mac to do modern work and bring the computer age to my 70's era kitchen. For this, it needed to run the latest Mac OS X, connect wirelessly to my home network, file share with my other Macs, run current web browsers, email applications, *iTunes* and *AppleWorks 6*, plus sound good while playing music CDs and internet radio stations.

To start with, original iMacs are definitely unimpressive by today's standards. 233MHz G3 processor, 32MB of RAM, 4GB hard disk drive and 2MB of VRAM (Video RAM).

Processor upgrades do exist for original iMacs, but they're too expensive for what

you get. RAM and hard drive upgrades are cheap and well worthwhile for any Mac. So, my first step was to add 256MB of RAM and a 20GB hard drive. I also wanted to upgrade the VRAM, but the part is unavailable.

Operating system. The old iMac was running Mac OS 8.1. I erased the hard drive and installed *Panther* (Mac OS X 10.3.3). With the speed improvements in *Panther*, and the RAM upgrade, the iMac runs acceptably.

Networking was next. Running an ethernet cable to the kitchen is out of the question, so I looked around and found a *wireless ethernet bridge*. This is a cool new technology invented for video games. The little radio pod plugged right into the iMac's network port and didn't even need software. I hid the pod under the table top for neatness' sake. That done, the iMac can access the internet for web browsing, email, internet radio stations and share files with my other Macs—all from the kitchen table. A boon to lazy, old me.

Control freak. The iMac sits in a corner of my kitchen on a small cart. It's an inconvenient

iMac rev. A 233MHz

Mac OS X 10.3.3

Add 256MB RAM

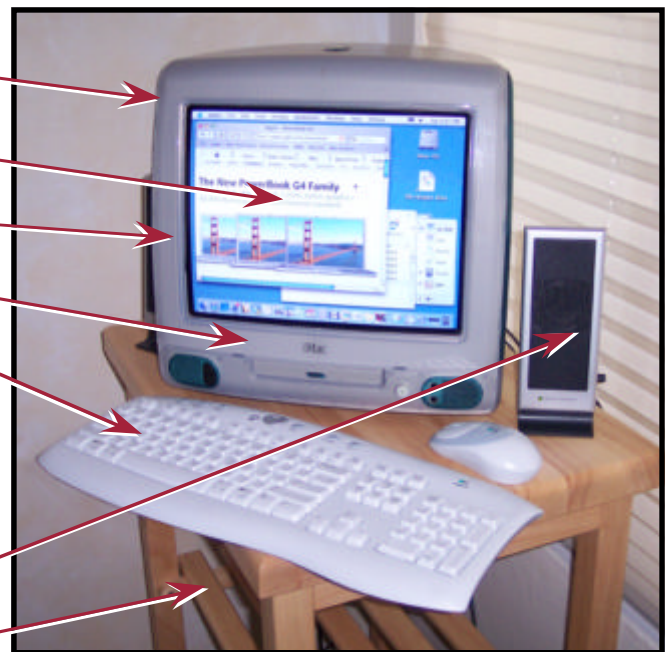
Replace 4GB hard drive with 20GB

Logitech wireless keyboard and mouse

D-Link wireless ethernet bridge
(Hiding under table top)

Altec stereo speakers with sub-woofer

Kitchen cart (Stacks and Stacks)



place to have to go to use the keyboard and mouse. However, the kitchen table is the perfect place, but the keyboard cable is too short! A Logitech wireless keyboard and mouse came to the rescue. With these, the keyboard can be wherever convenient, and there are no cables getting in the way.

Ouch! Sounds bad! The iMac's built-in speakers are tinny and fuzzy sounding. So, I added a pair of Altec stereo speakers with a big sub-woofer for solid bass notes. Now, it sounds great for music, radio and audio books.

The bottom line. So, what did it cost to remodel this old iMac? Here's a list of parts and costs:

Part	Cost
iMac	Free
256MB RAM	\$75.00
20GB hard disk drive	\$69.95
D-Link wireless e-net bridge	\$62.00
Altec stereo speaker system	\$49.95
Logitech wireless KB/mouse	\$34.95
Total	\$291.85

Not a bad price to save a trusty old iMac from the computer recycler and get internet access in the kitchen. Now, all I need is to get the TV cable to it and this old iMac will be a television, too! *Stay tuned*, as they say...

Trojan Horse Update

No, this isn't about the new movie.

Since last month's CCC News article *They're Heeere!*, the anti-virus company, *Intego*, has found another phoney "trojan horse" to try to scare us into buying expensive, useless software.

What they found wasn't a trojan horse, but rather a nasty example of what I like to call *Practical JokeWare*.

Back in the 80's, Practical JokeWare was very common. These were little applications that made users think that their computer had crashed or broken. Some hid files from view and a famous example had the screen image "melt" and flow down to a puddle at the bottom. With the rise of viruses, worms and other real nasties, the joke wasn't funny anymore and Practical JokeWare essentially vanished.

Practical JokeWare worked by fooling the user into thinking that the application was something they wanted, but unlike a trojan horse, the "joke" didn't reside inside a real, useful application; it just disguised itself with a false name and icon. *Microsoft Word 2004 Demo*, publicized by *Intego*, is exactly this sort of thing.

Microsoft Word 2004 Demo, was uploaded to file sharing systems where folks illegally steal software. There it fooled at least one person into downloading and running it. The result? That user didn't get the free *MS Word* they wanted, but lost their User folder instead. Had they used a moment's caution, they would have realized that a 100K download could not hold multi-megabyte *Word!* And, the "joke" was on them. Unfortunately, Mac OS X can't protect users from their own foolish folly.

May Tip—

A scam is a scam, so a bit of caution is always appropriate. The internet takes scamming to a whole new level. Watch out for email that claims to come from your ISP, bank, eBay or online retailers asking you to verify your account with these companies. You will never be asked to verify account information in this way! These emails are coming from scammers who are trying to fool you into providing your credit card numbers, passwords, social security number and more. This process is known as *phishing*. Always verify such requests before complying with them.

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for your
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