

t's that time of year again! 'Tis the season...to fight your way through crowded malls, listening to the shrill screams of cranky children and trying to find the perfect gifts for all your loved ones. MacSense's second annual 'Santa's 7' gift guide can help you minimize the trips to suburban war zones (i.e., the shopping malls) and helps you choose just the right gift for the Mac user on your Christmas list.

Each of the seven products listed below are highly recommended by Santa (and the MacSense staff) and carry two ratings: one for the utility of the item (UI, or the 'Utility Index'), and the other indicating how fun the product is (FI, or the 'Fun Index'). Both ratings operate on a five point scale; the higher the UI or FI rating, the more useful or fun the product is.

he Iomega Zip Drive isn't the best removable storage device ever made—new Optical mechanisms and Iomega's own Jaz drive are closer to that mark—but it is, without doubt, the best alternative to the floppy yet to appear. It feels like a floppy and behaves like a floppy, and it is fast enough to do an excellent job of backup and distribution—the two things floppies are still used for most. Moreover, once the drive is in your hands, the medium is cheaper than floppies, with one 100MB cartridge costing less than a box of ten high density floppies. \$199 US.

f ever there were two utilities that the Mac universe just cannot live without, they're Connectix's RAM Doubler and Speed Doubler. RAM Doubler does exactly what it says, doubling a user's RAM through a variety of compression and virtual memory techniques. Speed Doubler may not literally double the speed of your Mac, but for many Power Macintosh owners, Speed Doubler's Speed Emulator will rocket past the performance of Apple's built-in 680x0 code emulator. \$79 US for the bundle.

nless the Mac lover on your list has a new AppleVision 17, the built-in speakers in their Macintosh or Macintosh display are likely not up to the task of heightening the sensory experience of a cool multimedia CD. With no woofer and no real 'guts' (to drop into the vernacular), many built-in Mac speakers deliver a sound quality that has a hard time competing with AM radio. A good pair of shielded speakers can make all the difference to the next game of Marathon, the next trip to Myst, or simply the next music CD popped in the Mac. Consider the Apple Design Powered Speakers II (\$89 US), Sony SRS-D2K three-piece speaker system (\$149 US), or the Yamaha YST-SS1010 speaker/subwoofer bundle (\$229 US).

t used to be that graphics tablets were high priced items, relegating them to the domain of power artists with lots of cash. Not so anymore. For as little as \$139 US, you can purchase a Wacom ArtPad 4x5 tablet with Erasing UltraPen for the budding Picasso in the family. And while such a device may be targeted more to artists, it actually has mass appeal. A small tablet allows a user to sign their name to documents, explore their artistic side and serve as an excellent mouse substitute. When mousing begins to strain the wrist, pick up the pen and navigate through the Macintosh as though it was a giant Newton. Also consider the Wacom ArtZ II 6x8 tablet; \$309 US.

f you're reading this issue of MacSense, chances are you've used a modem to either download it from an online service or view it on our web site. And if so, you know full well the importance of having a fast modem: transfers take less time, thereby reducing online service expenses and long distance bills. If the Mac user on your list doesn't have a modem or is still plodding along at 2400 baud, you might think about getting them up to speed. MacSense specifically recommends Global Village's Teleport Platinum 28.8k data/fax modem. The Global Village fax software has been repeatedly acclaimed for its ease of use and advanced feature set. And like previous Global Village modems, the Teleport Platinum features sturdy construction and an aesthetically pleasing chassis design. From \$199 US.

he proliferation of the World Wide Web has made it impossible to ignore. In a matter of 12 short months, the web has exploded—and you can find almost any information you want, anywhere, anytime. If there's a Mac user you know who's not yet logged on, help get them back into the loop. Depending upon the amount of access you want, subscriptions can be as little as \$50 US per year. And while America Online and eWorld have their own web browsers, to truly experience the World Wide Web you must view it through the eyes of Netscape 2.0. A subscription service with a local Internet provider can open the door to a whole new world.

ast year's smash hit has been reincarnated with a vengeance in the form of Marathon 2: Durandel. The new game is bigger, faster and replete with old and new foes, three dimensional ambient sounds and one rockin' theme song. The game starts when Durandel wakes you from an 18-year slumber to do his bidding, in a far corner of the galaxy. It's hard to imagine a die hard Mac gamer who doesn't have Marathon 2: Durandel on their Christmas list. \$45 US, from Bungie Software.

Connectix's [QuickCam](#), \$99 US. An oldie but goodie: this \$99 video camera's a ball.

Kensington's [Thinking Mouse](#), \$89 US. Intelligent mousing for the smart consumer.

MetaTool's [KPT 3.0](#), \$129 US. Kai's new tools take image filters to the third level.

The [MacSense CD](#), \$49 (\$59 after Dec.15). MacSense on steroids, ten times a year.

e hope our Santa's 7 gift guide ideas have helped you narrow the search for the perfect gift for the Mac user in your life...or maybe, the perfect gift for yourself!