

LR8 Incorporated. Price: \$599 US. Requirements: Macintosh having Level 2 Cache slot.
Contact XLR8 Incorporated at (800) 206-7926.

Speeding up our computers has always been a desire of devoted Macintosh users. Many of us don't have the extra cash to either purchase a brand new machine or PowerPC upgrade card, so we look at other means of increasing the performance of our systems.

One rather inexpensive alternative is to install a Level 2 cache. A Level 2 cache works by storing frequently used program code in its onboard memory, making retrieval of this code by the CPU much quicker than if the same code were continuously retrieved from the hard disk. Depending on the machine, the size of the Level 2 cache and the amount of RAM installed in the machine, speed increases can be quite dramatic.

The problem with Level 2 cache technology, however, is that Apple's original L2 cache design contained a defect which caused frequent type 11 errors when installed. The defect involved the maximum estimated bus speed a Mac could handle. Apple mistakenly felt that a bus speed of 40MHz would not be exceeded for quite some time. With the advent of clock accelerators and other system speed enhancements, however, bus speeds of 45 MHz have become somewhat commonplace. To compound the problem, most third party L2 cache manufacturers copied Apple's original L2 design when producing their own caches, resulting in type 11 errors with their products as well.

Enter a new company simply called 'XLR8.' They discovered the defect in Apple's L2 cache design, corrected the problem, and released their own brand of L2 caches. And type 11 errors became a thing of the past (at least with XLR8 L2 caches). Indeed, the XLR8 1MB L2 cache I tested (and continue to use) performs flawlessly and has yet to produce a type 11 error, regardless of how hard I try to make one occur. It dramatically speeds the performance of my machine—and benchmarks tests by MacBench 2.0 and Norton Utilities 3.1 verify these speed increases.

When a customer buys an L2 cache from XLR8, they also receive a nifty control panel that tells the user how much L2 cache is installed in their machine (regardless of the cache manufacturer). This ingenious control panel, exclusive to XLR8, cannot be obtained from any other manufacturer. Through a very special arrangement with XLR8, MacSense readers will soon be able to download XLR8's innovative L2 cache control panel from our website at <http://www.macsense.com>.

The XLR8 L2 cache comes in three flavors: 256KB, 512KB, and 1MB. The size you'll need for your machine is determined by the type of Macintosh you have and the amount of RAM installed. When you call XLR8 to order your cache, they'll assist you in purchasing the proper size for your particular machine and configuration.

Also included with XLR8's L2 cache is a brief installation manual, telling exactly how to install the cache in your particular machine. All XLR8 L2 caches are warranted against defects in materials and workmanship, for the life of your computer.

high quality L2 cache can dramatically increase the speed and performance of most Macintosh. And with their relatively inexpensive cost, they're well worth serious consideration. While the robust 1MB L2 cache tested cost \$599 US, the 256KB and 512KB L2 caches cost \$99 US and \$259 US respectively, and are every bit as high in quality. While a new company, XLR8 gives definite reason for all larger companies to take a good look over their shoulders. They prove that good, old fashioned ingenuity is alive and well and nipping at the heels of the corporate mentality.

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[Kensington Microware Limited. Price: \\$69 US.](#)
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Most of us have plenty of cash wrapped up in our computer systems. We've scrimped and saved in order to buy the most recent and high-tech equipment we could. In fact, some of us have so much money in our systems, they rank more as investments than anything else. Hence, it makes good sense to protect these investments from the wrath of electricity.

Power surges, lightning strikes, static, brown outs, etc., all have the potential of wreaking havoc with our computer equipment. To protect against these calamities, Kensington Microware offers the MasterPiece HomeOffice Power Control and Multi-Stage Surge Suppressor. Since it is a control center of sorts, the MasterPiece HomeOffice is best placed under your monitor to conveniently have access to, not only the power for your computer, but the power for your various peripherals.

The front panel of the MasterPiece HomeOffice sports five separate switches with which to control various computer devices. The master switch is used for the computer itself, while the remaining four switches can be used to control any peripheral device you would like. Simply plug the computer into the master outlet on the back of the MasterPiece HomeOffice, plug peripherals into the remaining outlets, plug the MasterPiece HomeOffice into a standard wall socket, and away you go.

In addition to outlets for peripherals and a computer, the back panel of the MasterPiece HomeOffice also provides outlets for a telephone and modem to protect against surges and spikes that can travel through telephone lines. The MasterPiece HomeOffice has a surge protection indicator that glows red if its circuitry is ever damaged. Under normal circumstances, this indicator glows green, meaning all is well. There is also an indicator which advises the user whether the wall outlet they are using is properly wired. If the wall outlet is properly wired, the indicator glows green; if the wiring is faulty, the indicator glows red. These two indicators are priceless and really go to provide a degree of protection

beyond protecting against spikes and surges.

Yet another excellent feature is the antistatic nameplate mounted on the front of the MasterPiece HomeOffice. Kensington MicroWare points out that human beings can generate static charges up to 30,000 volts simply by walking across a carpet. Yet, it takes only a couple hundred volts to forever damage critical computer components. By touching the antistatic nameplate, harmful static electricity is safely dissipated and your computer equipment remains safe and secure.

The only thing that irritates me about this otherwise excellent piece of equipment is the way power is directed within the MasterPiece HomeOffice. Namely, the master power switch controls power to the other switches as well. What this means is the master switch must be on in order for the other switches to receive power when they are turned on. While this might not seem to be such a big deal, those with SCSI devices will understand the hassle associated with such a configuration.

Specifically, SCSI devices must be powered up before the computer itself is powered up. However, the MasterPiece HomeOffice makes no provisions for this. Hence, SCSI devices cannot be plugged into, and protected by, the MasterPiece HomeOffice—unless you wish to risk damaging your computer's SCSI bus. It would be nice if Kensington configured the MasterPiece HomeOffice so that each switch was independent of the master switch. That way, devices could be powered up and down separate from the master, making the unit much more practical and convenient to use.

The MasterPiece HomeOffice comes with a brief user's manual that explains how to properly use the unit. It also comes with a limited lifetime warranty as well as a \$25,000 equipment protection policy. The warranty protects against defects in materials and workmanship for the life of the product, while the equipment protection policy provides a \$25,000 insurance policy with Kensington Microware for computer equipment properly attached to the MasterPiece HomeOffice.

With the high prices we pay for our computer equipment, it makes little sense not to protect it to the best of our abilities. Toward this end, the MasterPiece HomeOffice is an extremely wise investment. Not only does it provide very high quality surge protection, but it also comes with \$25,000 worth of financial protection as well. It would be nice if Kensington Microware would reconfigure the unit so that SCSI devices could be easily attached, but this is only a minor inconvenience which doesn't negatively impact the quality of the MasterPiece HomeOffice. In short, surge suppression protection is an absolute these days and the Kensington Microware MasterPiece HomeOffice is a fine piece of equipment with which to protect your expensive and valuable computer equipment investment.

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