



Keep taking the upgrades

*It's never a perfect world, even for Mac users, but **Chris Cain** points out some recent releases to help make it better, and dreams of the ten best things Apple could do to make him happy in 1996.*

As it's that time of the year again, I've been compiling my top ten Mac wish list for 1996. It includes products that are scheduled to appear in the near future, and things that would be beneficial to Mac users everywhere. But first, there are a few important software updates that you should know about.

After my experiments with PCW's 9500 last month, I've discovered that RAM Doubler 1.5.2A doesn't work properly with any of the PCI PowerMacs. An email to Connectix brought the news that version 1.6 is in beta testing and should, hopefully, be available by the time you read this. As with the company's other updates, it will be a free fix, downloadable from all good online systems.

Apple's Open Transport networking code for PCI Macs has also undergone several bug fixes. The current release is

Christmas wishes

Here is a summary of my complete list of wishes for 1996.



- 1 Copland OS
- 2 Clearer error messages
- 3 Stable, native QuarkXpress
- 4 New Microsoft Office
- 5 RAM Doubler v1.6
- 6 A catchier name for the Performa
- 7 Better software bundles
- 8 PCI Mac clones
- 9 QuickTime and QuickDraw 3D accelerators
- 10 All systems sold complete

If all or most of the wishes on the list are granted it'll be a very happy new year for the Mac.

If you have a Mac wish list or something that you think I should have included, please drop me an email.

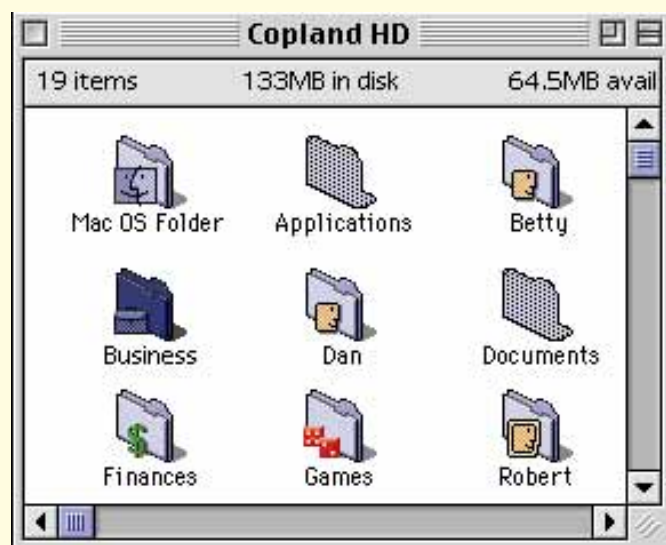
1.0.7 and can be downloaded from Apple's usual software support sites on the World Wide Web. If you use this regularly I recommend moving up to the latest version as soon as possible. Several people here at VNU towers have experienced grief with older versions. You need to be using version 1.0.6 to upgrade to 1.0.7. Users of earlier versions should contact their dealers.

On the applications front, there has been another change to Photoshop and a new release of Quark Xpress 3.3 is on the cards. Last month saw the release of Photoshop 3.0.4 and now 3.0.5 has been posted on the internet to fix a small bug with previews. As for Quark, the company's home page reveals that version 3.3.8 is just around the corner. Quite what features this will offer is not known, but even if it only manages to crash less it will be a worthwhile upgrade.

Other software upgrades include Plaintalk 1.4.1, an improvement to Apple speech recognition software; Aaron 1.1.3, now with awful spinning windows; and version 1.0.2 of Id's Doom 2, which adds more music and cleans up a few graphic glitches. All are available online.

Transport problems

It appears that even if you don't use a network, Open Transport can still give you major hassle. Because of the way the OT code is designed, it significantly increases the size of your system software. This can cause a serious memory shortage on 8Mb and even 16Mb machines, limiting users to loading only one or two applications at a time. Even removing the shared libraries from the Extensions folder doesn't help.



Along with changes to the user interface, Copland promises a substantial performance increase

Why doesn't OT follow the QuickTime example and load code only when needed?

Top of the pops

Making my top ten Mac wishes for 1996 (see boxout opposite) wasn't easy. There are quite a few things I'd like to see happen and narrowing the list down to ten took some doing.

Preferably without the spinning windows, or at least with the option to turn them off, Copland is easily my first choice. This more up-to-date and PowerPC-native version of Mac OS should provide a tremendous performance increase for PowerMac users when it arrives.

At present a large portion of the PowerMac OS runs under Apple's 68000 emulation software. While a few key system extensions have been re-coded for RISC, we won't see the true power of the architecture until everything that can be is reprogrammed. It's no good making the jump to new hardware if your system software doesn't follow suit.

As well as at least 95 percent native code Copland promises a robust pre-emptive multi-tasking microkernel, an improved file system and a customisable interface. You'll be able to adjust the levels of interaction to the ability of the user and the Apple Guide help system is expected to move from a Show Me to a more satisfactory Do It For Me arrangement. Apple also claims that Copland will incorporate QuickDraw 3D, much-needed improvements to virtual memory and enhanced multimedia functions. An early release next year is essential to keep Apple ahead of the game now that Windows 95 is here.

Repeat in English, please

While we're waiting for Copland, my second wish would be for more understandable system error messages. I get quite annoyed when I'm told the application failed due to an error of type 1010. I've used a Mac for long enough to know that this is usually the result of a bus error, and that restarting and possibly assigning more memory to an application will solve the problem. But that's only a guess. Besides, that message is only one among many others that have me and most systems departments baffled.

So, Apple, how about converting error messages into English phrases like 'This program requires more memory to run' or 'This application has unexpectedly quit with a Bus Error because...'. Even MS-DOS gives you more of a clue with 'Bad



Games like Doom II would be better for Performa software bundles than old titles such as Spectre

command or file name when you type something it doesn't understand. It's impossible to know the reason for every error, but the Mac could certainly be more friendly when they occur.

Number three on the list is a more stable PowerPC native version of QuarkXpress, the most popular Mac application for DTP. The latest version has caused more headaches in our production department than any other software. In fact, some people have refused to use it and have gone back to running the 68K version under emulation. It's slow but it's stable and most of the bugs are well known. I know I'm not the only person looking forward to the release of 3.3 revision 8.

Fourthly, the PowerMac version of Microsoft Office is in dire need of a rewrite. Compared to WordPerfect 3.5, Word is ridiculously slow, and Excel takes an age to load up even on an 8100/80. For no good reason, both products are nowhere near as impressive as their PC counterparts, and many Mac users prefer to use older, non-native versions.

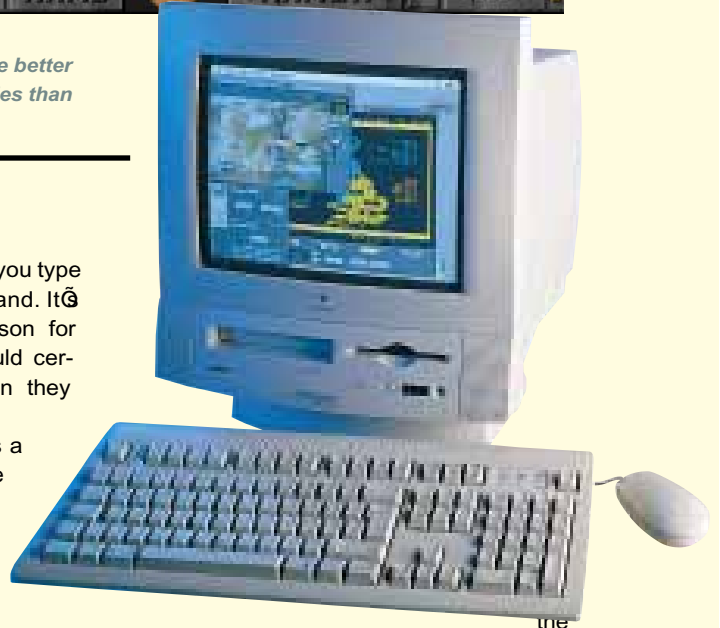
Microsoft has some of the best coders in the world and it's about time the company sat a few of them down in the Mac Office division. It would be good to ring in

the new year with a new improved version.

Double RAMmy

The PCI Mac-compatible version of RAM Doubler also makes it onto the wish list. This program is the best-selling Mac utility in the world and for a good reason. It actually does what it claims to do. An excellent idea would be a pack that combines both Speed Doubler and RAM Doubler for a reasonable price. Connectix could call it something cheesy like the Mac Performance Pack, and it would sell like hot cakes.

Number six is a request that Apple comes up with a better name for its Ready-to-go-Performa series. Although the machines are well specified, and the latest 5300 model is especially nice with its



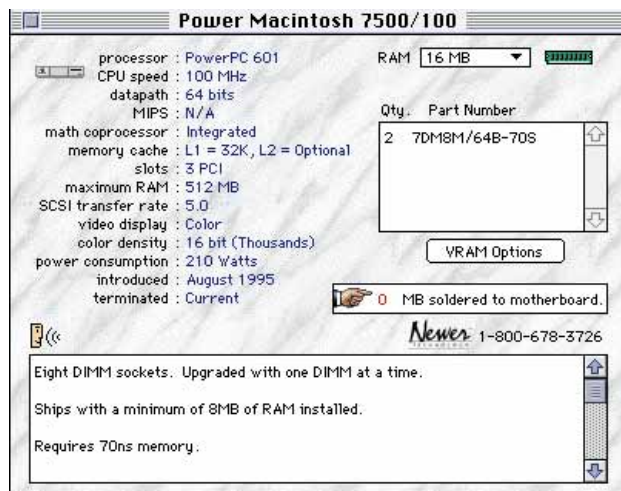
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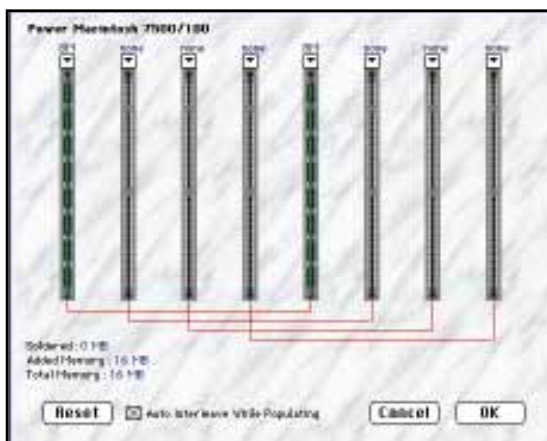
Utility of the Month

January's Utility of the Month is ideal for anyone who's thinking of adding more memory to their Mac. Guru 1.1.1 from Newer Technology is a freeware application that tells you how much and what type of RAM you can install in your machine, complete with diagrams.

After selecting the type of hardware you have, from a comprehensive list including the new PCI machines, Performas, Powerbooks and even some Apple printers, up pops a box showing basic specifications. From here you can tell the program how much RAM you want and it shows the correct SIMM configuration. An interactive picture of the motherboard lets you change SIMM sizes about in different slots to see the results. Guru 1.1.1 will also test existing memory for any defects. It's available from online services and is on this month's cover CD.



Left and below
Guru takes the guesswork out of memory upgrades
Bottom Jazz up your Mac with some Christmas icons



MPEG1 decoder and 16-bit stereo sound, the name makes these models sound inferior to the Power Macintosh line. What's wrong with calling all of them PowerMacs, with some models sold more cheaply than others? If the range has to be segmented, how about using the old LC or Classic name extensions? Performa just doesn't say 'come and buy a Mac' to me.

If this isn't possible, then I'd settle for a better selection of bundled software. Most PCs come complete with Microsoft Office, and it should be standard on Macs as well. ClarisWorks, a great little integrated package that's ideal for a one man band, is not really in the same league. Speed Doubler and RAM Doubler are natural choices for a bundle, and how about some good games instead of out-of-date titles like Spectre Supreme and Super Maze Wars? Marathon, Doom II, Dark Forces and Descent (when it arrives) would all be much more appealing. For kids, the Broderbund Living Books series is ideal, as is Microsoft's Encarta.

The last three items on my wish list are PCI Mac clones; affordable QuickTime and QuickDraw 3D acceleration cards; and finally, every Mac to come with a monitor and keyboard as standard.

Taking the plunge

Inspired by Cliff Joseph's article about PCI PowerMacs in the November issue, I decided it was time to upgrade to one of them. Having hesitated between the 7200 and 7500, I finally settled on the latter, almost entirely on the grounds that I'd be able to add a 604 processor card to it, saving another major upgrade in one or two years' time.

So far I can report that the machine has been compatible with everything I used before, save RAM Doubler, and that the difference in performance between the new machine and my old 7100 is quite noticeable. If you are thinking of making the same move, I will continue to report on

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