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Newsletter

The Albuquerque NeXT Users Group
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Intro:

A recent headline from an article in the Wall Street Journal reads, "As NeXT Inc. Enjoys Comeback, Computer Rivals Lurk in Wings" (6/27/91) The article is a mixed review which both praises Jobs for the recent comeback with the new introduction of NeXTs and warns that rivals Sun Microsystems Inc. and Silicone Graphics Inc. are developing their future computers to fill the niche that the NeXT is trying to claim. The article continues to talk of the rocky relationship between IBM and NeXT Inc., and of the failed attempts to have IBM market NeXTstep on its RISC/6000 series. They go on to describe other operating system purchases IBM is actively pursuing. Such as talks with GO Corp., Apple Computers Inc., and Novell Inc. The article also brings up the fate of the suspected processor of the NeXT, the Motorola 88110, stating that support for that processor is waning. Apple Inc. is discussing dropping support for that processor in future models. The NeXTstation took the front cover of UnixWorld Magazine in July. The headline reads "The Next NeXT: As Easy To Use as A PC?" This is an example of complete lack of understanding of the NeXT and its place in the market. It will displace the PC/UNIX market, but come on, as easy to use as a PC?! I might have to cancel my subscription. The article is complimentary of the ease of use and background power of the NeXT. The only problems it sees with the NeXT are its performance compared to RISC machines, its lack of applications, and the fact that it has a proprietary GUI instead of following the Xwindows trend. The first two problems are being solved by NeXT now. The last I see as more of a positive trait, you should understand if you have had any experience programming the Xwindows environment.

NeXT is faced with two conflicting problems, one is the upcoming introductions from Sun and Silicon Graphics which will both undoubtedly be very fast machines. Jobs will have to increase the speed of the NeXT to match this competition. The 040 isn't slow, but the standards for future machine speed in UNIX based work stations is rising. Now NeXT is forced to change its basic architecture which is based on the 680x0 series and move to a RISC chip, but which one? Apple is undoubtedly going to introduce new Mac (III?) based on a RISC CPU, but most likely not based on the Motorola 88110. So where does this leave NeXT. I would expect that the development of the new NeXTs based on the 88110 chip has been going on. This leaves the entire user base in the dust, not only in speed, but in basic compatibility. Look for the new NeXTs to clock in at 50 MIPS due to the 88110 with a new 3.0 version of NeXTstep. The new OS will offer a software solution to allow users to run 040 programs on the 88110 and also run 88110 programs on the 040-030. Also look for Jobs to offer an inexpensive solution to upgrading the current users. He can't start the company over and needs the installed base behind him. Also in 3.0 we should find some support for Macintosh data exchange, I might be dreaming here but the added support could give the NeXT the edge it needs to take over desk top publishing.

NeWS:

NeXT Computer is going to announce \$50 million in second quarter revenue. In a departure from the norm, they will not be announcing the unit shipments. There is no apparent reason for the withholding of this information. One can estimate that with a mean value of \$ 5,000 per system that they sold somewhere in the 9,000 to 10,000 range. Some large sales that NeXT scored in the last quarter were, a large number of NeXTdimention equipped Cubes going to DARPA, and the sale to The First National Bank Of Chicago (which is looking for NeXTstep programmers).

If you have not heard, IBM+Apple+Motorola=problems for the rest of us. Apple and IBM have agreed to develop software that will be sold by both companies to simplify programming on all platforms. They will develop a new OS with Mac like ease of use which will run on both DOS and Mac based computers. Motorola and IBM will make the future CPU that will drive these systems. All this sounds great to owners of IBMs and Macs, but the companies never promised backward compatibility, or current program support, and the delivery date isn't until 1995 (which means there won't be any practical applications or prices until 2000). This is a brilliant move by Apple and IBM to show the world their dedication to the future of computing. Unfortunately for them, computing may pass them by in the intervening years. The NeXT delivers most of what

they want to deliver. I believe it is time for NeXT to port its OS to all other platforms and sell it for a nominal fee.

Adobe Illustrator 3.0 for the NeXT is now shipping as of July 1st. It will be priced at \$650, about \$50 more than the established TopDraw from Media Logic Inc. Illustrator has become the de facto standard on the Mac. Adobe Systems Inc. has deep roots at NeXT with its Display Postscript language at the heart of the NeXT display interface. TopDraw will have to work hard not to lose its market share. "Graphic artists are going to go crazy for this product," said Steve Jobs, "Moving color windows around is soooo fast, and now you can even edit in Preview mode!" It will be interesting to see who Jobs will endorse as "Best of Breed", David or Goliath.

InterCon Systems is producing PlanetX, a way to network Macintosh computers and NeXT computers via X-windows. Rick Reynolds Executive Director of BANG is apparently involved in beta testing this product. He states in CIS that you simply have a Mac box with out a keyboard, monitor, or mouse. The box would send information to an Xwindow on the NeXT and simulate a Mac interface. HyperCube a hyperscripting environment for the NeXT is in final development and should be out later this year. It will run HyperCard stacks from the Mac. The delay in release was due to the upgrade of HyperCard to 2.0.

A developers version of Pixar's RenderMan is available on the NeXT This product provides libraries to link to code so it could be lic. to go along with a CAD program in the future. It is also a full application on its own creating truly photorealistic 3D rendering using the RIB language.

Promethesus Inc. has informally announced that it will build a 9600bps data modem with MNP5 and V.42bis compression and error correction methods along with a 9600bps send/receive fax which will apply to the group III and more importantly the class II standards. This modem is specifically designed to meet the need of the NeXT and will be marked as such. It will retail for \$1,080.

Ports:

I would like to devote this new area to discussions about applications that are in the process of being ported, need to be ported, or have been ported to the NeXT environment. I can not do all the research on my own, neither can I know what apps. people are interested in porting. So, please send mail to me if you have info in these areas or you have specific apps you wish to discuss. Who knows someone might read this section and make money porting

243-4670. If you have third party software that you have invested in I will try to have both a NeXTstation, and a Cube on hand to run the software. This way we could each get a first hand look at some of the available software before we have to invest \$4-700. If you plan on bringing software please email me. Also I will have on video a demo video from Lotus on Improv, a tape of Steve Jobs introducing the NeXTstation, and a video of the NeXT manufacturing plant. If there is any interest, these videos are short and have some interesting tidbits in them. Thanks :)

Please RSVP to me via email.
Thanks again for your time,

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