y Scott Love

OK. I'll admit it. If I had a ton of dough, I'd buy a Pentium so fast I'd have to bolt it to my desk. Throw in a serious sound card, a 6x CD ROM, and a video card which screams and I'd be set. Oh yeah, and I'd want a 28.8 modem, at least a 17-inch multi-sync monitor, and a hard drive measured in gigs.

And then I'd play games on it.

Hands down, that's the ultimate game machine these days. Tons of titles are shipping for the PC and an increasing number of game companies are moving to the platform. Heard of the 32-bit next generation systems? Yeah, they're hip. But the companies coding for the consoles are moving to the PC as well.

Course, there's one hitch: P5's (the latest from Intel) don't come cheap. For a gamer's dream system you're looking at dropping the better part of four or five grand. And then you're faced with the OS issue. To run a Pentium, you gotta buy Windows.

But I need more than a gaming machine. I need a Mac. I want a Mac.

So where's that leave me?

Actually, in a great position.

The Mac alone is a solid gaming machine. It's got better integrated sound and video management than most other boxes on the market today, and Apple has set high standards for video compression and sound formats. While the Mac is no longer exactly plug-and-play (tried to install 7.5.3 lately?) it still won't take a weekend to get a new game to talk to your sound card.

There's better news: developing games for the Mac has never been easier. Apple just came out with a Gaming SDK — software development kit — which makes it much easier for developers to create Mac games. Featured during the Computer Game Developer's Conference, the SDK drew widespread enthusism from many third-party vendors. And here's

a little known fact... Windows 95 actually is a good thing for the Mac software market: porting from Win95 to MacOS is a snap. It's much easier than porting DOS or Win3.1 to the Mac.   And if the wild-card in the mix — Bandai's Pippin — does well, we could see things really begin to hop (though it wasn't at all present at CGDC). Folks, wait four months and you'll start to see a flood of new titles for the OS that put the "oooh!" in GUI.

But let's face reality. There will always be more titles out for the PC and you're not going to see Sega Rally for the Mac anytime soon. As gamers, we'll always leave Babbage's dissatisfied with our fiftieth look at Quicken's box.

For those of you who want more than a single shelf of games to choose from, that's where the next generation systems come in. I don't know about you, but I don't have room in my salary for a $4000 monster Pentium. But I did have room for a $350 Sony PlayStation. I've got the best of both worlds now: I get to play all the titles I want on my TV and when I need a bit of strategy I can fire up Allied General upstairs. I have more games now than I have time. Sure, Command &   Conquer isn't out for the Mac (or PlayStation) but I haven't seen Wipeout on PC shelves either. And no matter if you have a Mac or a PC, playing games on your couch is much more comfortable than sitting at one's desk. If you want more polygons for your pennies, think about a Saturn or a PlayStation.

Beyond that, Apple and Reply Corp have plans which may interest gamers. In the next few months we'll see 100-MHz to 200-MHz cards start shipping for many PCI equipped Macs. Orange Micro has also just announced that they'll be manufacturing PCI based Pentium cards for the Mac. Want to sit on both sides of the fence? Drop $800 for a PC card and flip operating systems as the mood strikes.

Utimately buying a game machine gets tangled up with everything else we want to do with our computers. We've all chosen Macs, and for a long time have had to take seats on the back of the software bus. But that's no longer true. The Mac is strong and more games should be coming out in late 1996. For those of you who want more than that, the PlayStation and Saturn consoles are great suppliments to your gaming diet... and just wait until Nintendo debuts with it's 64-bit system. Finally, if you're dying to play PC games, you can. Apple and Reply have been surprised by the demand for DOS cards and are planning to support the market well. With so many options available to us, gaming never looked better. Now if only someone could rescue Atari...

Please feel free to contact Scott Love with questions or comments.
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