

In his keynote address at Macworld Expo in August, Apple CEO Gil Amelio put the kibosh on the planned developer release of System 8.0. Rather than wait for a big blockbuster release of “.0” software, Apple will convert to a new System Software paradigm of continuous upgrades.

In a press release covering this matter, Apple has revealed its reasons:

“The motivation for this change is that Apple believes that its current model of monolithic system-software releases isn't working, and that it doesn't allow Apple to get software advancements out to customers and developers soon enough. Therefore, Apple has decided to change its introduction strategy for system software to adopt the industry model of shipping releases in incremental segments more regularly.”

System 7.5.4 was due to be announced by Apple on Thursday, September 12. Instead, after receiving very limited distribution, several bugs were quashed and the System was incremented to 7.5.5—which was posted September 19.

System 7.5.5 Update provides reliability improvements for all systems by eliminating some causes of system freezes and improves the reliability of sharing a printer over the network.

Performance enhancements include:

- a revised version of virtual memory, which results in significantly better performance when performing some tasks (such as launching an application), especially for PowerPC-based systems using SCSI drives. Apple warns that this improvement will vary greatly depending on the amount of RAM installed in the system, the amount of virtual memory allocated, and the applications being used;
- a revised Code Fragment Manager enables some large PowerPC-native applications to launch faster, and some applications to be launched in low-memory situations;
- the Universal System Folder, a single user-created system folder stored on an external hard disk or removable-media drive, and used to boot up a wide variety of Macintosh systems, has been enhanced to support the latest Apple computers, including the Apple Macintosh 5400 and 6400 series.

Reliability enhancements include:

- More dependable use of the floppy drive on DOS-compatible systems;
- Improved floppy formatting and better reliability during system startup for 180MHz or higher604 or 604e microprocessor-based systems;
- The elimination of one cause of Type 11 errors on PowerPC-based systems;
- Better use of sound-intensive applications for Macintosh Quadra and Centris systems updated with the Apple Power Macintosh Upgrade Card;
- More dependable operation of the remote control included with the Apple TV tuner and Macintosh TV.

Network-specific improvements include:

- Increased trouble-free networking with the 5400 and 6400 series systems;
- Better data integrity when accessing a 5400 series system over the network.

Apple now plans to issue the next system software release in January 1997, followed by another release in July 1997.

The planned January 1997 release—System Software 7.6—includes some new functionality and integrates the latest versions of OpenDoc, Open Transport, QuickTime, and Cyberdog into the Mac OS. Apple intends to ship a developer seed of this release in early October.

Apple did not divulge what was planned for its July 1997 release, though sources report that System 8.0's spring-loaded Finder and Appearance Manager may be part of the package.

ore word is out about the Limited Edition Anniversary Mac we first reported on in the May 20th MacSense HotBits. A recent MacWEEK Mac the Knife column serves up a few rumors about the machine promised by Gil Amelio in his "The Plan" web site earlier this year.

According to the Knife, the mystery machine is none other than the "Spartacus" prototype that came to light and suffered an untimely death last year. From Knife and other reports we have put together some stats and provided you with a MacSense artist's conception of the new machine. If you want to see the real thing, rent the remake of Sabrina—it's sitting on Harrison Ford's desk!

The Anniversary Mac will be limited to 20,000 units. It will be based on a 603e PowerPC and will have built in CD with many audio features. (MacSense speculates it will have the new Surround Sound from the Performa 6400 series). A PowerBook- style keyboard with enlarged touchpad will mate via cordless infrared with a superslim and tall LCD display tower that pivots on two triangular legs and houses the CD below the 10" active matrix screen. Mac the Knife claims the back side will offer two regulation PCI slots.

The sleek design is by far the biggest thing to hit the Mac since the PowerBook 500 series and is reminiscent of a Bang and Olufson stereo. Don't be surprised to see wood inlay on the keyboard handwrests similar to what was shown at Macworld Expo in Boston earlier this month.

Electronics giant Motorola intends to become the third major Mac clone maker in America within 45 days. With its "StarMax" line of Mac compatibles, Motorola plans to make inroads into the Mac's weakest area—corporate business.

The StarMax models are most notable for their unprecedented five-year warranties. The five year guarantee has one year of on-site repair; two years of service via returns through an authorized service provider; followed by two years of service through shipment of computer to a Motorola factory. Fork out an extra \$420 and you can get "same-day, on-site" repair for the entire five years. Motorola will also install the machines for \$200. The company plans to provide Mac operating system support during regular business hours for \$216 annually. Neither Apple, Power Computing or UMAX offers such an enticing support structure for corporate business accounts.

Though a novice in computer manufacturing, Motorola's introduction of the StarMax models also make it the biggest name yet to release Mac clones. Its stately, conservative approach to the business section offers an interesting bookend to Power Computing's "in-your-face," hip approach to expanding the Mac OS market. (The "personality" of Mac cloner, Umax, seems to fall somewhere between Motorola and Power Computing's approach.)

Motorola officials told USA Today (9-17-96) its company would be the number one Mac clone maker within a year, shipping "hundreds of thousands" of Apple compatibles annually. (Power Computing sold approximately 100,000 computers in 1995.) Not only will selling its StarMax clones in high volumes swell Motorola's bank account, it will also expand the market for its chip business. Motorola manufactures the PowerPC chip that fuels StarMax, Power Computing and almost all new Apple computers, as well as PowerPC models that do not use the Mac OS. (Motorola debuted a PowerPC-based line of "PowerStack II" computers that runs Windows NT along with the StarMax systems.)

The StarMax models come in two different lines: the entry level 3000 series and the high performance 4000 series. The 3000 series uses the 603e microprocessor; the 4000 series uses the beefier 604e. Both series offer a choice of desktop and minitower configurations and come in two different speeds: 160 MHz or 200 MHz. Just like Power Computing's PowerBase series, the StarMax line have ports for PS/2 keyboards and mice, as well as the Apple standard ADB port. (All StarMax models are based on Apple's "Tanzania" motherboard design offered to all Mac OS licensees.)

The 3000 desktop models come with a 256K level 2 cache, 16 MB of RAM (expandable), 1.2 GB hard drive and three PCI slots. Minitower configurations ship with a 256K level 2 cache, 32 MB of RAM (expandable), 2.5 GB hard drive and three PCI slots. All 3000 models include a Motorola 28.8 kbps data/fax modem and a software bundle Motorola claims is worth over \$1,000.

The 4000 desktop models have a 512K level 2 cache, 2 MB video EDO DRAM (expandable up to 4 MB), 16 MB of RAM (expandable), 1.2 GB hard drive and three PCI slots. Minitower configurations come with a 512K level 2 cache, 2 MB video EDO DRAM (expandable up to 4 MB), 32 MB of RAM (expandable), 2.5 GB hard drive and five PCI slots.

All 3000 and 4000 models ship with an 8x CD-ROM with 16-bit stereo sound, keyboard and mouse. Prices range from \$1,595 to \$3,595.

Two major Mac publications, working with advance models, have given the StarMax line a thumbs up—with reservations. MacWEEK (online review, 9-17) says the line offers good performance and impressive features. But MacWEEK was disappointed that the StarMaxes offered no Motorola-specific innovations and failed to place CPUs on upgradeable cards. The review also said the top-of-the-line StarMax models didn't match the maximum performance of Apple, UMAX and Power Computing's top-end models. Still, MacWEEK said the five-year warranty and Motorola's reputation for excellence "could well help firm up the Mac's recent shaky position in the corporate market."

The November 1996 MacUser came to the same basic conclusion. The review called the StarMax line "solid" and praised the warranty program. However, MacUser said the "soldered-on processors and three RAM slots will look a bit restrictive." The StarMax computers only contain three RAM DIMM sockets, limiting RAM upgradability.

The StarMax line should be on sale by mid-November in the US and before the end of the year internationally.

Also, Soyo Computer of Taiwan is expected to announce plans to build Mac compatibles for the consumer market in the USA and Far East.

For more information on the StarMax, visit <http://www.mot.com/computer/>

Apple has announced new feature-enhanced Workgroup and Network Servers, two of which support PowerPC processors speeding along at 200MHz.

The existing 7250/120 gets a new 2GB hard drive and an 8X CD-ROM, while the 8500-series server gets a robust 200MHz 604e and becomes the 8550/200. Both the 7250 and 8550 Workgroup Servers will come with a trial version of RunShare for Macintosh by RUN Ltd. RunShare is tuned to increase the transfer rate for moving large files across the network, demonstrating the largest performance gains when operating across 100 Mbps ethernet segments. Based on benchmarks from RUN, RunShare can accelerate network performance by up to 300%. The 6150/66 remains in the line-up unchanged.

Apple's UNIX-based Network Server family will now be led by the flagship Network Server 700/200, also powered by a 200MHz 604e. The entire Network Server family has been further enhanced with the availability of a high-capacity 3.5" Fast/Wide SCSI-2 disk drive (9GB), a high-capacity 8mm tape drive (20GB uncompressed/40GB compressed), an 8x-speed CD-ROM drive and a PCI FDDI card. The 8mm tape drive from Exabyte is capable of backing up data at a rate of up to 6MBs per second or 40GBs in two hours.

Existing Network Server 500/132 and Network Server 700/150 customers are expected to have the option to purchase a 200MHz CPU Upgrade Card. The 500/132 benefits from an improved internal hard disk capacity of 54GB and the 700/150 gets a new 65GB capacity.

Apple has also announced the development of symmetric multi-processing (SMP) capabilities in its Network Server product line. Availability is planned for early 1997. Apple's first SMP server systems are expected to feature two 200MHz PowerPC 604e processors and 1MB of in-line L2 cache per processor to provide performance increases of up to 1.8 times for processor-intensive server applications and environments. SMP upgrades are planned to be available for existing Network Server customers.

The new Network Server 700/200 will be configured with 48MB of DRAM, two 4GB Fast/Wide SCSI-2 hard disks and an 8x-speed CD-ROM drive, and will have an estimated street price of \$16,129 US (\$24,999 CDN).

The new Workgroup Server 7250/120 will have an estimated street price of \$2,689 and \$3,509 US (\$3,899 and \$5,199 CDN), depending on solution bundled selected.

The new Workgroup Server 8550/200 will have an estimated street price of \$5,799 and \$7,399 US (\$8,299 and \$10,499 CDN), depending on the hardware configuration and software solution bundle selected.

All servers are expected to be available in October.

Apple's Server Division home page is at:  
<http://www.solutions.apple.com/servers/>

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