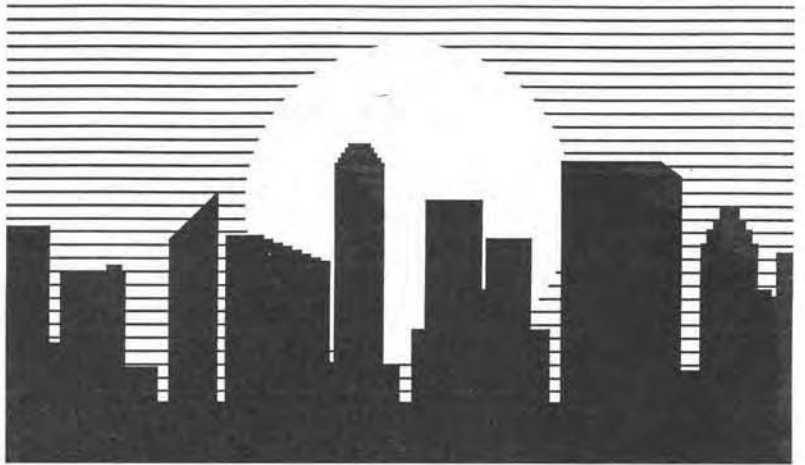


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A Close Encounter with an Apple IIGS in Singapore



I suppose all you IIGS owners out there know that your computer (the CPU at least) is assembled in Singapore, with components coming from Japan, Taiwan and many other countries. No wonder Apple never emphasizes that the Apple is American...

To the non-geographically minded, Singapore is a small island at the south-most tip of Peninsular Malaysia. It is a free port, and is one of very few countries that can boast that 100% of its population are urbanites. Incidentally, there's no room for rurals (I meant it when I said small..).

So much for the introduction. I jumped at the chance of visiting a fellow Apple IIGS owner out on this small island when he casually invited me out to his place. After picking me up at the pre-arranged shopping-complex, we drove out to his apartment in Bukit Timah in his Mitsubishi (Singapore is also one of very few countries with a 175% tax on vehicles sold locally—and you thought Keating was bad). This friend will remain un-named lest he be accused of sacrilege (Why so will come later).

After unlocking the millions of security devices on his flat's front door, we went into his study, a tiny cubicle in the proportionally tiny flat. Then, I saw his pride and joy sitting demurely (likened to a little French girl) on the marble desktop, a bright red GS and related peripherals.

That's right... RED. Evidently the owner had done a bit of homework with some lacquer, as the rest of his computer equipment was in the same shade. 'Stops colour clashes' he said. I supposed he hadn't considered the blue curtains...

Nevertheless, the IIGS powered on

as a normal platinum one would. The 140MB SCSI external drive had already reached working speed, and the stepped motors were silently reading information off the platters. In less than 10 seconds, System 5.02 was on the screen. In this time, I questioned the proud owner about the specifications of the machine.

'Memory?' queried I. '7 Meg, including the 1 Meg on board'. 'New motherboard eh?' 'Yup. Rom 03!' 'Good?' 'Fast enough.' 'Standard 2.7mHz?' 'No way! Transwarp on full!' 'Sound card?' 'Can't you see the Audio Animator there?'

A deft double click sent the hard disk drive loading AE Audio Animator's software into the CPU. Interrogation resumed.

'Apple's RGB good enough for you?' 'Too small, really.' His hand produced a universal remote controller which turned a large 26" Sony Trinitron on, showing an exact replica of the IIGS's screen. The fully expanded entertainment console behind me jumped to life with a smattering of multi-coloured lights. Thankfully, both Sony and the Pioneer sets were not painted red.

'Madonna's Dear Jessie?' 'OK by me.'

Double clicking on the Audio Animator software's selection box started the hard disk on another search lasting for about half a minute.

'Right. 6 megs worth, stereo at 30kHz coming out!' 'Huh?' 'I couldn't do it at higher-fi because 200kHz sampling would take too much RAM for the whole song.' 'A-huh...' Click.

The towering black speakers at the back of the marble desktop started

quivering, their acoustic vents blowing out huge gusts of air. However, it sounded perfect, yet different. '3D Surround effect' he grinned, 'the room is also fairly soundproof. Otherwise, the neighbors complain.' 'Ah so...' replied I, astounded.

'MIDI?' 'I've got a DX-7 in the other room. Sometimes I hook it up to the Audio Animator, but I'm a lousy player really.' 'Any good programs?' 'Take your pick. New ones like Instant Synthesizer, Jam Session, Master Tracks if you want music, games, well, there's Battle Chess, Balance of Power 1990, Tunnels of Armageddon. Lots more. Have a browse!' 'Thanks!'

So I did. Program after program loaded effortlessly from the hard drive, except the few that were copy protected and had to be loaded from 3.5". No problem, since he had four Apple drives daisy chained up. Strangely, there was another two 5.25" disk-drives as well. Seems he had an external power supply for the IIGS, to the tune of 250W, uninterrupted battery backed-up and all. That explained how his IIGS seemed to turn on by itself initially—the supply was also controlled by the Yamaha multi-remote-controller.

Several hours later, I emerged from that tomb of software, the haven for IIGS users. I clutched my couple of dozen blank disks, now full, in my hand as I made my way back to the hotel via the ultra-fast MRT system, dazed. How could I bear returning to my standard 2.7mHz IIGS, tiny RGB screen, twin drives etc.? At least it was platinum...

Bloody rich buggers...

