Open-Apple

Releasing the power to everyone.

Apple rediscovers the Apple II

It's been a long, lonesome four years for Apple II enthusiasts, but now that Apple has succeeded in business with its Macintosh line, it is readmitting to and recommitting to the Apple II. Apple demonstrated its born-again Apple II attitude at September's AppleFest in San Francisco with major new product announcements; with a confession from Apple's president, John Sculley, about Apple's treatment of the Apple II; and with a commitment to continue investing major research and development dollars in the Apple II family.

New product introductions included GS/OS, the 16-bit operating system written specifically the Apple IIgs that we've been waiting for, and the IIc-Plus. You'll find a major article on GS/OS later in this issue of *Open-Apple*.

The most striking feature of the IIc-Plus is its price. Just a week after Apple announced price increases on most of its products, it introduced a new, more-powerful IIc at a price 15 per cent *less* than the previous model. The suggested retail price on the IIc-Plus is $675, down from $799 previously. Sculley predicted that a IIc-Plus color system (including the AppleColor Composite Monitor at $429 suggested retail) would have a street price under $1,000.

The IIc-Plus also includes a built-in Apple 3.5 drive (not UniDisk 3.5), an accelerator that allows the computer to run three to four times faster than the previous IIc, and changes that make it more compatible with other Apple products, such as a slightly redesigned keyboard and mini-DIN-8 serial connectors.

The power supply "brick" is now built into the computer. You can plug the IIc-Plus directly into a power outlet. (Unfortunately, you can't plug the IIc-Plus into a car's cigarette lighter, as you can the old model, but since not more than half-a-dozen people besides me have ever done that, it's probably not a great loss.)

The IIc-Plus has internal connectors for a memory expansion card and for a modem. The memory expansion connector is different from the connector in the previous Apple IIc—*Apple's own IIc memory expansion cards will not work in this computer.* Furthermore, Apple does not intend to produce a memory card, a modem, or a flat-panel display for the IIc-Plus, but will leave development of these products to the third-party community.

Up to three additional drives can be connected to the IIc-Plus SmartPort connector. These can be a mix of Apple 3.5, UniDisk 3.5, or (one or two) 5.25 drives. A SmartPort-compatible hard disk for the IIc was also introduced at AppleFest by Chinook Technology.

The IIc-Plus weighs in at 7 pounds (3.2 kg).

I thought there were serious tones of rapprochement in John Sculley's AppleFest keynote speech. I liked Sculley's speech so much I've decided to print an edited and abridged transcript:

Apple II users were and are very special kinds of people. They've always been pioneers. They were among the first to see the importance of integrating personal computing into their daily environment....

There's such an incredible range of things that you can do with an Apple II. Remember Barney Clark, the courageous man who struggled to stay alive with an artificial heart? He did that with the help of an Apple II, which managed his artificial heart. You know that an Apple IIc has made it all the way to the top of Mt. Everest, carried through that perilous climb. Remember the Voyager, the plane that flew non-stop around the world? Dick Rutan, who designed that plane, did it with the help of an Apple II....And when America returns to space with our next shuttle mission, Discovery, there'll be an Apple IIgs on board....No computer in the world has inspired a greater range of user-driven applications than the Apple II....

I have a bit of a public confession to make to all of you. But I'd like to give you some perspective first. In 1985 we at Apple were in a crisis of corporate survival. We had to prove that the Macintosh could succeed in business. We had to deliver the Macintosh Plus in 1986 to deliver on some missing promises. The Macintosh SE and the Macintosh II have achieved our original Macintosh vision and the momentum is very strong. Competitors are in some confusion today with bus wars, with interface wars, and with standards wars.

Yocam to give just one more year

In early October Apple announced that Del Yocam has decided to leave Apple on his tenth anniversary with the company in November 1989. During his final year with Apple, Yocam will continue as president of Apple Pacific.

The Apple Education group, which Yocam has headed since mid-August (see October, page 4.67) is being moved under the Apple USA division, headed by Allan Z. Loren. Loren has created an Apple USA Marketing group, which includes three separate U.S. marketing organizations—Education, Business, and Channel—as well as Apple's Marketing Communications group. David Hancock, previously vice president of Apple Pacific, has been promoted and appointed to lead this group as senior vice president of marketing, Apple USA, reporting to Loren.

Loren also announced the creation of two new geographic units in the Apple USA Sales group, reporting to Charles M. Boesenberg, senior vice president of sales, Apple USA. As a result, five units now constitute the division's field organization: Northwestern (William B. Coldrick, VP: Northern California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Northern Nevada, Montana, Alaska, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado), Southwestern (Southern California, Southern Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii), Central (James J. Buckley, VP: Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kentucky, West Virginia, Nebraska, North and South Dakota), Southern (Georgia, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, North and South Carolina), and Northeastern (Harry D. Copperman VP: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine). These groups are responsible for all sales, support, service, field reseller, and field marketing activities in their regions. In addition, Apple USA's Channel Sales (Godfrey Sullivan, director), Federal Systems (Lloyd Mahaffey, director), and Product Distribution (Steven Acers, director) groups now report directly to Boesenberg.

THAT'S RIGHT, THE UPPER-CASE BUTTON WORKS ON SCREEN, BUT THEY'RE NOT COMING OUT ON THE DANG PRINTER! HOLD? SURE, I'LL HOLD.

Poet e.e. cummings makes his last service call.

we play games is to experience what the designer created—a jet, for instance, or a magical kingdom.

INTERCHANGEABLE CHARACTERS

Game designers assume that most people who finish the first game in a series want the next one to be more difficult. Some games even let you bring characters from an earlier game into the new one. For example, Destiny Knight lets you use characters from The Bard's Tale, or even from Wizardry or Ultima III.

That's a nice feature. But when you bring a character that's fully hardened by previous battles into a new game that's too easy to play, the first half of the game will be a cake walk. Game designers, therefore, make sequels harder to play—but where does that leave those who haven't played previous games in the series?

In The Bard's Tale, novice players spend a lot of time fighting and dying, even failing outright, to attain a bare level of survival. And where are these harder and harder games taking us?

The trouble with playing a series in order might be that newer games represent a better experience, or a better value, than older ones. Ultima I, for instance, contains a fairly small world, while succeeding Ultimas introduce vaster worlds with entire continents to explore.

More players should be able to experience the wonders of these worlds without having to play all the previous games in a series. I realize it's tough—maybe impossible—for game designers to please both novices and experts. Origin's Ultima IV ($59.95), though, does this better than any other game of this kind I've yet seen. Staying alive in Ultima IV is easy to learn,

though difficult to master. In The Bard's Tale, however, a party of novices can practically count on being destroyed utterly several times before making significant progress.

BIGGER AND BETTER

Some new features appearing in these games aren't aimed strictly at gorier battles. The recently released Apple IIGS version of The Bard's Tale adds great digitized sounds, including an eerie Gregorian chant in the temple of healing as your warriors are revived.

Although game authors rarely disclose everything they're planning, I learned that Ultima V will have twice as many different kinds of land "tiles," the grids over which your party journeys, such as mountain, swamp, grassland, and so on. The amount of spoken text will also double, allowing more realistic conversation. Ultima V will also include nightfall, a feature already found in The Bard's Tale.

But the problem of novices' needs versus those of experienced adventurers remains. Should game companies provide characters with more "experience" for those who want them? If I didn't pay my dues in the earlier games, does buying experience so that I can survive in the tougher games make me less of a game player? These adventures have a lot to offer more casual computer gamers as well as pros. Let me know what you think. ∎

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