

COMPUTERWORLD

Apple recall sours premium price plan

By Lisa Picarille

The timing couldn't be worse.

Macintosh users and analysts agree that Apple Computer, Inc. will have a hard time charging a premium price for its products in light of last week's announcement that as many as 1 million Macintoshes could be seriously flawed.

The Cupertino, Calif., company plans to reimburse its authorized dealers to repair or refurbish defective machines at no cost to users.



Cyberdog, Apple's Internet suite of OpenDoc applets, ships this week. See page 16.

The affected models include the Power Macintosh 5200LC and 5300LC, several models in the Performa 6200 and 6300 lines and the PowerBook 5300s and 190s. Each of these models crashes randomly and often, and freezes up intermittently (see chart, page 16). Dealers will try to repair the Power Macintoshes and Performas, but the PowerBooks will have to be sent to a central Apple recall, page 16

Mixed messaging

Digital floods users with mail options; vision unclear

By Tim Ouellette

Digital Equipment Corp. this week will gallop into the Internet E-mail race with AltaVista Mail, hoping to lasso new users for the firm's messaging products.

But users of Digital's existing electronic-mail products, MailWorks and All-In-1, have yet to see a clear vision of the future for their systems.

And the message has been further clouded by Digital's support of Microsoft Corp.'s Exchange for Windows NT and reports that Digital may provide NT-based OfficeServer as an alternative to Exchange.

"Digital sees its own products as answers for the enterprise" and mixed environments, with Exchange targeted more at the Windows NT workgroup level for now, said Mark

a Windows NT-based Internet E-mail server that works with any of the inexpensive Post Office Protocol-3 E-mail clients on the market. It targets companies with several remote offices or smaller departments that need Internet mail access — not Digital's traditional audience.

History lesson

Digital's All-In-1 has changed a lot since 1982. Version 3.2 now runs on Digital's Alpha platform and has discarded the proprietary interfaces to keep up with current standards.

For example, network manager Paul Demediuk at Washington University's School of Medicine, turned to AltaVista Mail to manage student E-mail accounts. The St. Louis university has never been a user of Digital's products; it ran a basic Unix-based E-mail system instead.

"I was constantly adding and taking people off the Unix system," Demediuk said. "AltaVista Mail is a lot easier [to use] to administer transient accounts, and the users can do some basic administration themselves from their Web browser."

Levitt, an analyst at International Data Corp. in Framingham, Mass. AltaVista Mail 1.0 is

Simple administration is one feature luring many current MailWorks and All-In-1 users who run Unix and OpenVMS to look at Windows NT.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Netscape plans software for processing credit-card transactions over the Internet. See story, page 6, by Mitch Wagner.



■ A tiny digital audio company in Hollywood, Fla., has filed lawsuits against Microsoft, Netscape, America Online and two dozen other online and voice-mail vendors, alleging patent violations for audio technology. See story, page 6, by Kim S. Nash.



■ Traveling man Dan Coolidge shares his experiences in his new book *Survival Guide for Road Warriors*. See story, page 8, by Mindy Blodgett.

■ SAP AG announces tools to simplify and ease the cost burden of R/3 implementations. See story, page 12, by Julia King.



Tandem's Roel Pieper (left) and Microsoft's Steve Ballmer say they will bring clustering and reliability to Windows NT servers

Tandem to enable fault-tolerant NT

By Michael Goldberg

Microsoft Corp. last week sought to allay any concerns about Windows NT's reliability for mission-critical applications by striking a deal with fault-tolerant systems leader Tandem Computers, Inc.

The pact means that in return for a payment of more than \$30 million from Microsoft, Tandem will make Windows NT versions of its proprietary fault-tolerant middleware, including its NonStop SQL database system.

Novell battles on NT, Internet fronts

By Laura DiDio

After three years of strategic missteps and costly acquisitions, a newly svelte Novell, Inc. is making many of the right moves.

Having exited the desktop application market by unloading WordPerfect and its UnixWare offerings at a staggering loss, the Orem, Utah-based networking firm will use the Internet to become a network services company, President Robert Frankenberg said last week.

This latest strategic twist will find Novell caught between a rock and a hard place — Microsoft Corp.'s Windows NT Server, and the perception that Novell won't be able to match its success with NetWare in the LAN market with a similar dominance of the

Novell's long-term success is guarded optimism based on its biggest asset: a mostly loyal installed base (see chart below) and the company's newfound

Novell, page 113

Will the rise of Internet Web servers make NetWare obsolete?



Editorial

Surfing

I don't usually devote this column to a new product, but there's one on my desktop I think is important enough to challenge our assumptions about Internet information delivery.

It's PointCast, an Internet-enabled screen saver that draws a continuous stream of news, weather, sports, business and lifestyle information from a server on the 'net. This free client software from PointCast, Inc. in Cupertino, Calif., (<http://www.pointcast.com>) is the most useful application of agent technology I've seen, and it may spark a fundamental change in the way we think about Internet interfaces.

PointCast lives on your Windows PC and quietly downloads categories of news that you specify over a background Internet connection. You can read the information online or let PointCast's screen saver utility pop up and display the headlines, stock quotes and, yes, advertisements on your screen. If you have a continuous Internet connection, your data is never more than about an hour old.

What impresses me about PointCast isn't so much the technology — although that's pretty slick — but the way it challenges the Web browser metaphor. Frequent surfers know that one of the most maddening things about the World Wide Web is that it's a passive medium: You have to go looking for stuff. That's a waste of time for the user and a problem for businesses that spend time and money drawing users to their sites.

PointCast brings you the information you want without your having to ask. The screen saver is a small stroke of genius because it makes the application an active presence on your desktop. PointCast will keep the service free by selling on-screen ads. Company officials say it's already the second-most-visited Web site.

Now PointCast is extending the technology to the intranet through a \$995 package that gives an internal web the same capabilities as the PointCast server. So, instead of Cubs scores scrolling across your screen, you can see the names of new hires in your business unit. It's a smart way to use all those MIPS that are being burned running "Dilbert" screen savers.

I expect the PointCast idea to be adopted in a lot of other products. As an information provider, I'm a little spooked by the competition. But as an avid 'net surfer, I'm intrigued by the creativity of the concept. I wish I'd thought of it.



Paul Gillin, Editor



Letters to the editor

Remember OS/2

I was amused and annoyed to see Bob Francis' article "Desktops hit disk barrier" [CW, April 15]. Oh, my. None of the major operating systems — "MS-DOS, Windows 3.1 and Windows 95" — can handle drives more than 2G bytes, so you'll have to switch to NT. Especially amusing is that on the jump page the box in the upper right corner is "Nightmare on NT street." Ever heard of OS/2?

High-performance file system supports drives up to 512G bytes, yet there is nary a mention of it in Francis' article. Of course, at 12 million users (as of last December), OS/2 isn't a major operating system. Perhaps the name of your publication should be *RedmondWorld*, so that your masthead reflects the same orientation as your staff.

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Some great advice for losing one's job

Richard Finkelstein's Viewpoint column ["Separating the cyberbergs from the cyberjunk," CW, April 29] is a great recipe for getting to know a headhunter. It's good enough advice for the 80% of the applications that

bread-and-butter applications. The "high deployment, maintenance and upgrade costs ... of today's client/server applications" don't even approach the user's cost of lost productivity due to a browser-based application's poor response time for any remotely mission-critical application.

Finkelstein clearly doesn't understand the nature of the hardware business if he thinks he can avoid renovating thousands of pieces of desktop hardware every two years. Manufacturers will ensure that this year's model has some whizbang feature not in last year's. Any IS manager who tells users their obsolete models are still "good enough" will soon be looking for a job.

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Microsoft will win

In a technological sense, civilization advances as people learn to use new inventions ["Will Microsoft catch Netscape?" CW, April 29]. Over time, complexity is learned or hidden, and new ideas become common knowledge. This same force will tame the Internet, and network access will be simplified. I predict dominance by Microsoft. It is a marketing master of the commonplace.

Jerry Norton
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An 'open' question on Windows NT

In "DEC's Win NT gang grabs for

sociates analyst] Tony Iams as claiming that Windows NT is more open than Unix environments. Does Iams really expect us to believe that an operating system that lives in the public domain is less open than one owned and controlled by a single company? The next time you get quotes from an expert, make sure he knows something about what he's talking about.

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Tech doesn't filter down from tyrants

I care about social issues. I'd rather not read about them in *Computerworld* though, thank you, especially the specious social drivél espoused by Joe Maglitta ["Dying to make technology work for all," CW, May 6].

People do help one another. Technology does filter down, except in places such as Cuba. Making the world a better place is one thing — and what most of us are trying to do at our jobs. Making the world safe for repressive government edicts and tyrants is another. I wonder if Maglitta knows the difference.

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■ Computerworld welcomes comments from its readers. Letters should not exceed 200 words and should be addressed to Paul Gillin, Editor, Computerworld, PO Box 9171, 500 Old Connecticut Path, Framingham, Mass. 01701. Fax number: (508) 875-8800. Internet: letters@cw.com