he Microsoft Anti-Trust Case -

# The Battle For The Internet
by Thomas Ash

By the time you read this, the court action brought against Microsoft by 20 US states and the Department of Justice will have started. Those of you who have read the case against Microsoft will probably have been impressed by the DoJ's understanding of the Microsoft monopoly (and the economies of network and scale which make it so unbreakable), but might have been a bit dissapointed to find that the case is exclusively about Microsoft's emerging monopoly in internet browsers, rather than it's existing one in operating systems which is such a problem for Apple.

But make no mistake - a few years down the road a monopoly in internet browsers will be far more valuable than one in operating systems, and Microsoft knows this very well. Commentators all over the world are waking up to the fact that it will be the NC, not the PC that will rule the computing world in the next century. Sure, the NC has been ridiculed, but it makes a hell of a lot of sense, particularly in the form of an iNC.

NC... hmmm. Sounds kind of like an iMac, doesn't it? In fact it stands for interNet Computer - a $150 box to plug into your TV, and let you browse the web and use the power of super-powerful servers. Such a machine would win over millions of consumers, and is perfectly viable right now. When the sluggishness of the net is rectified by satellite and cable modems in a few years, the PC will stand no chance.

Microsoft's problem with this is that the iNC will completely bypass conventional operating systems like Windows and the Mac OS. The battle is now on to see who will own the standard cross-platform, internet based means of running applications. I'm sure the first possible standard that springs to your mind is Java. Microsoft is actively trying to sabotage Java, supporting a modified version of it that only runs under Windows. How useful. This is where Microsoft's control over 50% of internet users via Internet Explorer comes in really handy, as it can choose not to support any technologies which could potentially damage it's monopoly.

ut where does Apple fit into all of this? Apple might do well to get into this race, and as it happens it has something of a headstart. You see, Apple already owns one cross-platform, internet based standard - QuickTime. At the moment, rumours are circulating that Apple intends to extend QuickTime's capabilities with version 4 to include running simple applications. So for example a piece of multimedia might just be a single QuickTime movie, playeable over the internet. It looks like for the first time since 1984, Apple is starting to move

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