

## t's A Bugs Life

Richard Sarson

If you ask one of the Mac magazines what you should do to avoid the Millennium bug, they will write back in a lordly way to say that you have no need to worry because the Mac has had a four-digit year since 1984. They will probably add that the people really at risk are the Mainframers with legacy systems, or the electricity power-stations.

If you ask a Y2K consultancy specialising in large-company networks, they will say that they have tested all the legacy systems to destruction as part of their contracts with the IT departments. But the people who are really at risk are the Departmental PC people who decided not to spend money on a Y2K audit.

When I ask if these consultants have ever found that Macs are safer than PCs, Y2K-wise, they do not know what I am talking about. Nobody, least of all Apple, have ever told them that Macs and PCs are different from each other in this rather important matter of the year-length. Ask the same question of a Bug Buster, who has spent the last year sorting out the Y2K problems of SMEs, and you will get the same blank look. I am left dumb-founded at the blinkered ignorance of the people who earn a lot of money being "experts" on Y2K.

once ventured the view to Robin Guenier, head of Taskforce 2000, which is the outfit that for three years has has been crying Woe, the sky will fall on your head on January 1st, that everybody should buy a Mac, to avoid the Bug. He replied that this would not be so brilliant an idea, because "the BIOS may be OK, but that doesn't fix the operating system, the application software and all that stuff - spreadsheets databases and so on - you developed yourself using good ol' two digit years." My first reaction to this was that

Robin was just another old mainframe man, who doesn't understand anything about the Mac market, which has one operating system tightly meshed into the hardware, and some perfectly adequate spreadsheet and database packages. All this makes it quite unnecessary to do anything so daft as write your own programs and date routines. Another false prophet.

But then I thought for a minute about other Mac users I know, and realised that they are the most opinionated, arrogant, obsessive and perfectionist people in the world. They are quite capable of rejecting contemptuously anything served up to them, and doing their own thing, with one-digit year codes, if they felt so inclined. So, if you have people like that using your Mac, you are in as much manure as the most benighted PC user.

On top of that, you might have the problem of using packages which were originally developed for the PC or Unix, and the two-digit years have infected the Mac version.

o, I thought I would see what Apple itself says about the Millennium bug. This is it: "A Year 2000 Compliant product from Apple will not produce errors processing date data in connection with the year change from December 31, 1999, to January 1, 2000, when used with accurate date data in accordance with its documentation, provided all other products (e.g., other software, firmware and hardware) used with it properly exchange date data with the Apple product. A Year 2000 Compliant product from Apple will recognize the Year 2000 as a leap year.

The Apple Year 2000 Compliance Statement refers to all Apple-branded hardware and software products as originally delivered by Apple indicated as compliant on this website. The Compliance Statement does not apply to product features that have been customized or altered, or third party add-on features or products, including items such as macros and custom programming and formatting features. Apple's Year 2000 Compliance Statement does not extend to third party software applications, whether shipped preinstalled on an Apple computer or installed using a program supplied by Apple. Apple does not test third party applications for Year 2000 compliance and encourages customers to consult third party publishers directly for information concerning Year 2000 compliance. Only currently-supported Apple products have been tested for compliance."

So, there you have it. Mac users are NOT immune from the Millennium Bug. They have to check their application software suppliers, before they can be sure. So, stop being smug, and get checking. Cupertino says so, and Cupertino is always right. And don't forget to check the work of the maverick programmers in house.

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