

Veronica

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Yes, she is one of the many beautiful girls after Archie but she's also the next build of the Mac OS... and boy is she BUILT. Currently in beta testing, Mac OS 8.6 (codenamed "Veronica") is due to be released in early April, or sometime in the next 35 days. The next release is going to be a free update to all owners of 8.5, like the 8.5.1 update. Unlike the 8.5.1 update, which was mainly a bug fix, Veronica is going to include many more additions to the Mac OS arsenal of features. The focus of the features in the next two releases of OS 8, Veronica and Sonata (8.7), are going to be the migration towards OS X (Ten). As 8.5 did, Veronica will only run on PowerPC machines and will be optimized for the G3 architecture, including iMacs and Powerbooks. So, now onto what's happening inside Veronica.

The biggest feature in Veronica is the new "nanokernel". A kernel is the essential part of the operating system responsible for resource allocation, low-level hardware interfaces, security, and other low-level tasks. This feature is designed to smooth the transition to X by supporting such Blue Box features like "rootless" (partially transparent) operation. For those who don't know, the Blue Box is what will allow systems designed around the Yellow Box (Rhapsody/OS X) to run native Mac OS applications. Currently, when companies report that they have developed some application for OS X Server, that development is done in the Yellow Box. Along with this Blue Box feature, Veronica's nanokernel boasts improved multitasking efficiency and multiprocessor support. The new nanokernel allows Virtual Memory to be on while the Multiprocessor library is in use. The friendly engineers at Apple have reduced the new nanokernel's RAM footprint from 2 MB+ to a meager 60KB. There are many other technical features such as a new, high performance memory allocator, processor errata fixes, a suspend-on-exception task model, and integrated debugger support.

Veronica will include several other upgrades to some of its individual software pieces. This will be the first OS release to include Game Sprockets as part of the default install. This looks like one more step to turn the Mac OS into a gaming platform.

Sherlock is sure to be updated to version 1.2, allowing the user to resize the "Search Internet" portion of the application and add an "Uncheck All" button.

The new version of Sherlock will be accompanied with an extension called "URL Access" which will give proxy support to Sherlock. The help engine will get a revision along with including an SDK, allowing developers to utilize the Apple "Help" facilities. The content provided in the Help Viewer will be revised and get additions that discuss the new features in 8.6.

The Macintosh Runtime for Java, now version 2.1, when combined with Veronica will offer performance that is competitive, if not better, than Windows. The Chooser will continue to be repressed, possibly replaced in Sonata with another printer choosing application. The Network Browser will continue to be the AppleShare browser of choice. Themes will continue to be built into the Finder experience, however, they will be unsupported by Apple. Hardware support will also be spread further. There will be updates for Revision C iMacs, "Blue" G3s, USB, Firewire, and DVD support. The ground will also be laid for support of Apple's next generation laptops and desktops. And the list goes on: PlainTalk update for iMac microphones, Apple System Profiler 2.2, support for read/write DVD, minor adjustments and bug fixes to AppleScript, LaserWriter software updates for secure printing as well as USB support for Postscript printers, updates for Apple's Multi-Language Text Editor allowing for more than 32K of text and Unicode, updates for AppleShare, updates for Veronica's Installer application, support for Unicode imaging and layout, and an update for DiskCopy.

Veronica has been developed alongside the next release of another important Apple technology, QuickTime. QuickTime 4.0 is expected to be released at the same time as Veronica BUT not bundled with 8.6. The next version of QuickTime will turn streaming multimedia into child's play. In QuickTime format, movies can be set to stream to one client or any number of clients. This technology was shown in that famous

demonstration by Mr. Jobs of fifty iMacs receiving some streaming Bare Naked Ladies music videos from one G3 Server. It seems that both of these project's timetables have been pushed back into early April, but hopefully we shall see them published in tandem.

As you can see, this is no small update to our favorite Operating System, and Veronica's previous version number, 8.5.2, does not do her justice. I am awaiting with high hopes this next version of the OS but with even more anticipation for OS X and that essential element in Macintosh life, Carbon.

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