ey, we love your email, and this page is where we prove it! So if you have a comment, question, opinion, or complaint about anything related to My Mac Magazine or the Macintosh experience, please write us at <publisher@mymac.com> or <editor@mymac.com> and let us know what's on your mind!

Vimage G3/325

As a regular reader of My Mac, I noticed your fairly rave review of the Vimage G3/225 card (Issue #44 Dec 1998), so between that article and the excellent 6400 Zone website I purchased the 325MHz version from Small Dog Electronics.

Firstly, from Small Dog the service has been excellent with delivery effectively taking only 2 days longer than if I had ordered from a domestic UK supplier.

I then followed your installation guide for my 6500/250 as it was easier to follow than the manual which, as needs must, deals with a number of different machines. One criticism I have of the manual is that it features the G3/225 card and associated speed figures of what to expect once installed.

Once installed, my Mac hung at the Speed Doubler extension. This was anticipated as the bug has been flagged in the PF G3 320/325 install review on the 6400 Zone site. Simply rebooting without the extensions and inserting a space in front of the Vpower extension cured the problem.

The double boot still exists but is really of no consequence.

I have now been using the accelerator for 2 weeks and it has proved completely

stable.

Regards
Mike Williams
<<Mike@ollantay.force9.co.uk>>

Mike, I have the 325MHz version now, too, and I agree that it works great and has actually made my Mac more stable. Before the upgrade, there were times when, if, for example, I launched AIM and checked my email at the same time, my Mac would crash, and crash hard. But with both the older G3 card and now this newer version, that problem vanished. So I'm left to wonder if the instruction sets in the 603e chip are somehow midly buggy, because there's nothing different on my Mac save the CPU upgrade.

Glad you had good luck with Small Dog. They're really a great bunch of people to work with!

One last thing: it looks like Vimage has changed their business focus here in the United States. They're no longer selling to end users, nor even to vendors like Small Dog. Instead, they've decided to sell their products only to third-party hardware companies that will then re-market them under their own brand names. This was a business decision, and apparently there's more money to be made that way. Regardless, we wish them the best. Whether this means their upgrade cards will cost more for Mac users remains to be seen.
Tim

MacFactor Article

I would like to see proof that the Mac is cheaper and is easily upgradable. I have worked with Macs for 6 years and PCs for 15 years and the cost difference is not even comparable. Mac have been and probably always will be 15 to 30 percent higher in price than PC's.

Further more on the upgradability—The G3 is the only Apple computer that I have run across that you might be able to upgrade the processor. What else can you upgrade? Memory all computers do that, video I want a Riva TNT2 with 32 megs. Speaking of memory why is PC100 memory 32megs hovering around $100.00. PC 32megs SDram is only a mere $33.00. So as you can see I would like to know where you obtained all of your information because it is not really accurate either. I like both systems they each have their ups and downs. Slamming one only shows

how bias we can be. Also the most important question. Who gave Apple BILLIONS of dollars to keep them afloat?????? Lets see Microsoft Bill Gates the one who is being slammed the most.

Sit back and think next time. I wish I could say this was a good article but it's not.

Thanks
Milton Hammer
<mhammer@schoolvision.com>

Mick Responds
Thanks for your email. In response to your arguments: (1) there are two types of upgrades—hardware and software. The days when the average consumer considered a hardware upgrade are quickly coming to a close as technology improves and gets cheaper. That is, the iMac will run the vast majority of Mac and PC software at acceptable speeds (PC software using emulation programs like SoftPC) and as iMac specs move up and the price goes down, it just will become a non-starter to even consider a hardware upgrade. I expect the iMac, however, will eventually incorporate a FireWire bus in order to make it easier to attach high speed peripherals. Since 1986, Macs have included a Small Computer System Interface (SCSI) that has allowed relatively effortless expansion. Meanwhile, PCs have required opening the system and installing some kind of expansion board—a thowback to the early days of personal computing.   iMacs currently support USB expansion—and though it's relatively slow—it's adequate for most consumer purposes.

High-end Macs (like high-end PCs) will continue to support board level expansion and, in fact, the 'Blue G3' Macs have a clever swing-out case that makes it easier than ever to get to the innards—if that is a requirement. The 'upgradability' of processors   may sound intriguing, but real performance upgrades depend to an extent on a whole range of factors including bus width, cache speed and size, and so on. There are presently upgrade paths for virtually all of the older PowerPC-based Macs, though again, any upgrade strategy should be carefully compared to the purchase of a new system. (I purchased my PowerPC 8100 for around $4500 some five years ago, while today you can get a much more powerful system (the iMac) for less than one-third of the price. Though the 80 MHz processor is sluggish compared to the new 4000-500 MHz CPUs currently being introduced, it still is adequate for my purposes and runs a terrific array of graphics software at acceptable speeds.)

The practicality and availability of hardware upgrades and expandability is important, but the cost of upgrades also must take into consideration the technical ease with which a system can be modified. If you have worked with PCs for a number of years, then you already understand the complexity of installing new hardware. Early versions of Windows were problematic, but could be 'worked.' That is, adding a network board, an accelerator, a SCSI board, or a sound board might just work the first time, but often required you to adjust a memory setting or an interrupt request to get the system to actually acknowledge the board. Now that there are some five versions of Windows kicking around—each supporting different sets of hardware drivers—it has become enormously complex to expand systems. The inane error messages that accompany attempts to upgrade systems are symptomatic of this complexity. I'm not 'Windows-bashing' here—just relating my experience.

(2) Software upgrades are a different matter. I differentiate these into system software upgrades and application software upgrades. Macintosh system upgrades have certainly not been error free. If you read my earlier columns, you'll note I experienced some problems moving from system 8.1 to 8.5, but in comparison to Windows upgrades, they are truly seamless. It appears that the only way to upgrade Windows software from one system to another is to completely trash the earlier system. Then—if you're lucky—the new system will include drivers for all of your peripherals. The Windows registry and profiles will have to be retailored for mutliple users and, unfortunately, the task is a daunting one. As Stewart Alsop finally discovered (after years of covering the PC industry), even homespun geeks can't successfully upgrade their systems (see this month's Mac Factor). The fact that the registry makes no sense and the average user can make changes to it speaks volumes about Microsoft's lack of understanding of the consumer market. Again, this isn't 'Microsoft-bashing'—it's simply the truth.

Applications upgrades on the Mac are nearly always trouble-free. In years of upgrading applications software, I can't recall a significant problem except with (you guessed it!) Microsoft's Office and Internet Explorer, which both seemed to go out of their way to populate my Macintosh with a wide range of inane, unintelligible preferences and settings. Both products work   fine, but it bothers me that so much clutter is placed around the System. Upgrading applications software on a PC, on the other hand, is only for the strong of heart. Again, I refer you to Alsop's excellent column.

One problem with applications software and systems software is the "leapfrog" effect. That is, when a new system is released, new applications software quickly

follows that takes advantage of the new system and, by the way, requires you to buy the upgrade. Historically, Mac systems software has avoided this problem, though the introduction of System 7 did present somewhat of a departure point for earlier software. But even then, adherence to Apple's software development guidelines pretty much ensured that software would run under newer versions of the system. Early Mac software, like 'FrontDesk', for example, ran quite happily for years despite numerous system updates. In the PC world, developers were free to write software any way that worked (this "freedom" championed by the likes of Alsop and Pournelle) and so new versions of Windows often created new problems, requiring users to upgrade their applications. ("Freedom's just another word for nothing left to spend.") And now that there are five versions of Windows kicking around, this problem has been somewhat exacerbated.

You made some point about someone giving Apple 'billions of dollars to keep them afloat.' Sorry, you added a few too many zeros there and anyone who knows Mr. Gates, understands that he doesn't 'give' the competition anything. Microsoft did very well with their stock investment and their alliance with Apple certainly seemed like a strategic move in the face of the federal government's charge that Microsoft were ruthlessly destroying the competiton. I'd also make the assumption that the company knew about the iMac technology and realized it would be successful and sell a lot of Microsoft software.

You know, I've written about Mac software for years, while at the same time using Windows technology on a daily basis. I have no interest in Apple other than an appreciation for the 'innovator' that dares to take a chance (Think Differently, if you will). I resent being labeled as a 'Mac person' because I am not. There are a whole lot of us who are simply excited about computing and have objectively determined that the Mac still offers the most reliable system in town. Please don't accuse me of bias; ad hominem attacks are a simple way to dismiss someone's point of view. (One of my earlier columns, now available at the My Mac site, was "Micro Bigotry is a Macro Problem.") If you disagree with someone technically, put the labels away and then refute their arguments.

Thanks again for taking the time to write.

Mick O'Neil <mickoneil@mymac.com>
'The Mac Factor'

Power Computing & Apple

David at Apple wrote:
Apple has neither tested nor qualified Mac OS 8.5 or Mac OS 8.6 with third-party, Mac OS-compatible computers. You should be aware that Mac OS 8.6 may not work with your computer.   Apple does not provide support for customers using Mac OS 8.6 with non Apple branded computers. For specific information about the compatibility of Mac OS 8.6 with you product, please contact the manufacturer of your product.

But Apple purchased Power Computing, so that's now you—or does corporate memory disappear after one kills a viable clone market?

If you truly read my message, it's wholly about Apple's OS issues and the installation of 8.6. I would point to the section where I wrote that I experienced the same problems installing the OS on an Apple Powerbook 1400cs with maxxed out RAM. Apple's instructions and Help file, as well as Read Me files, did not indicate that the name of Open Transport PPP had changed to Apple Remote Access, which used to be a client for the Apple Remote Access Server program, which you sold separately.

The icons, which are labeled "Browse the Internet" and "Mail" on both the Apple Powerbook and the Power Computing clone do not function to initiate Open Transport and open up my browser and mail client. Instead, I have had to create aliases of my own in the Apple Menu Items that do function correctly.

I would also remind Apple that Power Computing had a Powerbook clone that they wanted to sell, but Apple refused to allow the box to be manufacturered. Instead, Apple immediately took action to eliminate the clone market, and eliminate free technical support (which was a factor in my comparison of Apple computers to PCs and other Mac OS compatible computers) via 1-800-SOS APPL.

I am your preferred customer, as I work in publishing, media, and video. I am a power user and fully understand that you would prefer to not support my Power Computing box. I'm also aware that you would prefer to not need to support my 6100 or my Powerbook because these are legacy computers and you want me to rush out and purchase a blue and white G3 or an iMac right this instant.

I am also a rare customer for you, as I moved to the Apple OS from the Microsoft OS because my Microsoft OS computer could not do what I needed it to do and all

Macs could do that just fine, thanks. I believe in what Apple is doing and I wanted to suggest that Apple could warn users who were installing the new OS to understand that you have renamed Open Transport PPP and that your new desktop aliases would not work unless you did an installation of Microsoft's Internet Explorer (I suppose).

But you'd rather quickly dismiss my honest advice due to "unsupported hardware." My issue could have easily be handled by the inclusion of a Read Me file on your installation CD-ROM or some more creative programming on your part (with respect to the desktop aliases).

-Mark Hollis
<mhollis@onepine.com>

My first Mac

It was an Apple, but not really a true one. Rather it was a FranApple. I'll expose it for what it was... a Franklin Ace. I loved it, except for the DOS system which was so much trouble, even with the help of a computer group where I was with only a few other Apple folk. So, one day my son saw my suffering and gave me his original Mac, no one remembers the model number; he needed a new one. Franklin Ace, the Apple IIE clone was out. The new Mac was fine, until it needed repair, as did the extra hard drives, but no one could fix it and no one wanted it or the Franklin either, the poor thing. But we moved and I couldn't give them away, not to a school, not to a library, not to a dealer. So first Mac was to leave me forever.

Then in Florida, I got my first really new Mac, in a deal as an educator, directly from Apple and I was hooked; imagine a 6115 with too much RAM and disk allowance. That is until I learned to do things with it. Thus ,eventually the 6115 went to my grandchildren and I got the 6500 which is still mine, until a G3 starts to tempt. My grandkids are now looking for an iMac and they may get it soon.

My son is now in Kentucky, (music prof)   and uses a Mac desktop..and the grandkids await a gift of a new Mac, maybe iMac from us.   BUT I stay with what I have.. a G3? Gee! who knows? If I survive to ???? My 2 year old Mac is aging faster than I am.

Abraham Amchin
<ABSHRINK@aol.com>

My Mac Magazine

Love the article, not like, LOVE, about Sonata by Adam Karneboge! I find it so hard to get in-depth news about upcoming Macintosh software. I have been researching Macintosh management software for 2 days and found all I needed was a little more time and the MM software will come with the new OS. Thank you so much! You've got a new subscription.

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