y R. Kirk McPike
Where's the Speed?

Remember the 80s? Good, I thought so. Remember TV in the 80s? Well, we're rolling now! Here's the tough part: remember those Wendy's commercials with the little old lady who was always looking for "the beef" in McDonalds, Burger King and Whataburger products?

Everytime I see a Performa (even my brother's 6116 or my school's 5215s) I think of her: I see her walking around the aisles of a local CompUSA (which I just learned is *not* pronounced "comp-oo-sa" ;-). What is this old lady doing in a computer store? Well, she's ripping the casings off of Apple Performas, wondering "Where's the speed?"

I mean, where IS the speed? That 5215 says it runs at 75 MHz, yet a Power Mac 6100/60 kicks its butt in just about every benchmark out there. Even the multimedia" Performas are dull beyond belief. The
"100 MHz" PowerBooks are too. That's the slowest 100
MHz I've ever seen.

So in these days when Apple has rip-roaring Power Macs
 for all those boring office people, must home users suffer
through the experience of waiting (and waiting and waiting)
 for that weak little PowerPC 603e CPU in their Performa
to open their favorite games and programs? Nope. Not
anymore. Now, everyone can have blinding speed, thanks to
clones: thanks to Power Computing.

It's called the PowerCenter. It's a 604 based machine running between 120 and 150 MHz (as fast as Apple's fastest business machine). And it costs less than most any Performa; the lowest end (read: cheesiest) PowerCenter retails for less than $2,000.

By offering these speed-for-the-masses machines, Power is pushing the availability of truly powerful Power Macs up and offering more people a more inticing reason to drop Wintel and join the Cult of Mac. And it's something Apple could never do.

I'm not saying that Apple couldn't produce machines as slick as the PowerCenters (or their big brothers, the 166 and 180 MHz PowerTowers). Of course Apple could, innovation is Apple's middle name. But it couldn't price them this low because Apple's R & D budget forces the company to adopt certain pricing practices that bump the price on otherwise low cost machines.

These practices will be alleviated somewhat when the low-cost PowerPC Platform Macs start being released, but for now, they persist in forcing Apple's prices up, and let it fall to Power to really push the speed of the Mac OS forward.

DayStar Digital and Umax Computer also perform similar feats (along with Power) at the high end, where clone systems continue to leave Apple eating price-to-performance dust. The DayStar Genesis MP is the world's first workstation-class Mac. The Umax S900L is a speed demon in line with the PowerTowers, and has built in multiprocessor support. Apple

can't keep up, and I think that's a good thing.

Having these clones pave the way, with MP, with 180 MHz machines, and soon with 200 and 225 MHz machines (the Power Computing PowerTower Pro series), Apple can, for once, follow instead of lead, and cut its R & D budget (and therefore the prices of its models) back. By allowing itself to fall incrementally behind, Apple can ride the slipstream of Power, DayStar and Umax's development, then pull out from behind with some killer new Macs. After which, the cloners coatail Apple before leapfrogging again. As this process continues, the companies learn more from each other, produce better
machines and cut costs dramatically.

This is how it happens in the Intel world, and its finally starting here with the Macs. And all thanks to clones.

So, in response to that little old lady, delirously and vainly searching the racks of CompUSA for the Performa Express that doesn't exist, I can only say "Where's the speed? Over at Computer City, an authorized dealer of Power Computing clones."

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Hey there, if you want to hear my views of why Apple's gonna make it outta the bad press blues and the Mac will never die, point your browser, preferably Microsoft Internet Explorer 2, over at:

http://members.aol.com/fireballkm/apple.html

and tell me what you think!

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