

5 and  
once you have  
\$120.

# plugged in

## Writing new chapter for

### SIMSON GARTINKEL

I BOUGHT MY FIRST Macintosh back in 1985. The computer was slow, the disks didn't hold enough, and it crashed a lot. I sold the machine three months later to a foolish MIT graduate student.

Two years later I bought my first laptop, a Toshiba 1000. Since then, I've owned a string of PC laptops. Most were fast for their time, and relatively cheap. But when I moved from DOS to Windows, I started having device-driver problems. Another problem was Microsoft Windows itself: the operating system wasn't too friendly on a laptop's tiny screen. I gave up on Windows, and kept my laptop running DOS.

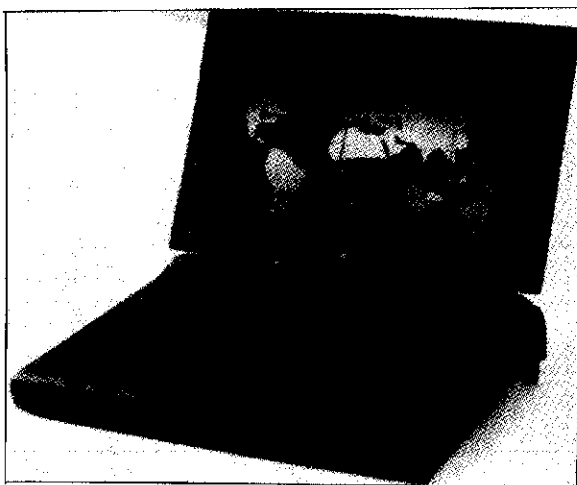
Last year, I decided to give Apple another try. I bought a PowerBook Duo 280c. Since Apple built both the hardware and the software, I didn't have any of the device-driver problems that are commonplace in the Windows world. And while there may be fewer programs available for Macs than for PCs, I found that I could run Quicken, send and receive faxes, and have my choice of more than six word processor programs. I was an easy convert to the Macintosh.

This week, a lot of Macintosh users have felt slighted as the hoopla over Windows 95 — a program that makes a PC almost as easy to use as a Mac — reached a fever peak. Apple's new laptop family, introduced this week, were almost lost in the hype.

But these new PowerBooks, the 5300 series, represent a fundamental step forward for Macintosh users. They are dramatically faster than existing machines, have bigger screens, spacious hard disks, and infrared networking — features that might show up on Windows notebooks later this year, or early next.

Based on a new PowerPC microprocessor, the 603e, the new PowerBooks offer 20-40 percent faster performance than last year's top-of-the-line desktop Power Macintosh computers. They can easily out-perform today's top-of-the-line Pentium desktop machines.

At the apex of the new PowerBook line is the 5300ce/117. This computer comes equipped with a



The new PowerBooks are dramatically faster than existing machines, have bigger screens, spacious hard disks, and infrared networking.

117Mhz PowerPC 603e processor, 32MB of RAM, 1.1GB of hard disk, and a stunning 10.4-inch active-matrix SVGA screen that displays 800 by 600 pixels, each one 16-bits deep. Today nearly every laptop on the market is limited to a 640x480 display size, with 8-bit pixels; the additional pixels mean that you can display more information at the same time — more paragraphs of text, more applications, and more detailed photographs. With this new system, there is both the RAM and the screen real estate to run Photoshop, Quark and Microsoft Word 6 at the same time.

For those of us who can't afford to blow several-months salary on a new machine, there is Apple's 5300/100, which comes with a 640x480 gray-scale display, 8MB of RAM, and 500MB of hard disk. That system has a 100Mhz PowerPC processor — faster than a 120Mhz Pentium — and costs \$2,200.

A color version of the entry-level 5300 is the 5300cs for about \$2,800.

All of the models sport Apple's new Lithium-ion battery. Apple says that the battery can carry the PowerBook for between four and five hours. In my testing, I got 3 hours. The battery charges in 2 hours if the PowerBook is turned off, or in four hours if you are running the system.

The new PowerBooks also come equipped with an infrared transmitter on the back, allowing you to network without cables. (Farallon Computing will soon start selling an AirDock that allows you to network with desktop machines.) They have an improved track pad, which lets you tap the pad to click the mouse. And Apple has changed the color of the PowerBooks' case from slate gray to black. According to one Apple marketing executive, "people perceive black things as being small-

“These new PowerBooks, the 5300 series, represent a fundamental step forward for Macintosh users.”

# SURF SITES

FOR THE INTERNET EXPLORER

## TOP FIVE \*

<a href="http://www.ts.umu.se/~spaceman/camera.html">http://www.ts.umu.se/~spaceman/camera.html</a>	Peeping Tom
<a href="http://www.msstate.edu/Movies/welcome.html/">http://www.msstate.edu/Movies/welcome.html/</a>	Movies
<a href="http://www.entraveler.com/">http://www.entraveler.com/</a>	Conde Naste
<a href="http://www.crayola.com/crayola/">http://www.crayola.com/crayola/</a>	Crayola
<a href="http://www.voyagerco.com:80/LA/VgerLa.html">http://www.voyagerco.com:80/LA/VgerLa.html</a>	Green Room

\*Most visited sites according to Point Reviews (<http://www.pointcom.com/>)

## PowerBooks

er and weighing less."

Unlike previous PowerBooks, these new models are expandable. The floppy disk drive can be pulled out and replaced with a second hard disk, a magneto-optical drive. (VST Power Systems, of Concord, makes a universal AC adaptor that slides in and eliminates the "power brick" that laptop owners have to carry around.) The laptop also has two Type II-size PCMCIA slots, which means that PowerBook owners can finally use those low-cost credit-card sized fax modems, ethernet cards, and portable hard disks that have become all the rage in the Windows laptop market. But unlike your typical Windows laptop, the PowerBook recognizes the PCMCIA card when you insert it and shows the card's icon on the screen; drag the icon to the trash, and the card gets ejected.

I like the new PowerBook keyboard: it has a light touch which doesn't hurt my fingers. The big screen is fantastic, although I wish it could be made a little brighter.

Throughout the laptop, Apple's high standards of ergonomics and usability are evident. For example, when you set a password for the machine, the Mac also asks you to give it a hint for remembering the password. Forget your password, and the Mac will display your hint.

And if you've really got to run Windows applications you can. Insignia Solutions guarantees that it's SoftWindows 2.0 program will run all Windows programs, or your mon-

ey back. SoftWindows costs about \$300 and delivers 33MHZ 486-level performance.

For more than a year, Apple has been advertising that its PowerBooks are upgradable to PowerPC. This week, we found out that upgradable means \$700 for PowerBook 500 series, and \$1,200 for Duo users like myself. The upgrade comes with a 100Mhz 603e processor and an additional 4MB of RAM.

Apple has also introduced a low-cost PowerBook 190 series. Priced at \$1,850 for an 8MB gray scale system, and \$2,200 for a color system, these systems don't have the PowerPC processor, although they are upgradable. For students and others on a tight budget, it's going to be a hard choice between the color 190cs/66 or a PowerPC-based gray-scale 5300.

Apple expects the PowerBooks will hit stores sometime in early October. Let's hope that they build enough this time: For the last year, Apple has been plagued by chronic shortages which cost the company more than a billion dollars in lost sales.

*Michael Putzel is on vacation. He can be reached by e-mail at [putzel@globe.com](mailto:putzel@globe.com) and by paper mail c/o Plugged In, The Boston Globe, 735 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02107. Correspondent Simson Garfinkel can be reached at [simsong@vineyard.net](mailto:simsong@vineyard.net). Or, take a tour of his new house at <http://vineyard.net/10spring>.*