

# The faithful hedging bets

Companies showing off cheap, powerful clones draw attention at MacWorld / **Simson L. Garfinkel**

**A**PPLE'S DOMINANT place in the world of publishing and Internet Web-site building is clear at the MacWorld

Expo, where the most exciting booths belong to companies selling tools for the graphic arts and high-speed machines on which to run them. But even among these Macintosh faithful, it's clear that there is an increasing amount of defecting and hedging going on.

Power Computing, UMAX, Motorola, and APS all demonstrated powerful computers based on the new "G3" PowerPC microprocessor. Meanwhile, a new clone maker, UK-based Computer Warehouse, showed its models in this country for the first time.

"I'll show you exactly what's exciting about our machines - the bottom line," said Ed Silvester, a technical support engineer with Computer Warehouse. The company's "Rome" computer included a 200 MHz 604e PowerPC chip with 256 kilobytes of cache, 16 megabytes of memory, a 1.2 gigabyte hard drive, 3 slots, and a mouse - all for \$1,895. Comparable machines from US clone-makers cost more than \$2,000. Computer Warehouse is at MacWorld in hopes of finding a US distributor.

David E. Krekelberg, chief executive of Minnesota-based iREZ Research, showed off his

company's Kritter video camera. Looking more like huge one-eyed insect than a piece of precision equipment, the \$349 camera was perched on top of a PowerBook screen and pointed at the audience. The camera's 22-inch cable connects to a \$149 PC-card that slides into the side of a Macintosh 2400 or 3400 laptop. The camera and card can capture full-screen 640x480 video at 30 frames per second - a breakthrough for the price.

Krekelberg likes working with the Macintosh, saying that "it is very easy to support" video on Apple's hardware. Krekelberg said that he got his system working with the Mac in less than a day. But he is also working on a PC version, although it is taking longer because there are so many more kinds of hardware in the PC marketplace.

Like iREZ, other Macintosh vendors are hedging their bets. Craig Isaacs, vice president of sales and marketing at Dantz, said that his company recently started selling software that would allow its Retrospect software to back up files residing on Windows 95 and Windows NT computers.

"Last week, PC Week Magazine suggested that some people might want to buy a Mac to administer their PC networks because of the leading-edge features we have!" Isaacs said.

Retrospect software is

frequently bundled with backup tape drives; a 10-pack of the company's software for Windows computers costs \$150.

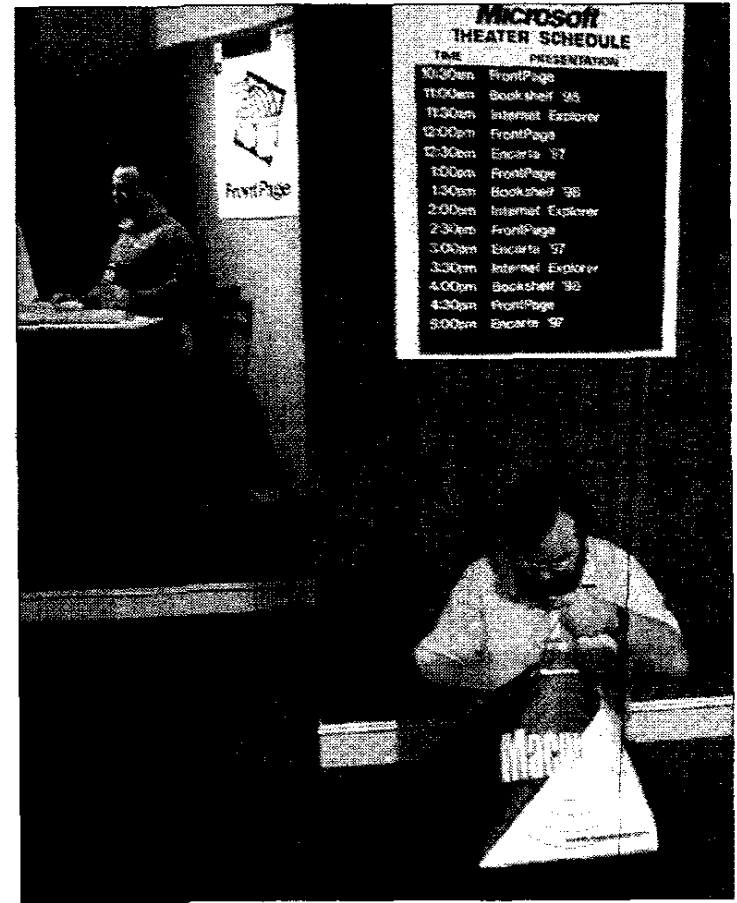
During his hour-long keynote address, Apple cofounder and member of the board Steve Jobs never once mentioned Rhapsody, the company's next-generation operating system. Vendors I spoke with weren't worried about this omission.

"I think that it was really smart," said Richard C. Zulch, Dantz's chief technical officer. "They are not selling it. The problem with making this a Rhapsody conference is they wouldn't get any revenue from it."

But Dantz is hard at work on a Rhapsody version of its software, as well as a Windows NT version. What's impressive to Zulch is that, from the developer's point of view, Rhapsody is much easier to work with than the operating systems from Microsoft.

One booth that has drawn perpetual crowds belongs to Be, whose next-generation operating system, Be OS, was also considered by Apple last year as a replacement for Apple's aging Mac OS. According to insiders, one of the main reasons that Apple didn't pick Be OS is that the system is still being created. At last year's MacWorld, Be OS looked like a toy. But Be's engineers have been busy over the past year. This year, Be showed off its work with a suite of third-party applications, including a word processor, a spreadsheet, and a variety of graphic applications.

Within a few months, some people might seriously consider



AP PHOTO

**J. Spencer Love of Milford takes a break during his visit to MacWorld.**

replacing their Macs and Windows PCs with computers running Be OS. To make that decision easier, Be is giving away free copies of its operating system that will run on any Macintosh computer equipped with a 503 or 604 PowerPC microprocessor and a PCI bus.

Be is targeting its operating system for one of Apple's two remaining markets: graphics professionals who require the absolutely fastest, most powerful, and easiest-to-use tools that money can buy. By creating a new, high-performance operating

system from scratch, the company has been able to shed much of the baggage that slows down Windows, Windows NT, Mac OS, and even Apple's forthcoming Rhapsody system. On the same hardware, Be OS substantially outperforms the competition.

When Be OS is finished, it could be a serious threat to Apple's future. Perhaps that's why Apple isn't giving Be any help.

Technology writer Simson L. Garfinkel can be reached at [plugged-in@simson.net](mailto:plugged-in@simson.net)