

Apple Breaks The Mold: Long-Awaited Operating System New From Ground ...
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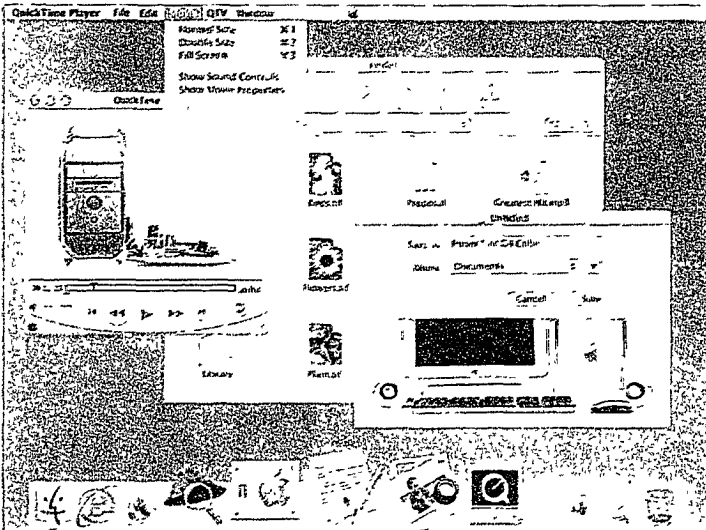
Long-Awaited Operating System New From Ground Up

By J. D. BIERSDORFER

THE last time Apple Computer introduced a fundamentally new operating system was in 1984, when System 1.0 was shipped with the original Macintosh computer. Ronald Reagan was president, Steve Jobs was the chairman of Apple, and consumers' embrace of Windows was still several years away (in those days many computers ran on the DOS platform, which involved a lot of typed commands instead of pointing and clicking).

Since then, there have been upgrades and false starts, and Mr Jobs has gone and returned. And yesterday, after years of waiting by the Macintosh faithful, Apple Computer released to the public a beta version of its Mac OS X (10) operating system software.

The system is new not only in its new interface, called Aqua, but also at its core, which is based on the stable Unix operating system. "This is the single most anticipated release from Apple ever," proclaimed the



... 8, 9, 10, **READY OR NOT, HERE IT COMES** The Aqua interface of the new Macintosh operating system, OS X, available in a beta version, is easy to navigate.

Mac Observer, a Web site devoted to Macintosh news, late last week before the beta became available "The eyes of the Mac world, the PC world, Wall Street and a few other places will be focused on Apple." While the stakes are high for Apple, the new operating system could have an impact on the rest of the computer world as well.

"If MacOS X is accepted," said Andreas Pfeiffer, editor of the industry newsletter The Pfeiffer Report on Emerging Trends and Technologies, "it will also help re-establish Apple as an innovator in the operating-systems space, where the company has kept a relatively low profile lately, and alongside with the continuing growth of Linux, it will

contribute to the erosion of the Windows domination of the overall computing market."

Anyone who would like to pay for the opportunity to try out the new operating system and help find those last few bugs can order a CD and a manual from Apple's Web site (store.apple.com) for \$29.95 plus tax. The price, which Mr Jobs announced yesterday in his keynote speech at the Apple Expo in Paris, may come as a surprise to those hoping to download the code free from the Web. "The audience, however, did not seem to take offense," Mr Pfeiffer said in

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OS X: Apple Breaks the Mold

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an e-mail message from Paris, "and when one thinks things over, it probably makes a lot of sense since only motivated users will actually pay."

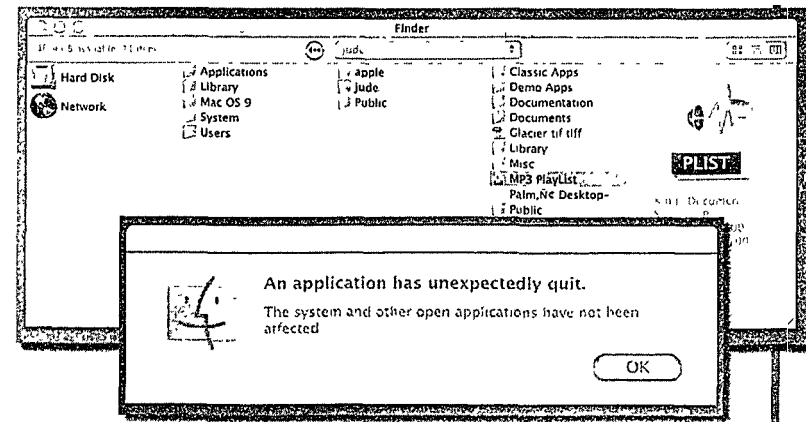
But Mac addicts should know that they are using the software at their own risk. A beta test is usually considered to be the last stage of examination and evaluation for software code before it is released to customers in its final form.

Bugs and glitches may still lurk within the code, and many users who rely on a functioning Mac won't touch a beta release with a 10-foot mouse. But software thrill-seekers will often jump at the chance to see a product early, find problems with it and report them to the company.

The fact that a company has released a test version of the software to the public isn't news in itself. Microsoft released a beta version of Windows 98 to impatient consumers for \$30. America Online has even asked for volunteers to test its upgrades free of charge.

"Releasing Mac OS X as a public beta first is vital," Mr. Pfeiffer said. "The whole software industry seems to have switched to that model for final stages of testing, and it contributes significantly to ironing out bugs."

This is the first time Apple has offered a public beta release of any operating system, according to Philip Schiller, the vice president of worldwide marketing at Apple Computer. He said there were various ways for customers to file bug reports and comments on the beta, including a link right on the desktop of Mac OS X that takes users to the



NEW LOOK With the Macintosh OS X, the Finder looks like a browser. Protected memory means that when one application crashes, the whole system doesn't follow suit.

appropriate place on the Web.

He also said the company would ask the beta's users for surveys and comments. The beta-testing period is expected to last into early next year, and the beta software itself will expire in May 2001. Pricing for the final version is not yet set.

What is news is that the operating system has finally appeared. Back in 1994 Apple announced that a new state-of-the-art operating system, code-named Copland, was in the

works. It was going to be the silver bullet that saved Apple from its internal woes and from losing any more ground to Microsoft in the platform wars, which were heightened by the introduction of Windows 95.

Copland never made it to the marketplace. Technical problems and the company's turbulence in the mid-1990's didn't help matters, and while bits of the Copland system were incorporated into later system upgrades, including Mac OS 7.6 and 8.0, a truly new

system has not appeared until now.

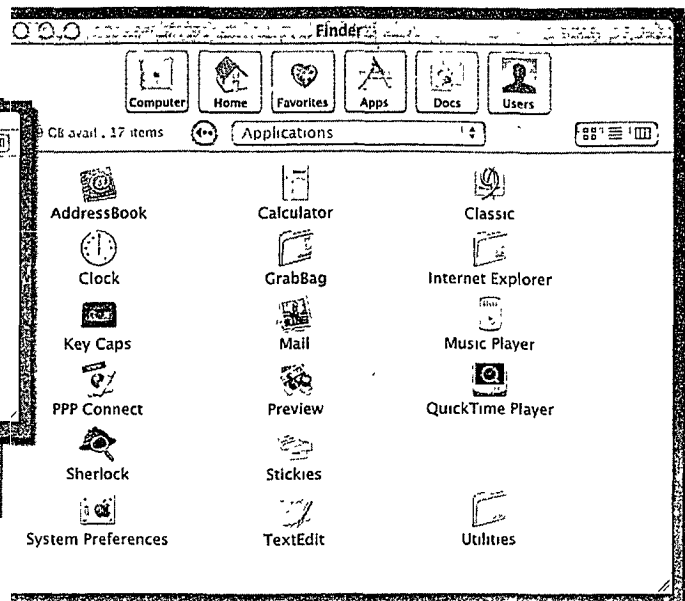
Apple's System 1.0 consisted of six files that took up 216 kilobytes of space. In comparison, the Mac OS X beta has system requirements that seem hefty enough to launch a space shuttle.

Apple advises users to have a computer that can spare 15 gigabytes of hard-drive space and 128 megabytes of RAM to operate the beta system, although the final release is expected to require only 64 megabytes of

RAM.

Beta testers will also need to possess a Power Macintosh computer with at least a G3 chip and Mac OS 9. Apple says that any G3 machine (including all iMac and iBook models) except the original G3 PowerBook can run the Mac OS X beta software.

A preview of the Mac OS X beta showed Aqua to be visually stunning, with updated, more detailed graphics, and easy to navigate. And, at least on a G4 Power Cube



system that was provided by Apple, it refused to crash

"If you go down the list for all the things that customers want in an operating system, we feel we have addressed it all," Mr Schiller said. "Stability is No 1 OS X is designed to meet all customer needs, from the consumer to the educator to the desktop professional"

Existing programs that run on Mac OS 9 should work on X, and Apple says that more than 200 different developers, including Microsoft, Adobe, IBM, Sun Microsystems and Hewlett-Packard, have agreed to create software for the new system

That reliable Unix kernel underneath all the Aqua has already attracted the attention of software developers who might create new applications for Macintosh (Unix is a supremely stable, industrial-strength oper-

Mac fans can pay for the privilege of trying use-at-your-own-risk software.

ating system favored by computer professionals for everything from scientific and academic applications to running Web sites) Mr Schiller said that 5,000 developers had been given copies of the OS X code for use in creating new programs

According to figures supplied by Roger Kay of the International Data Corporation, Apple Computer currently holds a 34 percent share of the computer market worldwide. How much interest the beta project generates outside the Mac community remains to be seen

"My feeling is that Mac OS X is just another new product for Apple and won't have the 'make or break' impact that everyone ascribed to Copland," said Owen W Linzmayer, author of "Apple Confidential," a history of the company, in an e-mail message "I think Mac OS X will be greeted with a warm welcome from the Macintosh faithful but is likely to be ignored by the mass market no matter how much better than Windows it happens to be"

Mr Pfeiffer said "If Mac OS X succeeds, it will once again put the Macintosh in a class of its own Not only will the operating system look significantly different — and in a consumer market, looks do count, as Apple has proven with the iMac — it will also be the first consumer OS based on a solid Unix foundation"

Despite the overhaul, one thing that hasn't changed with all this change is that when the beta OS X boots up, the little Mac face that has been part of all Mac systems before still smiles at the user If the beta testing is a success and the final release of Mac OS X delivers on its promises, that little Mac may be grinning even more widely in years to come