

AN EVALUATION OF THE APPLE /// IN COMPARISON TO THE APPLE //, LAZER 128, 512
MAC AND THE LISA (MAC XL) ...

I happen to have all of the above systems and have worked with them extensively. In reading through various Apple /// newsletters and magazines I sometimes feel a certain sense that some owners of the fabulous Apple /// felt left out and must watch their investment drift out to sea as some sort of relic of 'the good old days.' Sure, it was a swell item in its day, but it just can't stand up to the advances in computer technology that have taken place over the years since it was conjured up.

Well, ladies and gents, that ain't exactly so. Yes, there are many new toys moving into the marketplace everyday. There are things I can do on the MAC 512 and MAC XL that the Apple /// can't touch in sophistication (i.e. advanced graphics and musical notation/midi interfacing). Still, strangely enough, most of my time and most of my love is still expended on the ///. And right now I continue to own and happily use 5 Apple ///'s. Who knows, I may even buy a few more.

Why my continued enthusiasm? First, the Apple /// was truly a breakthrough machine. It was a grownup built for the business market that had enormous capacity and computer power. This was especially true once it was upgraded to 256K and had a workable clockchip installed. Before Apple decided to run off in other directions, there was enough time for it to be acknowledged by programmers as a first-class system and fortunately they wrote some wonderful programs for it.

Once you have developed a machine that can do outstanding word processing (Word Juggler or Apple Writer ///, if you prefer), has a desktop program like 3EZ Pieces with enormous flexibility and speed; has a system like Catalyst available to make a joy out of operating a hard disk, and features an operating system (SOS) that is still a marvel of engineering - well, where do you really have to go? With that machine, the Apple computer came of age. Oh, sure, you can add more memory, cut down all those extra nano seconds of waiting around, add pull down screens, a mouse, and an endless supply of desktop accessories, but most of that is really window dressing. What the majority of people need is simply a hardworking, non-eccentric machine with advanced database, spreadsheet and word processing capacities.

Here's a quick report card comparing a few programs (from a prejudiced observer naturally) ...

WORD JUGGLER - there is nothing I've used to date, including the new Microsoft Word 3.0 for the MAC Plus, that works any faster than good old WJ. Its editing functions are way, way ahead in terms of speed and ease of use. Also outstanding is its perfect approach to addressing individual envelopes; inserting documents into a file, and chaining a series of files together for printing. Also the spelling checker, Lexicheck, still holds up beautifully against the competition for size and ease of use. Also the Apple /// keyboard is still far and away the most comfortable to use over long periods of time.

WJ doesn't feature multiple windows and certain advanced formatting features of such programs as Word 3.0. It's really not much of a loss for most of the work you would be doing. Its biggest weakness in comparing it to the MAC and MAC XL is that it does not have their ability to change fonts and font styles

with the ease of the Macintosh environment coupled to an Imagewriter II or Lazer printer. When I want to do a custom resume with a lot of pizzazz, I do turn to my MAC to handle the job. Otherwise I usually keep it covered. (By the way, you do keep your machines covered if not in use and turned off, don't you?)

3EZ PIECES - Using the Switcher with a MAC Plus, employing a hard disk and onboard memory of 1 megabyte or more, you can achieve some of the speed and ease of use you've been enjoying with 3EZ Pieces. At lower levels of sophistication there's nothing that comes close to the simplicity and performance of this amazing program (it's equally great in the world of the Apple // as well, particularly if you upgrade one of those machines to 640K or so, which is where I'm at with my Lazer 128.)

You do have limitations in your Database size (3,000 records) and the variety of layouts you can view or print in 3EZ Pieces, but for the majority of assignments it's a wonder ... so fast, so logical, and so easy to use. It took me nearly six months to really learn Microsoft File for the MAC. It is an excellent program once you've learned it, featuring enormous flexibility, but who the hell is likely to spend that kind of time to learn it? (and I'm pretty quick with this stuff).

And even with that effort, Microsoft File's sorting and search commands are rather slow, it can not handle a global search, it can not run multiple searches on the same field, there is no way, in its printing mode, to ask it to skip blank lines keeping the record length the same (an unforgivable lapse in many printing situations), etc. Filemaker Plus, the other big gun in the MAC database race, is easier to use, but still has a number of limitations as well as extra features.

Still I do use Microsoft File for a number of jobs. I can mix graphics into the database as one of the fields in a given file and print it out with other material. I have virtually no limit to the number and layout of formats that I may want for printing or display. It also has some wonderful report generating techniques that are unknown in 3EZP. Still, 90% of my database work is done on the Apple /// in 3EZP. So that program must still be doing a lot right for me -- and doing it better in most situations.

As for spreadsheets, it depends what you need. I have never found anything that I needed to do (and I've had some rather sophisticated needs in spreadsheet work) that couldn't be done magnificently by 3EZP. I do have Advanced Viscalc - at least, I have it in the box. I haven't bothered to use it for more than 3 years and doubt I ever will again.

On the other hand, in the MAC environment, I have Multiplan. I've looked at it, tried it out - but there was nothing there that I didn't already have in 3EZP. Also my 3EZP spreadsheet could stay on my desktop with other files and be far more workable for my needs. I should note that Microsoft has a program for the MAC (with advanced macro capabilities) called Excel which is indeed wonderful if you need that much power. Still I doubt one person or business in a thousand has a need that really exceeds what 3EZP already delivers.

DRAW-ON /// - Good graphics program for the Apple ///. I use it with Apple /// Business Basic to generate some neat stuff onto color videotape, but that's where it ends. If graphics are your bag, run, do not walk, and buy a MAC; also pickup a copy of Superpaint while you're at it as well as perhaps some other graphics programs. There are miracles in the capacity of that machine that our beloved Apple /// just can't come within miles of achieving. So for graphics and musical needs, oh, yes, and for desktop publishing the operating word is MAC. For everything else, turn back to your trusty

workhorse, the Apple ///. That way both machines will last longer.

For all the other secondary programs, from balancing your bank statements to figuring out your astrological future, you'll have to be the judge as to whether you're already served with your Apple /// or Apple /// in emulation mode, or whether you need to switch to another machine.

But for me, I still see a long and happy life ahead for my family of Apple ///'s. We play together (yes, we have a few game disks too), we work together, sometimes via my modum program I even send a few files from my Apple ///'s over to my MAC. The MAC's smiling face starts to change to a frown over the idea of it being fed by an obsolete beast like the Apple ///. Then it remembers - remembers how much its older brother passed on to it in its development stages. It smiles again. It realizes that brothers should live at peace with one another, acknowledging what each does best, and both thumbing their noses at that other overrated, once-upon-a-time, bully on the block, Big Blue (otherwise known as IBM).

Happy computing!

- Barry Downes (New York member)