

Do you faint and don't know why?

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Lyons' Den

OS Evolution

By Daniel J. Lyons

As a computer professional, I try to keep up to date on what's happening in the industry. To assist me in this, I attended a recent seminar at Microsoft covering the upcoming Windows 2000. One comment at this seminar has stuck in my head; Microsoft will have two separate operating systems, Windows 2000 (W2K) for corporate customers and Windows Millennium (WM) which is being designed specifically to compete with the gaming platforms like PlayStation which have become so popular recently.

For those of you who don't know, W2K is the upgrade for Windows NT while WM is the code name for the next update to Windows (W98). In a recent story, The Register (www.register.co.uk) has cited problems with the video drivers being distributed with the upcoming Windows 2000, which provide only basic support of several types of video cards, including the 3D



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cards that modern games require. Microsoft's current plan, as outlined at the seminar, is that W2K is the only OS that will be promoted though advertising between now and Christmas. W98 will be available beside W2K but will only be recommended to customers that need to use older DOS software or game titles. When WM is released for Christmas of this year, they will begin advertising for it as a multimedia and game platform for home use.

When I heard about this plan, it reminded me of Steve Jobs' comment at the last MacWorld Expo about their single OS plan. Windows has historically tried to do a little of everything all at once but is now becoming more specialized and divided in functionality. Within the Windows 2000 family there are four levels, each providing a different solution with different abilities. There are also the Windows 98 and Windows CE families, each offering very specialized functions. At the same time, the Mac OS, which has always been seen as specialized, is becoming more and more able to do a bit of everything.

While there are still people that believe that the Macintosh platform is good only for publishing and graphics and Windows is the only platform for business

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and games, I think that public opinion is starting to recognize the viability of the Macintosh. With breakthrough machines like the iMac and G4 and the upcoming OSX Apple is starting to make inroads into markets that have been in decline for years. I can't count the number of times that I've heard someone say how much they hate Windows but continue to use it because it's what they have at work and it's what they're used to. This attitude, in part, is helping the current Linux movement and is helping the current increase in popularity of Macs.

With Mac OS X, the platform is becoming more robust and capable of meeting several different needs. While it is becoming more stable, with the UNIX core, it is also becoming more user-friendly with the new Aqua interface. And under the hood, the OS is far less cluttered than older versions with the Carbonizing of the API set. With all of these changes, the Mac can be both a powerful business workstation as well as an easy to use game machine, all with the same OS.

It will be interesting to see how sales of W2K and WM break down in the next year. This will illustrate how much of the Windows market is

about productivity and how much is about playing games. Don't get me wrong, I realize how important both of those areas are, I just would like to see how the percentages fall. It will also be interesting to keep an eye on the growing Mac corporate and gaming markets and see how OSX and the new iMacs effect them.

Reader Feedback

In my last column, I spoke about the Appearance Manager not being supported in the upcoming OSX, and Chris Nebel took me to task for using the wrong terminology:

Please remember that the Appearance Manager is not the same thing as user-selectable themes. The Appearance Manager is perfectly well supported and even expanded on Mac OS X, but the Appearance Manager is just a collection of APIs that abstract what various interface elements look like. Indeed, the Appearance Manager is what makes Aqua possible without extreme pain to application developers - they simply use the Appearance Manager APIs, and they get the right look. (Well, it's a bit more complicated than that, but not much.)

Chris is completely correct

here, I should have said that the user-selectable themes feature of the Appearance Manager would probably not make it into OSX. Chris also alerted me to Raven Zachary's OS Xing column ([http:// macweek.zdnet.com/2000/01/09/ osxing.html](http://macweek.zdnet.com/2000/01/09/osxing.html)) from MacWeek.com which was published just after my last column was released: "In a break with recent consumer OS releases, Apple won't support switchable themes in Mac OS X. Bereskin said Apple has spent a lot of time refining Aqua and that it will be *the* user interface."

Unfortunately this confirms that official Themes will be going away which is sad but not surprising. I still hold out the unsupported hope that Apple will eventually add this support to OSX but I don't think I'll be holding my breath. There is a lot of other good information in this article, that you may wish to take a look at.

Another Chris, Handorf this time, wondered how Apple would be able to release new machines running OS9 after the release of OSX.

What I want to know is
how long will Apple
have to support OS 9?
Looking back at
Apple's history, it seems
like every time a new
machine comes out it
coincides with a minor
revision of the Mac OS.
In other words, every

new machine Apple comes out with breaks compatibility with the existing version of the OS. There are always some kind of hardware modifications that require corresponding modifications in the OS. So will Apple basically put OS 9 to rest in January or will it be forced to make minor revs for all new hardware coming out for the next couple of years? I can just see it now - a Mac OS Version 9.2.3.2.

Perhaps Apple is so confident in their upcoming UMA-2 motherboard that they feel no enablers will be needed for any of their new systems. Or, more likely, their hardware release plan calls for no new systems between August and December but only speed or feature bumps.

[Talkback](#)

The Lyons' Den

Daniel J. Lyons started with the Mac back in 1989 laying out a High School newspaper on an SE and was immediately hooked.

Now, several computers later, he is hoping to share his thoughts and experiences and maybe even a few gripes with anyone who will listen.

Daniel has worked in several

computer labs and built and maintained numerous office networks over the past ten years. He is currently employed as a Technology Manager and has experience with both AppleShare and NT networks.

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