MacBC Online
The Macintosh Broadcasting Company

Edition: Sunday, 01 July, 2001
Internet Services provided by MacConnect

Lyons' Den

Block Six: the Apple iSlab

By Daniel J. Lyons

July 19 marked the introduction of a fifth block in Apple's product grid. This block was filled with the new Mac G4 Cube, an ultra-compact desktop computer. The grid now has a large empty spot in the portable lineup and The Register speculates that it will be filled with an ultra-slim laptop. They may be right, but lets take a moment of wild speculation and "Think Different" about what might fill this slot.

There have been many rumors recently about an Apple branded PDA, all of which have been categorically denied by Apple. I doubt that we'll ever see a true PDA from Apple again, they've already done that and there is nowhere that they can take the concept right now that's truly Different. Apple may not be building a PDA, but there's nothing stopping them from building a pen-based computer. Before the iBook was released, there was much speculation on what form it would take, one of the most interesting was a sub-notebook that could fold itself open and be used as a tablet.

Let's take these concepts a step further and speculate that the sixth block of Apple's product grid will be filled with a hybrid PDA/Laptop that I'll call the iSlab. The iSlab, like the Cube would be an extension of current concepts into new areas. The iSlab, in short, would be an iBook with no built-in keyboard. Picture a Palm with a 12" color TFT screen:

Mac Quick Tips
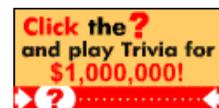Finder
Internet Explorer
Email
Applications

MacBC Help
Mac Tutorials
Forums
Shareware

MacBC Columns
Lyons' Den
The Mac Files
Economist

MacBC Web Links
Mac News Sites
Mac Reference
Mac Magazines
Mac Rumors

The iSlab could borrow a few tricks from the late DUO line and become a notebook computer that can also be the core of a desktop system. Couple the iSlab with a stand that acts as a port replicator and a charger and you will end up with something that will make the buying public drool.

Expansion could be tricky, but Apple could easily come up with a locking clasp that would release the back panel exposing the RAM, HD and, of course, AirPort. Perhaps the entire system would pop away from the display similar to how the G4 Cube pulls out of its case. Ports would be the same as the PowerBook, with one addition, a Palm-like docking port to mate with the docking stand.

iSlab would ship with an external CD or DVD drive, Docking Stand, Apple's new Pro Mouse and Keyboard and a snap-on shoulder strap to allow it to be slung over a shoulder and carted around. A handle isn't out of the question, but may affect the shape and size needed to make such a device desirable. It would need a snap-on or flip-over cover to protect the screen when traveling.

That shape would have to be ultra-slim like Sony's VAIO line but still rugged like the iBook. The case could be rubberized in Apple's new colors. If the 12" screen proves too big for the iSlab, a smaller, but still high-quality screen could be subsituted.

The sixth block, if it is filled, may be filled with an ultra-slim laptop or an iSlab, but whatever it is, it will have to be revolutionary and open new markets for Apple.

Reader Feedback:

I apologize to readers who responded to my previous column, due to a move and heavy work schedule, I have been off-line since the beginning of July. I will respond to all feedback in my next column.

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.

Do you faint and don't know why?