



The GAB'er

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Volume 23, Number 1 - September 2006

iMac Core 2 Duo Benchmarks

The new iMacs which were released on Wednesday incorporate the latest Core 2 Duo processor from Intel. The Core 2 Duo represents the continuation of the Core Duo line which first made its appearance in Apple computers in January. Intel has maintained that the new chips would provide roughly 20% improvement in performance.

MacCentral tested the new 17" 2GHz iMac and 20" 2.16GHz iMac and compared them to the previous 20" 2GHz Core Duo and the 2.66GHz Mac Pro.

The most direct comparison between the two processors comes between the 17" 2GHz Core 2 Duo iMac and the 20" 2GHz Core Duo iMac. The overall score was 10% better in the new model while the individual tests showed gains up to 20%.

As expected, the 2.66GHz Mac Pro (Woodcrest processor) outperformed the new iMacs, but the reviewers were still impressed how well the iMac fared:

With twice the number of processor cores, all running faster than the iMac, the Mac Pro had a definite advantage in this match up. But because not all applications and tasks take full advantage of the Mac multiprocessing capabilities, most results showed the Mac Pro between 20 and 30 percent faster than the 2.16GHz iMac.



Coordinator's Corner

by John Buckley

It is that time again. The beginning of the school year is also the beginning of the year for GAAB. We will be starting our new year at Troy High School in a lab that has eMacs for us to use. While I have retired, we still have our meeting place at Troy High School. If you want to see what's happening, this is the place to be.

At the September meeting we will set the schedule for the remaining demonstrations and then take a look at what is now available from Apple and .Mac. In addition, we will take a closer look at Tiger and see Apple is going with the new operating system, Leopard.

To find out what's happening, GAAB is the place to be. So be sure to be at our September meeting and every meeting to find out the best information about the Mac.

The September meeting will be held at Troy High School in room 212 on Wednesday, September 13, 2006. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Troy High School is located at 1950 Burdett Avenue two blocks south of Samaritan Hospital. From the Northway, take exit 7 to Alternate Route 7. Follow Alternate Route 7 to Troy. Route 7 becomes Hoosick Street in Troy. Travel east on Hoosick Street to the first light past the old closed Dunkin Donuts. This is Burdett Avenue. Turn right and travel past Samaritan Hospital for about two blocks. Troy High School will be the second school on your left. The name is on the front of the building. You can park in the front lot. Come in the main entrance, go up the main stairway to the second floor, turn left and go to room 212.

Next GAAB Meeting
September 13, 2006

Tiger / Leopard

7:00 p.m.
Troy High School
Room 212

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Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984



The Greater Albany Apple Byters is an Apple Computer User Group. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month (except July and August) in Room 212 of Troy High School, located on Burdett Avenue, Troy, NY.

Annual membership fee is \$10.00. Membership privileges include this newsletter, access to a large public domain software and video/audio tape library, local vendor discounts, special interest groups, and other special offers.

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Apple Ambassador

Last year at this time we were looking forward to what the changes from the G4 and G5 processors we have become use to the new Intel processors. Following this summer we have seen the completion of the conversion of all Macintosh computers to the Intel processors. This has provided some with a lot of anxiety and some with a lot of excitement.

First of all, no matter what the processor, the computer is still a Mac. The big difference now is that you no longer have to look at processor speeds with a bit of skepticism. Both the MS Windows machines and the Macintosh computers are using the same processors. The big difference is the operating systems. Windows is still trying to catch up to the Mac in ease of use and computer security. Even when Vista comes out in the spring of 2007, it will be a long way from Leopard, which will be released at about the same time.

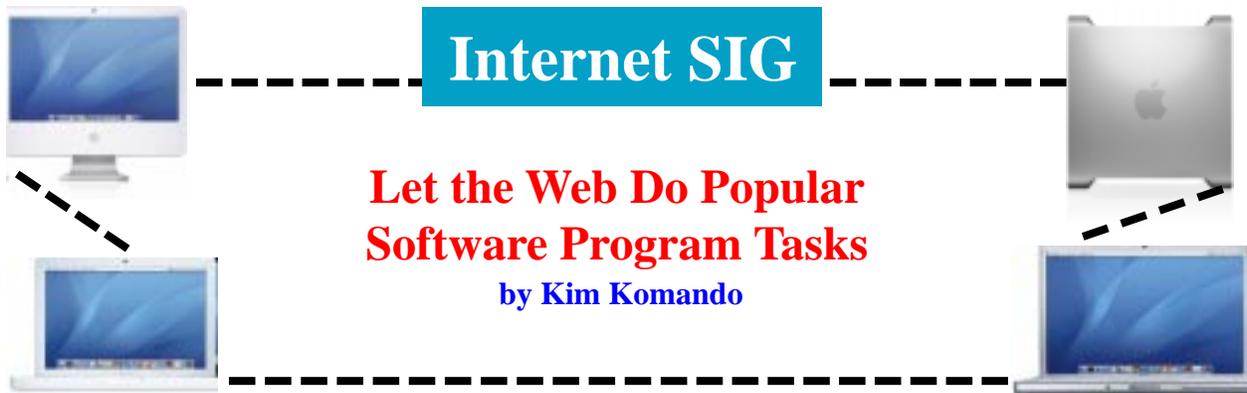
The other difference that has always put doubt in the minds of computer purchasers has been cost. That also has been put aside. While Apple continues to put more into their machines in terms of functionality and finesse, It is now being shown that there is very little difference in cost or the Mac is way cheaper, especially at the high end with the new Mac Pro introduced at the Worldwide Developers Conference.

In an article in MacWorld: Comparing prices: Mac Pro versus PCs by Dan Frakes, a comparison between equally equipped Dell and Mac Pro shows a large gap in the price difference in the Mac's favor.

Frakes states: "I've become something of a veteran of the price-comparison game, writing several articles stacking up various Mac systems against "comparable" offerings from Dell, including a three-part series on the original Mac mini, and two more articles on the MacBook Pro. Now the point to these previous articles—which can get lost amid the numbers—is not that Macs are necessarily cheaper than Dells; you'll always be able to find a cheaper low-end Dell if you try, because Dell lets you strip away features to save money (something Apple has declined to do). Rather, the point was that Macs and comparably-

Continued on page 7.





Web sites today do more than provide entertainment or information. They help you balance your checkbook, create a résumé and stay in touch with your family. These sites are more like programs that run on the Internet.

Some computer scholars have named them Web 2.0. Most are in the testing phase, so there can be glitches.

With these sites, you only need an Internet connection. Special software is unnecessary. And the services run on both Windows and Mac. Plus, most are free.

Here are some useful Web 2.0 sites:

1. Free Office.

Microsoft Office is the de facto suite. But its various renditions cost several hundred dollars.

Zoho offers Zoho Writer, Zoho Sheet and Zoho Show. These are free counterparts to Word, Excel and PowerPoint, respectively. You won't find as many features as you'd find in Office, but there are just enough to be useful.

The sites are similar to Microsoft Office, so there are no big learning curves. All files are saved online. You can start a document at work and finish it at home.

All three sites open and save files in a variety of common formats. For example, Zoho Writer will open a previously created Word document, HTML or rich text file. It will also save any file onto your computer's hard drive as a Word, pdf, txt, rtf or html file.

Zoho isn't the only business offering. The ubiquitous Google has an online word processor and spreadsheet. Google purchased the word processor, Writely, which has been around for some time. Writely doesn't have as many features as Word, but it is certainly usable.

Google Spreadsheets is less complete than Zoho's program. It is fine for basic number crunching and the maintenance of lists. But it lacks the capability to create graphs like Zoho Sheet.

You need an invitation from a current user to sign up for the Google programs. Or, you can get an invitation online.

2. Online résumé.

Creating a résumé is difficult. But creating a good-looking résumé is even tougher. Emurse helps you create nice-looking résumés that can be shared online or printed on paper.

You can either upload an existing résumé or create one. Creating one from scratch takes longer. But you have more options when done, such as the ability to edit and share it online.

Once a résumé is created, emurse will post it online for free. It also tracks where you've sent your résumé, offering reminders to follow up.

3. Family affair.

Personal Web sites and blogs can help keep families in the loop. But they're generally managed by one person. Jotspot Family Site lets everyone get into the act.

One person initially signs up for the free service. Invitations to other family members are sent through the Web site. Each family site is given its own Web address. Family members must sign in with a user name and password.

Any family member can add photographs, birthdays or important dates. There's also a section to share recipes and a blog feature.

4. Share video.

Web sites like YouTube are great for sharing video with the world. But you may want to keep your family trip to the beach private.

Fliqz allows you to share videos with as few people as you want. It offers three security levels: public, private and private with security. Videos designated as public are accessible to anyone. Private videos have unique Web addresses. Only those who know the addresses can access them.

"Private with security" videos also have a unique address. In addition, visitors need a password, which you set.

You can store and share an unlimited number of videos. However, each upload is limited to 100 megabytes (10 - 15 minutes of video).





Education SIG

Bookshare.org

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Benetech's origins start with its Arkenstone project. In 1989, a group of visionary Silicon Valley engineers and executives asked themselves a profound question: "Why couldn't the far-reaching power of the PC with voice synthesis be combined with scanning technology to create a usable, affordable reading machine for the blind?" The market was small and for-profit companies were not interested. Benetech was formed as a nonprofit enterprise to bridge the gap between "the possible and profitable."

During Arkenstone's 11 years, Benetech sold literacy products under the Arkenstone brand in more than a dozen languages to over 35,000 individuals in 60 countries. The goal from the beginning was to empower people with vision and learning disabilities to use state of the art technology to achieve independence and high performance in the workplace. During this time, 99 percent of the nonprofit's budget came from product sales.

Today, Benetech has become one of the nation's most successful examples of high technology social enterprise, using an innovative business model to achieve major social objectives in education, employment and independence. The Arkenstone product line was so successful that it was purchased by a for-profit company and was thereby assured expansion capital and sustainability. The income received from the sale of Arkenstone provided the core capital for Benetech and seed investment for [Bookshare.org](#).

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Apple Ambassador

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equipped, brand-name Windows PCs tend to be roughly comparable on price these days. That old notion that you have to pay up to use a Mac often isn't the case any more."

That said, my earlier comparisons were admittedly imperfect. For example, it was tough to compare a Mac mini with a Dell because the Mac mini is a full-featured computer in a tiny case, whereas Dell's budget computers are stripped-down minitowers. And at the time I looked at the MacBook Pro, Apple had only a 15-inch high-end laptop, while Dell's only Core-Duo laptops were budget consumer models. In fact, any comparison of products aimed at different markets is going to require some degree of upgrading on one side or the other if you want the products to be "comparable"—and some of those upgrades include items that some users may not care about but which ultimately inflate the price of one of the computers.

With the Mac Pro, such concerns go out the window: The Mac Pro is aimed squarely at pros—people who need workstations with power and expandability—so it's fair to compare the Mac Pro with pro-level workstations from other vendors. After all, it's hard to argue that a pro user won't want all the features you get with the Mac Pro: the fastest processors available on the Mac platform, multiple drive bays, a good number of expansion slots, lots of ports, and so on. Conversely, Apple has omitted features, such as AirPort and Bluetooth, that are likely to be unnecessary for professional work on a high-speed, wired network, so there's no need to add such options to other computers to make them comparable. Finally, unlike with laptop comparisons, we don't have to quibble over which LCD is truly "better"; you use whichever display you want."

With that in mind, I was excited to do the first "hey, these might actually be comparable" Dell vs. Mac price comparison of the Intel-based Mac era. In one corner, we have Apple's standard-though-customizable Mac Pro; in the other, Dell's ultimate workstation PC, the Precision 690. I used Dell's Small Business store to configure a dual-2.66GHz Precision 690 Workstation 1KW as closely as I could to Apple's dual-2.66GHz Mac Pro. (I used the Small Business store because a similar Dell configured via the company's Medium/Large Business store was more expensive.) I then used the online Apple Store to make a few changes to the Mac Pro to make it match the Dell."

What makes the Dell so much more expensive? Surprisingly, a big chunk of the cost is the second processor.

If you need only a single 2.66GHz Xeon, the Dell's price drops a whopping \$869; it's still more expensive than the Mac Pro, but at least they're in the same ballpark. Which means one of two things: Either Apple is getting an amazing deal on the Xeon processors used in the Mac Pros, or Dell is soaking dual-processor customers."

So, for that big difference in price, what's different about these two systems? On the Mac side, you get more internal SATA buses, four of which are accessible via slide-in, cable-free drive sleds that make upgrading hard drives a snap. You get an extra PCI Express slot, and all four slots are configurable. You also get FireWire 800 ports (the Dell offers only FireWire 400), and optical audio-in and -out. And let's not forget the stellar software package, worth hundreds of dollars if you were to equip the Dell with comparable titles. (Although, to be fair, given that this is a pro system, software such as iLife is less valuable than it would be to owners of, say, a MacBook or an iMac.)"

On the Dell side, the most obvious difference is that you get a 19-inch LCD display—a \$250 value when purchased separately (at least at the time I priced the above system). In addition, the 690 offers slightly faster CD reading, 3 standard PCI slots, two more USB ports (although I couldn't determine how many separate USB buses), an additional analog-audio input on the front of the machine, and a slew of legacy ports (PS/2, parallel, serial). The Dell's "Economy" on-site service plan may also offer some advantages, although that isn't clear. And with the Dell, you can opt for SAS drives in lieu of, or in addition to, SATA drives for better performance, although you'll pay a good number of pretty pennies to do so."

In other words, the machines aren't identical—each has a few advantages—but I think they're fairly comparable in terms of the needs of a pro user. (If you're looking to find all the technical differences between the two, good luck. If you go to Dell's basic tech specs page for the 690—the one you encounter while building it—you get one set of specs; however, if you go to the more complete page, available before you start building, and linked at the top of the above table, you get a very different set of specs. For example, the maximum RAM for the 690 is stated as either 8GB or 64GB; that's like Toyota saying its new Camry gets either 12mpg or 70mpg! I've attempted to make sense of these conflicting specs; with such a significant difference in price, at least I've got a good margin of error if one or two mistakes would result in a smaller or larger difference in capability or price.)"

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Apple Ambassador

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I'm sure some of the critiques of this comparison will involve mention of Dell's various "secret" discounts. They do exist, and they vary anywhere from a hundred bucks to more than \$500. You can usually find a discount coupon if you search the Web hard enough, or catch a price break if you talk to the right Dell salesperson. (When I called Dell, anonymously, to verify several of the 690's specs, I was offered a discount of "a couple hundred bucks" if we bought it over the phone.) I've previously voiced my displeasure with these Dell sales policies—which basically amount to a tax on the non-Web-savvy—but even if you embrace them, no Dell coupon I've seen is going to eliminate the \$1,000-plus difference in price between these systems."

I'm sure some Dell fans will also quibble with my choice of video cards. It's true that less expensive cards available from Dell will be adequate for many users, and some of

those will even offer comparable performance to the Mac Pro's Nvidia GeForce 7300 GT. However, the Quadro FX 3450 was the least expensive video card from Dell that offers both dual-link and single-link ports, allowing you to drive a 30-inch Apple or Dell display along with another smaller display—something the Mac Pro's stock card can also do, and a task that's more popular than you might think among professional users."

On the other hand, Mac users will point to intangibles—the most important, and convincing, of which being viruses and security. Say what you will about the supposed smugness of Mac users on this issue, but the fact remains that not a single Mac OS X virus, malware, or spyware has been found proliferating in the wild. Compare that to the tens of thousands (and counting) of such security breaches for Windows XP, and the software and manpower it takes to deal with such exploits, and I think it's fair to tally a significant additional cost savings for the Mac Pro. And let's not forget that the Mac Pro is the only high-performance computer in the world that can run Mac OS X and Windows."

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