

The TarMac Vaporware Gazette

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Mossberg: Mac Mini is strong addition to an entertainment center



This is a review of an interesting new entertainment-center component that happens to also be a personal computer – a computer fully capable of, say, creating a spreadsheet but one you might never use that way. This product also happens to be a new Macintosh model from Apple Computer, but, in its entertainment-system role, it works perfectly with Windows computers.

The gadget is the latest version of Apple's tiny Mac Mini desktop computer, a petite silver and white box that's just 6.5 inches square and stands just 2 inches tall, small enough to tuck away on a shelf near a TV. This Mini costs \$599 and doesn't include a monitor, keyboard or mouse.

The most important thing about this Mac Mini is that it comes with Front Row, Apple's handsome software for controlling a computer from across a room, and with the tiny, simple remote control Apple designed to work with Front Row. You can plug it into your TV and home audio system, fire up Front Row and watch any videos stored on its hard disk, listen to any songs it holds or view any photos it contains. It also plays DVDs.

Even better, this Mini can find – and stream to your home entertainment system – all music and videos stored on any other computer on your home network, whether it be Windows-based or a Mac. All that's required is that the other computers be running Apple's free iTunes software. The Mini can't stream photos from a Windows PC, but it can do so from another Mac.

In my tests, all of this worked fine, and I can recommend the new Mini with Front Row for anyone who wants to play back, on a home entertainment system, media stored on a computer or multiple computers. There are a few caveats, however.

First, this Mini isn't the so-called media hub product Apple is rumored to be working on. It's still too much of a regular computer to fit that bill. A media hub product would be focused entirely on the home entertainment task, and it would be much cheaper.

Second, company officials made it clear to me that the Front Row software is still a work in progress that will gain more functions and power in the coming months. This is a high priority inside Apple.

Third, you can do something similar with a Windows PC that uses Microsoft's Media Center software. In fact, Media Center, which I've reviewed several times in the past, does more than Front Row, because it's also capable of receiving and recording TV programs. Microsoft has been ahead of Apple in this area, and Media Center is very well designed. I found the new Mini simpler to set up, though.

When I got one of the Minis for testing, I first connected it to a monitor, keyboard and mouse, simply so I could go through the new-computer setup and copy to the 60-gigabyte hard drive a bunch of songs, photos and videos.

Then, I took the Mini downstairs – sans monitor, keyboard and mouse – and plugged it into my Sony Trinitron 35-inch analog TV using a \$19 adapter Apple sells and an S-video cable from RadioShack. I also plugged the Mini into my speaker system using another accessory cable. I set the TV for the input corresponding to the jacks the Mini was using, turned on the computer and waited for it to boot up. Then, I pressed the menu button on the Apple remote.

Instantly, the Front Row menu appeared, and I was able to sit on my couch and choose from four options: music, videos, DVD and photos. The menu and all the media I played filled the TV screen and looked and sounded great. The Mini automatically detects that it's hooked to a TV and sets its video output accordingly.

All my iTunes playlists were available, and each song was accompanied by a large picture of its album cover on the TV screen. Videos played perfectly, and photos were displayed as slide shows.

If you click on "shared music" or "shared videos" in Front Row, the Mini will search your home network for other computers and list them. I was able to stream music

Tonight's Agenda

- 6:45 Help desk

6:45 **Magic Time!**
New members - Brian Dues (\$3) - Ray
Things to buy or sell

7:30 Tonight's demo:
Microsoft Office
- Brian Fountain

8:00 Wrap-up - Brian



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and videos from my Hewlett-Packard desktop and my IBM ThinkPad laptop, both running Windows XP, and from my portable and desktop Macs.

There were a few issues. All the videos took as much as a minute to launch, a problem Apple says it will address with a software upgrade eventually. Music playback wasn't as flexible as on iTunes – for instance, you can't shuffle through songs in a single playlist. Also, unless you connect a keyboard and mouse, you can't add content to the Mini or upgrade its software. Apple really should add the ability to view photos from a Windows computer.

In addition, video playback is highly dependent on the speed and robustness of your home network. In my tests, videos played perfectly, even from laptops connected wirelessly, as long as the Mini itself was plugged into a wired connection. When both the Mini and the laptops were wireless, the videos sometimes stalled. Your results may vary.

All in all, the new Mini is a solid addition to any entertainment center.

analysis: Intel News Hints at Future Apple Products

3.13.2006 - Laurianne McLaughlin - MacCentral

At the Intel Developer Forum, you usually see as many product codenames as you do plaid shirts on the tech-confab's attendees. But at last week's session in San Francisco, you also saw a few hints at what could be in store for Apple's portables and desktops.

Intel uses its developer forum to give PC industry customers and partners a detailed look at its upcoming roadmap and new technologies. For Apple users, that could mean extremely power-efficient notebooks in the second half of this year, and desktop PCs with quad-core processors in early 2007. Intel also announced a funding deal that could put Intel processors inside Apple servers.



The week began with the announcement that Intel and Transitive will work together to apply Transitive's QuickTransit binary translation technology to servers based on Intel's Itanium 2 and Xeon processors. That would let Intel-powered servers run software written for older RISC machines. (Itanium 2 powers Intel's most powerful servers, while Xeon powers more modest corporate servers.)

Apple users need little introduction to QuickTransit: It's the translation technology behind Rosetta, which enables Apple's new Intel-based machines to run applications written for the PowerPC platform. Translation software earns its keep during transitions from one processor architecture to another, albeit with a performance hit.

The announcement that Transitive will support Itanium 2 and Xeon has Apple watchers wondering: Can we expect Apple servers with either chip sometime in the near future? "Apple has said nothing and is so secretive that we'll likely not know until the official announcement," says Shane Rau, Program Manager for PC Semiconductors at market research firm IDC. "However, it would make sense that, as it transitions its client systems to Intel chips, Apple would also use the technology to transition its Xserve server systems over to Intel chips, like Xeon."

Keep in mind that servers today represent a tiny percent of Apple's business—about one percent, says Tim Deal, a senior analyst at Technology Business Research. Apple sells Xserves mostly to its core markets, including creative, design, and higher education. The PowerPC G5 chip currently fuels Apple's highest-end servers; switching to an Intel processor would be primarily a marketing advantage, Deal says.

"It's been important for Apple to overcome objections regarding sales of its servers into the large or mid-size enterprise," Deal says. "Apple's been challenged by a pervasive perception that its server offering is not compatible with existing technology." Itanium 2 and Xeon would speak for themselves: They are components IT customers already know well, Deal says. As for when those chips might make an appearance in the Xserve, that remains to be seen.

Dual-core details emerge Lower-power, dual-core chips also got their moment in the Developer Forum spotlight, as Intel revealed more details regarding three long-awaited products: "Merom" for mobile computers, "Conroe" for desktop PCs, and "Woodcrest" for servers. All are based on Intel's new Core micro-architecture, which is a descendant of the design for Pentium M (developed for mobile computing.) These new chips are designed to be extremely power efficient, whereas Intel's first dual-core chips threw a ton of heat inside PC cases, hindering performance and limiting design options.

The new chips will be manufactured using 65-nanometer technology, a process improvement that lets Intel make smaller chips that draw less power—perhaps 30 percent less than today's comparable chips, Intel says. Intel plans to roll out even more efficient 45-nanometer technology in 2007, the company also revealed last week.

Power-efficient chips have two big implications for Apple. It gives the company room to make highly creative notebook designs in late 2006, while raising the possibility of making an "ultra-mobile" PC—a tiny machine that's smaller than a notebook but bigger and more functional than a PDA.

Ultra-mobile PCs have already been discussed among Wintel PC makers. Microsoft has recently let out a few hints regarding "Origami," a prototype software environment for an ultra-mobile PC; Samsung showed a prototype device at the CeBIT tradeshow in Europe. "Power's a key issue," Deal says. "From a design standpoint, Apple constantly surprises us."

These new chips could let Apple widen its mobile product line, says IDC's Rau. That would allow Apple and other PC makers to further segment their desktop PC offerings. Quad-core coming?

In the other big news from IDF, Intel unveiled more details regarding its plans for quad-core chips. Intel said it plans to release its first quad-core chip for desktop PCs, codenamed "Kentsfield," in the first quarter of 2007. But this chip won't really meld four central processing units into one chip—as rival AMD plans to do with its quad-core chips coming in 2007.

Instead, Intel's "Kentsfield" will combine two dual-core chips into one package. This isn't the most efficient design strategy, but it will help Intel get quad-core chips to mar-

ket at the same time as AMD. Of course, Intel will improve the quad-core design as quickly as possible. For Apple users, quad-core chips will mean a huge amount of horsepower compared to today's highest-end Apple desktops.

Citigroup Raises Apple's Rating to Buy



Analyst Richard Gardner says the company's shares have cheapened recently, but new products will fuel a rebound in the coming months

Citigroup upgraded Apple Computer to buy from hold, explaining that the technology company's share prices have cheapened to \$63 from \$85. Analyst Richard Gardner says Apple's prices fell amid factors such as disappointing January quarter guidance and flash memory product order cancellations -- but new products will be unveiled near the company's 30th anniversary in early April.

Gardner expects Apple share prices to rebound starting in the June quarter. He cut his \$4.8 billion revenue and 48 cents earnings per share (including options expense) March estimates to \$4.5 billion and 45 cents per share. But he keeps his \$82 stock price target.



Apple Issues Another Mac Patch Bundle

Apple Tuesday released its second bundle of security updates in as many weeks, issuing updates to fix problems in a few core Mac OS X programs, including the operating system's e-mail client and Safari, the default Web browser.

By preparing a specially crafted e-mail message with attachments and enticing a user to double-click on that attachment within Mail, an attacker could trigger a condition that allows the execution of unwanted programs on the user's system, according to Apple's advisory.

Apple also released an update to fix a problem in which Safari could automatically open a file that appears to be a safe file type, such as an image or movie, but is actually an application of the attacker's choosing. Apple said the update also shores up some of the protections in a separate Safari update it issued March 1, when it released a bundle of fixes that mended 20 different software vulnerabilities in OS X.

Tonight's presentation

Brian Fountain



What's Included in Office 2004?

Office 2004 includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Entourage, the Mac version of Outlook.

Most users will find the Standard or Student/Teacher version suits their needs.

Word 2004 –

Notebook View

The notebook view is a handy addition for students, journalists, or anyone who needs to organize notes. The look mimics the lined pages of a notebook. The real benefit of notebook view is the tabbed pages. The tabs are similar to those in Excel, although they're on the right side of the page. You can quickly flip through the pages by clicking on the tabs.

Track Changes

If you have ever used the track changes feature and worked between your Mac and a PC, you will appreciate the changes in this feature. Like in the PC, you view changes in comment balloons next to your text, and quickly identify the reviewer with color-coded comments.

Excel –

Function ScreenTips

Helps you ensure that calculations work every time by instantly checking the correct syntax for your formulas.

Charting Improvements

The Formatting Palette gives you new color schemes, new chart types, the ability to add or change axis titles, among a range of other options.

PowerPoint 2004 –

Presenter Tools

When presenting with an projector and your computer is set to not mirror your screens, you have access to the PowerPoint Presenter Tools. You can stay in control with an on-screen clock, a thumbnail view of the entire show, and note panes.

Entourage –

The Project Center

The Project Center resides in Entourage, as one would expect. However,

it is available from any application. The purpose is to help users organize tasks and track projects. The Project Center provides a handy way to keep your documents organized and to share them with others. So everything related to the project is together in one place. The Project Center is handy when you're working on a big project with a lot of related documents. It should not be confused with Microsoft Project for Windows – this is a much smaller program, geared for a single user or a small group.

Exchange Server Support

Operating in an Exchange Server 2000 (or later) environment is even easier if you update Entourage 2004 with the enhancements provided in SP2.

Compatibility Check

When you save an Office document, you're asked if you would like to run a compatibility test. Word documents transferred between a Windows machine and a Mac machine were flawless. There were none of the discrepancies in formatting that one would expect.



from the bright side of the dark side

Q&A: Intel-Based Macs

Office:mac

Q. Will Office for Mac and Messenger for Mac run on the Intel-based Macs?

A. Yes. The Microsoft Macintosh Business Unit tested both programs on Intel-based Macs running Rosetta, and the programs run well in that configuration. Rosetta is software that is included with every Intel-based Mac and works behind the scenes to make sure that your existing software runs on the Intel-based Mac. You do not need to set up or configure Rosetta to use either Office 2004 or Messenger for Mac. For more information about Rosetta, visit the Apple Web Site

Q. Will you re-release Office 2004 for Intel-based Macs?

A. No. There are no plans to re-release Office 2004. With Rosetta, Office 2004 runs well on Intel-based Macs.

Q. When will the next version of Office for Mac be available?

A. The next version of Office for Mac is under development, and we typically release a new version every two to three years. Although we are on track, making sure that our next version will run on the Intel-based Macs

will likely require additional time in our development schedule. We will know more about our release date after we've thoroughly evaluated the Intel-based Macs, and have identified any changes we need to make so that Office for Mac runs smoothly on both PowerPC-based Macs and Intel-based Macs.

Q. Will the next version of Office run on both PowerPC-based Macs and Intel-based Macs?

A. Yes. The next version of Office for Mac will be a Universal application. Universal applications will run on PowerPC-based Macs and Intel-based Macs without the need for Rosetta. For more information about Universal applications, visit the Apple Web Site.



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Apple's Bud Tribble on Mac OS X Security

Jim Dalrymple - MacCentral

There has been a lot of talk in the press recently about how secure Mac OS X really is and how much Mac users have to be concerned about security. While Apple said they are very serious about security concerns, Mac users, for the most part, have been unaffected.



What was not initially reported, however, was that anyone that wanted to hack the machine was given access to the computer through a local account (which could be accessed via SSH), so the Mac mini wasn't hacked from outside root access was actually gained from a local user account.

"There is certainly a tendency to make news out of every potential exploit on the Mac simply because it is more unusual than on some other platforms," said Tribble. "A lot of times when you look behind the news, it is a little bit of a stretch." That said Apple does fix security issues in Mac OS X whenever they arise, but most times, these are before the issues are even known publicly.

"These updates tend to be more preventative," said Tribble. "They aren't exploits in the wild that you are actively trying to prevent. Users should never be complacent about security we aren't here. We are extremely proactive in paying attention to these things and eliminating them when we find them."

Many Mac users openly boast about the lack of antivirus and security software they use on their computers because the Mac is a safe platform. Apple points out that a lot of security measures are looked after for the users, so even the most inexperienced computer user can feel safe when using a Mac.

"We actually build a lot of security functionality into Mac OS X including things like download validation, flagging junk mail, making sure the ports are turned off, and we have a firewall there if you need it. There are a lot of things we do," said Tribble.



Analysis: Setbacks Won't Stop Dual-boot Mac Efforts

Peter Cohen - MacCentral

A Mac that can boot into either Mac OS X or Windows sounds attractive to some users. Efforts continue to create a dual-boot Mac, even though Microsoft recently announced that Windows Vista won't work with Mac hardware at least until it ships the server version of its next major operating system release — due sometime in 2007.



The possibility of a dual-boot system first came to light after Apple announced its switch to Intel CPUs at last year's Worldwide Developer Conference. The "Developer Transition Kit" systems that were to give Mac software programmers a leg up on creating software to work on the new machines worked with both Microsoft's Windows operating system and Apple's Mac OS X. So, some posited, the real Intel Macs would work the same way.

Apple's comments since then haven't done much to dissuade people from that assumption. Company executives have said that Apple wouldn't do anything to prevent users from installing Windows on a Mac. But at the same time, Apple hasn't done anything to actively help Mac users to do so, either. That became readily apparent when the first Intel-based Macs shipped. These new Macs are different from Developer Transition Kit systems because they incorporated Extensible Firmware Interface (EFI)—a technology that bridges a connection between the operating system software and the computer's firmware.

About EFI

EFI is not a new technology—it's been around since the late 1990s, but it's something that the PC world hasn't seen on a lot of desktop systems. Instead, those computers use something called Basic Input/Output System, or BIOS for short. As it turns out, out of the box, EFI-based systems like our Macs can't install or boot using Windows XP. And wouldn't you know it? We won't be able to run Vista when that's ready, either—at least not initially. Leave it to Apple to be on the cutting edge. For now, EFI is something that's only found on server computers in any quantity in the Windows world, so that's why Microsoft plans to support it when the company finally gets around to shipping the server version of Vista, its next major operating system upgrade.

Vista won't be ready until later this year. Microsoft plans half a dozen different versions of the operating system, and the

server iteration of Vista isn't expected until sometime in 2007. That means that we'll be waiting a long time before we see a version of Vista that could potentially run on the Mac.

No 32-bit support

Microsoft made it clear at last week's Intel Developer Forum in San Francisco that EFI support won't be forthcoming in any version of Windows designed to work on 32-bit microprocessors. That could be a big problem for users of Intel-based Macs who want a dual-boot machine, since the Intel microprocessors featured in Apple's new iMac, MacBook Pro and Mac mini are 32-bit. Windows server hardware increasingly uses a 64-bit microprocessor architecture that will work with the new server version of Vista, however. And if Apple adopts 64-bit Intel microprocessors in its future Macs, those devices might conceivably be able to dual-boot Windows and Mac OS X.

If you've invested in an Intel Mac and Windows interests you, don't give up hope yet. The race is on to make Intel Macs run Windows, and Mac OS X Internals author Amit Singh claims to "have made good progress with booting an unmodified Windows XP installation" on a Mac using BAMBIO — a new software application that emulates the BIOS operations of a PC-compatible computer.

He's not the only one — a reward has been posted for details on how to shoe-horn Windows XP onto an Intel Mac, and as this article was posted on Macworld, a user claims to have done it. Time will tell whether this is the case.

Whither emulators?

Outside of telling users that Virtual PC 7 doesn't work on Intel Macs, Microsoft is fairly close-lipped on the subject, saying only on its Web site that "We are working with Apple to determine the feasibility of developing Virtual PC for Mac for Intel-based Macs." According to Microsoft, Virtual PC is highly dependent on the hardware and will require additional development to work on Intel machines.

This article continues at:
www.macworld.com/news/2006/03/14/setbacks/index.php
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This just in:

Hackers get Windows XP working on Intel Mac
www.macworld.com/news/2006/03/16/xponmac/index.php