



Southern Maryland
Mac User Group

20058-D Point Lookout Road
Great Mills, Maryland 20634
Meetings second
Monday of the month from 7pm to 9pm
at the SMARTCO warehouse.

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Product Review: Sonnet Technologies Encore/ST G4

by: David Sindt

For those of you with older Macs that need a more powerful computer and have a limited budget, deciding whether to upgrade your existing machine or purchasing a new one can be a difficult decision. There are a number of components within a desktop Mac that are upgradable. The most common include: RAM, hard drive and optical drive. Many Mac models also have upgradable processor cards, PCI slots to add additional devices such as SCSI and gigabit ethernet, and AGP slots to add faster video cards. If you already have a substantial amount invested in your desktop Mac, such as additional RAM, bigger hard drives, etc., than a new processor card for your older Mac probably makes more economic sense than purchasing a new, low-end Mac such as a Mac Mini.

The Sonnet Technologies Encore/ST G4 processor upgrades are designed for the highly-upgradeable PowerMac G4 systems, and are compatible with the original G4 sawtooth models, the Gigabit Ethernet models, the Digital Audio models, the Quicksilver models, and the G4 Cube (note that the earliest Yikes! PCI graphics models are not supported; these machines require a different type of upgrade).

I purchased the Encore/ST 1.2 Ghz upgrade for \$249 and installed it into a PowerMac G4 450 Mhz (introduced 1999). The packaging includes the processor upgrade, installation instructions and an extension bracket designed for use in Quicksilver models.

The installation manual included instructions for every supported model. The instructions are clear and concise, and include many pictures, although the pictures are not in color.

While installation is fairly simple and straightforward for those familiar with the innards of a computer, it required a bit more work than other manufacturer's upgrades. While other manufacturers include a pre-attached heatsink on the upgrade card, Sonnet designed their card to use the old heatsink. Installation requires removal of the heatsink retaining clips, the heatsink itself, and three screws which secure the processor. After removing the old processor, simply plug in the new processor and secure it with the screws, replace the heatsink and secure it with the heatsink retaining clips. It is important to note that Sonnet applied a thin coat of thermal compound on the G4 chip to maximize heat transfer between the G4 chip and the heatsink. Should you ever

remove the processor upgrade and re-install it, you must reapply new thermal compound before installation.

Once installation is complete, simply turn on your newly-upgraded Mac for an instant speed increase. The difference is immediately apparent; the system boots faster, programs load faster and many processor-intensive tasks take half the time. Xbench (www.xbench.com) test scores increased from 17.56 with the old 450 Mhz processor to 37.85. All areas of the benchmark saw substantial increases in performance. The newly-upgraded, six year old PowerMac now matches the current low-end 1.25 Ghz Mac mini in overall system performance. How does this translate to real-world performance? The old 450 Mhz took over eight minutes to rip a 54 minute CD into AAC format, while the 1.2 Ghz processor took four minutes flat.

Generally I do not recommend processor upgrades for older machines, especially those that still include the original hard drives, optical drives and RAM. But if you already have a substantial amount invested in other upgrades for your older PowerMac, a processor upgrade might be a more attractive option to purchasing a new, lower-end Mac such as the Mini.

Sonnet also offers 1 Ghz, 1.33 Ghz, 1.4 Ghz and 1.8 Ghz upgrades at varying price points.

Apple Introduces New iMac G5

October 12, 2005

Apple today introduced an update to their popular iMac G5 consumer desktop. Apple simplified the model line-up with only two models, a 17-inch and a 20-inch model, both with standard SuperDrive DVD burners and 1.9 Ghz and 2.1 Ghz G5 processors, respectively. Other improvements over the older models include ATI Radeon X600-series video processors on the cutting-edge PCI express bus, standard 512 MB DDR2 RAM, built-in iSight camera and the new FrontRow application that turns the iMac into a dedicated mediacenter, all controllable by an infrared remote control. Please visit www.apple.com/imac for more information.

Apple Introduces New Video-Enabled iPod

October 12, 2005

Apple today introduced an update to their market-leading iPod line of digital music players. The new iPod includes a 2.5-inch, 320x240 pixel color display capable of displaying digital pictures and full-motion video. Available in 30- and 60-GB models, the new iPods are both smaller and offer significantly longer battery life than previous models. Visit www.apple.com/ipod for more information.

Apple Reports Fourth Quarter Results

Reprinted from www.apple.com

CUPERTINO, California—October 11, 2005—Apple® today announced financial results for its fiscal 2005 fourth quarter ended September 24, 2005, reporting the highest revenue and earnings in the Company's history. Apple posted revenue of \$3.68 billion and a net quarterly profit of \$430 million, or \$.50 per diluted share. These results compare to revenue of \$2.35 billion and a net profit of \$106 million, or \$.13 per diluted share, in the year-ago quarter. Gross margin was 28.1 percent, up from 27.0 percent in the year-ago quarter. International sales accounted for 40 percent of the quarter's revenue.

Earnings per share benefited by \$.12 from several tax items related to net deferred tax assets, tax reserves, and a revision to the full year tax rate estimated in prior quarters.

Apple shipped 1,236,000 Macintosh® units and 6,451,000 iPods during the quarter, representing 48 percent growth in Macs and 220 percent growth in iPods over the year-ago quarter.

For fiscal 2005, the Company generated revenue of \$13.93 billion and a net profit of \$1.335 billion, reflecting annual growth of 68 percent and 384 percent, respectively, and representing the highest annual revenue and net profit in the Company's history.

“We're thrilled to have concluded the best year in Apple's history, with 68 percent year-over-year revenue growth and 384 percent net profit growth,” said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. “This is the direct result of our focus on innovation and the immense talent and creativity at Apple. We could not be more excited about the new products we're working on for 2006.”

“We're very pleased to report 48 percent year-over-year growth in Mac shipments in Q4, as well as our 10th consecutive quarter of record iPod sales,” said Peter Oppenheimer, Apple's CFO. “Looking ahead to the first quarter of fiscal 2006 which will span 14 weeks, we expect revenue of about \$4.7 billion. We expect GAAP earnings per diluted share of about \$.46, including an estimated \$.03 per share expense impact from non-cash share-based compensation, translating to non-GAAP EPS of about \$.49.”