Return of the Mac

So it was more au revoir than goodbye. Yes, the Mac column returns to PCW with new Macmeister Cliff Joseph at the helm. This month, there's more rhapsody than blues.

Mac OS Roadmap

▲ APPLE PLANS TO MERGE THE MAC OS AND RHAPSODY AT THE END OF 1999

The Mac is back — and in more ways than one. To tie in with this issue's redesign, *PCW* has decided to bring back the Mac *Hands On* column.

Macs may be hugely outnumbered by Windows PCs but there are lots of companies that still have die-hard Mac users in various departments. There are also more than a few people who have PCs in their office *and* a Mac at home, so we decided to keep you up to date on the practical side of dealing with the Mac.

Back from the brink

Having stared death in the face for the past couple of years, Apple seems to be on the mend at last. The new G3 Power Macs and PowerBooks have arrested Apple's falling sales, and this month sees the launch of the ultra-cool iMac, Apple's first real attempt to get back into the consumer market for several years.

There's a lot still to be done, though and Apple's not-so-interim CEO, Steve Jobs, is still rethinking the company's product line and technology strategy. So we'll also be using this column to examine various aspects of Apple's comeback strategy, such as its future plans for Rhapsody and the Mac OS.

Rhapsody is the next-generation operating system on which Apple has been working for the past couple of years. The original plan was for Rhapsody to completely take over from

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the current Mac OS, which is getting a bit long in the tooth.

But Rhapsody seemed to get put on the back-burner when Steve Jobs mounted his coup and took over at Apple once more. At first, Apple said that it would be used as a server operating system while an updated Mac OS would continue to be the main operating system for desktop Macs.
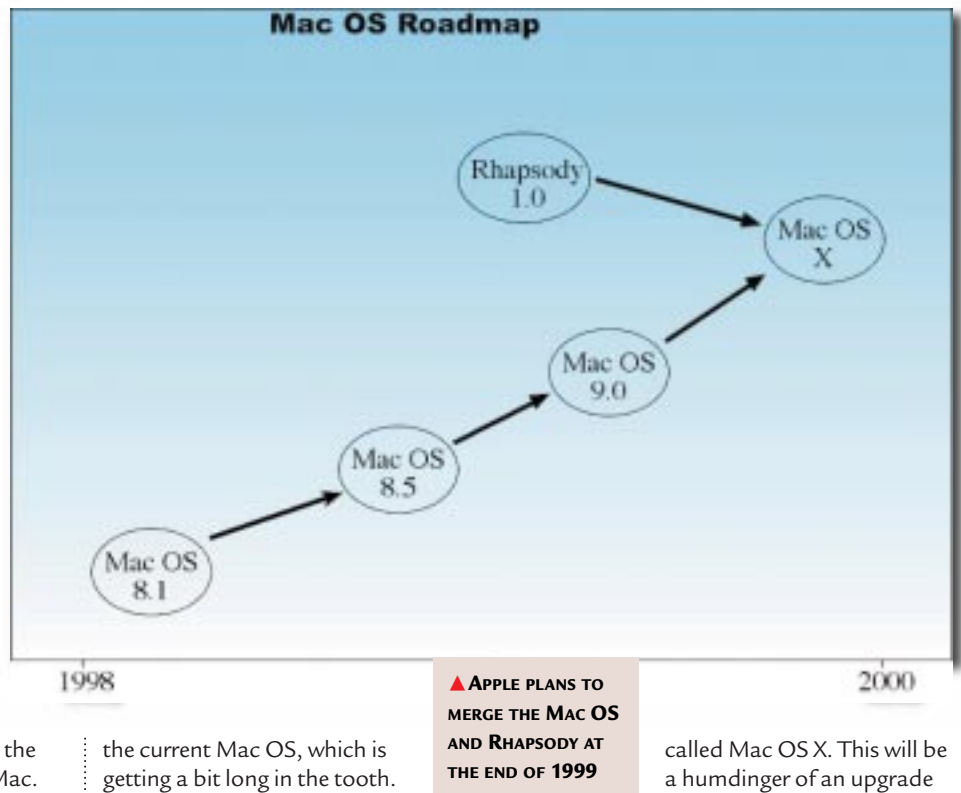
Then, at its recent developer conference, Apple announced that Rhapsody 1.0 would be released later this year but there would be no Rhapsody 2.0 after that. This was thought to mean that Rhapsody was dead but what's actually happening is that the Rhapsody technology will be repackaged and merged with the current Mac OS.

At the moment, the Mac OS is at version 8.1, with version 8.5 planned for the end of September. Rhapsody 1.0 is due soon after that. Mac OS 9 is scheduled for the first half of 1999 and then towards the end of that year, Apple plans to release version 10, which will be

called Mac OS X. This will be a humdinger of an upgrade that merges the Mac interface with the high-tech Unix architecture that underpins Rhapsody.

Some people have suggested that Mac OS X should actually be called Rhapsody 2.0, but that's incorrect. The problem with Rhapsody was that it was an entirely new operating system. Although Apple planned to provide a Mac OS emulation mode that would allow Rhapsody to run existing Mac OS software, software companies were still required to develop new Rhapsody versions of their applications to make the most of this new operating system.

Mac OS X eliminates this problem by integrating Rhapsody's new features, such as protected memory and multi-processing, into the existing Mac OS. This means that Mac users can continue to use their existing software and developers can upgrade their applications to use these new features without having to completely rewrite the applications from scratch.

Apple hasn't done a very good job at explaining all this, but it's a much better solution and should keep users and developers happy.

There's still a lot of detail that needs to be filled out in this roadmap (*see left*), but the MacWorld Expo starts in New York a few days after this issue goes to press and we hope to have more news on Rhapsody and Mac OS X for next month.

OS upgrades

In the meantime, a lot of Mac users have been wondering whether or not to upgrade to OS 8.1. This minor upgrade fixes quite a few bugs and updates features such as PC Exchange, which allows the Mac to read PC-formatted storage devices.

One of the most important features of OS 8.1 is a new disk formatting system that Apple calls Mac OS Extended Format. However, many people are simply calling it HFS+, as it takes over from the HFS format (hierarchical file system) that the Mac has used up until now. Just to confuse matters, Apple is now referring to HFS as Mac OS Standard Format.

Mac OS Extended Format makes more efficient use of your hard disk space and is particularly useful for disks that are 1Gb or more in size. However, Macs that are still using the old Standard Format can't see files stored on disks that use the new Extended Format. So if you try to exchange files with other Mac users on a network, or are using removable devices such as Jaz disks, they may not be able to see the contents of your disks unless you're all using the same disk formatting system.

The other problem is that hardly any of the current Mac disk utilities can handle Extended Format either, although Symantec is planning a new version of Norton Utilities For The Mac that will support the new format in a few weeks' time.

Fortunately, the new Extended Format is an option that you can choose to do without when upgrading your Mac to OS 8.1. This allows you to install OS 8.1 while retaining the Mac OS Standard Format on your hard disks. This is probably the best bet until the various

▶ **DEACTIVATING QUICKTIME'S AUTOPLAY OR AUTOSTART FEATURE WILL PROTECT YOUR MAC FROM THE AUTOSTART WORM VIRUS**

disk utility products have been properly updated. Whatever you do, remember to back up all your important files when you make any changes to the formatting of your hard disk.

You can download OS 8.1 and get further info on Mac OS Extended Format from swupdates.info.apple.com.

Virus alert

You don't hear of many Mac viruses these days, but there's a new one going around that really has been making a nuisance of itself. (Some wits have suggested that as viruses are once again being written for the Mac, this is proof of Apple's recovery).

The 'autostart worm' can be spread on floppy disks and on a network

The "autostart worm" can be spread on floppy disks and removable storage devices like Jaz and Zip cartridges, as well as between hard disks on a network. If you're running QuickTime 2.0 or higher, with the Autostart CD or AutoPlay CD option enabled in the QuickTime control panel, the virus can infect your hard disk and overwrite some of your data files with garbage.

Deactivating Autostart CD can prevent infection but doesn't help if your

hard disk has already been infected.

Most commercial anti-virus programs have been updated to cope with the autostart worm. If you don't want to pay for anti-virus software, you can get details of how to tackle the worm yourself from www.macintouch.com.

PCW CONTACTS

Cliff Joseph *welcomes correspondence and feedback on the Mac column. Contact him via the PCW editorial office (address, p10) or email* **mac@pcw.co.uk**

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☐ **Enable Audio CD AutoPlay**

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Allows some CD-ROMs to start automatically when inserted.