

■ JOHN C. DVORAK

# INSIDE TRACK

*The last musings about the PS/2, perhaps . . .*

**A** good story comes from an insider at Microsoft. Now we know how IBM kept quiet the details surrounding the Micro Channel bus.

IBM did give out a number of machines to OEMs, all right. But it encased all of the new machines in lead! Inside the box, the machine was wrapped in a lead foil that couldn't be removed without alerting IBM to a breach of security. It also couldn't be X-rayed. Curiously, the company felt no initial need to lead-foil the Model 30. That is, I'm told, until the boys at Microsoft started to fool around inside the machine to test some Microsoft hardware. "We showed the IBM rep some things we did, and the next thing you know, he left and returned with the lead foil."

The big controversy within IBM, though, wasn't security. It was the color of the logo. The design itself of the new logo isn't new—the logo for the new Personal System/2 is taken right off the wall of the retail product centers. Yup. That sideways angle is right from the now defunct Retail Products Centers. Notice the various colors, too. Some logos are black on silver, silver on gray, black on whatever. These different combinations represent different divisions and teams within IBM. Apparently, there were angry arguments over what colors to use. Each group battled for its color combo. Apparently this issue became more important than anything else to many employees. What a life—arguing about logos.

**Genuinely Interesting Software Dept. or Benchmark-Testing the Model 50 at the Office Dept.:** I like to play with benchmark programs. I discovered a couple of unusual ones that I ran on the new machines.

The first is the **Landmark CPU Speed Test** (\$29.95 from Landmark, 1142 Pomegranate Ct., Sunnyvale, CA 94087; (408) 733-4035; included is a great setup utility for real-time clock setting, add-in memory changes, and so on). It tells you, in real time, the effective clock speed of your computer as compared with a PC-XT and a 6-MHz one-wait-state PC AT. The Model 50 clocked the effective CPU speed as 9.8 MHz, indicating a sluggish 10-MHz system with one-wait-state memory. My old 8-MHz no-wait-state custom AT runs at an effective 10.3 MHz on this test. So the IBM is no screamer. Get a copy of this nifty benchmark and try it on your equipment. It's worth having for the setup utility alone.

I also like to look at the **data transfer rate** of the hard disk along with the track-to-track speed. The fastest disk in the world with superfast track-to-track doesn't do much good if the controller won't let anything past it faster than 500,000 bps. *That's* the most data that can be transferred from disk to memory on a PS/2. Ask the technology writers what they're talking about when they say the disks are running data out at 10 megabits—something I've read three times in different publications.

**A good test for data transfer rates is the Coretest from Core.** Core is the premier disk drive upgrade company. If you can't get a copy from a BBS or user group, the company will send it for \$20 handling (Core International, 7171 N. Federal Hwy., Boca Raton, FL 33431; (305) 997-6055). Coretest tells me that the effective data transfer rate of the Model 50 hard disk is about 450,000 bps. Not bad. The average PC-XT and AT transfer data at about 150,000 bps. The speed increase on the Model 50 is

mostly due to the 1:1 interleave and addition of a memory cache, the best-known ways to increase performance on a disk system. But even 450 isn't great. On my AT at home I have the **Super PC-Kwik cache** (from Multisoft, Beaverton, Ore.) installed as a 256K-byte cache residing in the expanded memory, and I get an effective data transfer rate that averages 750,000 bps using the Coretest—faster than the controller could ever handle. If the cache has just been loaded or flushed, the number flies off the scale.

**Doomsayer Dept.:** While talking to the boys at Core, I found out something interesting. They trashed their Model 50 hard disk each time the machine was jiggled or moved. "We formatted it eight times!" I was told. "If this turns out to be a general problem," says Core honcho John Simonds, "then it will be a bonanza for us."

**The Fly in the Ointment:** Some feel that Intel's recent attempt to can its relationship with AMD as a second source for the 386 is a move influenced by IBM to keep any cheap 24-MHz parts a few years away. The reasons are obvious when you look at the IBM minicomputers.

In a desperate attempt to keep the 286 the chip of choice, IBM even forced Microsoft to make OS/2 usable on the 286. The software boys all know that the 80386 is a chance to start from scratch and build a new operating system. But IBM said the new system has to be usable on AT-class machines, thus creating an operating system that won't cut the mustard. To make matters worse, Microsoft will want \$795 for a full-blown version. And developers have to shell out \$3,000 for a developer's kit for OS/2. From the looks of it, OS/2 might easily become the Lisa of software. It remains to be seen whether or not Microsoft has a Macintosh of software waiting in the wings. ☐