



Computer Corner

Is Your Old PC Up For The New Gadget Challenge TM

(NAPSA)—The year 2003 may very well be the year of the gadget. Some analysts forecast that U.S. shoppers will buy more than 12 million digital cameras and nearly 10 million MP3 music players in the coming year. With mounting sales of digital electronic devices, from personal digital assistants (PDAs) to CD burners and DVD writers, a high-tech toy could be in your immediate future.

However, many consumers may be disappointed when they link their new digital device to their current home computers. Hardware limitations in older PCs can result in limited functionality when operating the software necessary to manipulate digital images, audio files or video. "Today's digital devices may demand a higher level of system performance than your current PC might offer and can easily overtax an older computer," says Patrick Moorhead, vice president at Advanced Micro Devices.

"Consumers should make sure their existing PC is up to the challenge of operating these performance-intensive digital devices. Many households last upgraded their computers in 1999, says Moorhead, when consumers wanted to acquire more up-to-date systems that would allow them to take advantage of the Internet. While older computers may still be effective for word processing and e-mail communication, they can be overwhelmed when tasked with handling digital imagery or music files. "Many of today's PCs have real-world performance advantages over older computers when used with modern consumer electronics," says Moorhead.

To illustrate the difference in performance between an \$899 PC purchased two years ago with an \$899 PC in stores today, Moorhead offers this example: Convert-

ing five minutes of digital video footage to a format that allows DVD playback takes less than 14 minutes on today's computer, compared to more than 35 minutes on the two-year-old computer. That adds up to more than two hours of time saved when converting a 30-minute video.

To avoid digital disappointment, Moorhead advises new gadget owners to consider the following:

- It's important to evaluate how you will use a new PC before you go shopping. If you are planning to save a large number of digital pictures on your hard drive, you should buy a PC with plenty of storage space and a CD burner.

- Make sure your home computer meets the hardware requirements of the software you will use for your digital devices because otherwise, your new high-tech toy may not operate as expected. Many digital toys require a USB or 1394/FireWire connection.

- Evaluate a variety of system features when buying a new PC. Don't base your purchase on a single factor, such as processor speed or frequency (example: 1.6GHz). Beware of the "Megahertz Myth"—which inaccurately suggests that higher processor frequency (expressed in Megahertz or Gigahertz) will necessarily lead to a better computing experience. You should buy a PC that offers the best possible performance of the software you use. The reality is that overall system performance is what matters most. By doing some homework first, like reading computer magazines and researching online, buyers can get a great PC that meets their needs, and avoid the costly Megahertz Myth. For more information on PC performance, go to trusted sources such as computer magazines and Internet sites including www.amd.com.