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The next meeting of the Capital Apple Macintosh Performa User Group will be held on Wednesday, January 11, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 103 at Gardiner Area High School. Sue Westlake will demonstrate GarageSale - a highly rated piece of software that enhances your ability to create ebay listings.

Board of Directors meeting at 6:15 (not 6:30)

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New Software Review Policy (approved November 16, 2005)

In light of the difficulty in procuring complementary evaluation software, the directors voted to implement an additional software/hardware review program. Under the new program, the directors will partially reimburse members for the cost of a software or hardware item. The reimbursement amount is the lesser of $50 or 50% of the purchase price. Reimbursement will be paid from CAMP funds. A member who accepts CAMP reimbursement agrees, within a reasonable time, to demonstrate the product at a CAMP meeting and write a review for CAMP News.

All reimbursement requests must be made to the directors, and reimbursement will be paid only for requests that are approved by the directors. In evaluating requests for approval, the directors may consider such factors as the volume of requests received, the likely level of group interest in the product, past approvals for products of a similar nature, and the member's demonstration and review of any previous product for which reimbursement was paid. The directors will use their best efforts to apportion the benefits of this program equitably among the members.

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Brother HL-5250DN
Monochrome Laser Printer
$250 estimated street price
$250- $30 rebate = $220
final price (Staples in-store)
         *Affordable, Feature-Rich
         Printer for Home Networks

Although inkjet printers are all the rage on the consumer front these days, black-and-white laser printers can't be beat for economical, speedy, high-quality text. As with inkjets, the price of B&W laser printers has come down drastically, and there has never been a better time to buy one than now.

Under the slogan "At your side," Brother International has been actively courting the Macintosh market. Is this the kind of big brother, I wondered, who teaches you how to hit a baseball and fends off bullies? Or is this the kind of big brother who beats you up and tricks you into eating dirt?

I am pleased to report that in this case we are dealing with a benevolent, not malevolent big brother. I recently bought the company's HL-5250DN monochrome laser printer and found lots to like. The only significant drawback is the need to eventually purchase a replacement drum unit. This may limit the economic life of the printer for heavy users.

The HL-5250DN is an unassuming, but not unattractive charcoal gray and off-white box that blends in unobtrusively next to your CPU or router. Router? Yes, the HL-5250DN sports a 10/100 Ethernet interface as well as USB 2.0 and parallel ports. The HL-5250DN is Bonjour-aware, so adding the printer to your network is a snap once you've installed the appropriate drivers. Network connectivity in a printer at this low a price point is a real coup.

Paper feed is accomplished via a 250-page letter-size cassette or a 50-page multipurpose tray that accepts legal size paper or sizes down for smaller widths and envelopes. For an additional $50 you can buy the HL-5250DNT, which brings a second 250-page cassette to the party. 250-page letter size cassettes can also be purchased separately, such that you can stack your HL-5250DN or HL-5250DNT with a maximum of three cassettes. However, the $200 price for add-on cassettes on Brother's web site is 80% of the $250 estimated street price for the entire printer.

Brother's claim of < 8.5 seconds for first page out is accurate. I didn't attempt to measure the claimed print speed of 30 pages per minute, but I can tell you one thing: this baby is *fast!* My subjective impression is that the HL-5250DN churns out pages at the same rate as the heavy-duty HP network printers at my office. PDFs and web pages render very quickly. Part of this

may be due to the default 32 mb of installed memory, another feature you won't always find in this class of printer. A slot for installing additional memory is easily accessed by popping open a cover on the outside of the printer.

Duplexing (i.e., printing on both sides of the paper) is another calling-card feature of the HL-5250DN that is usually seen only on more expensive printers. On the HP printers at work, duplexing takes place entirely inside the machine. Brother takes a different approach. When two-sided printing is selected in the Print dialog box, the HL-5250DN rolls a sheet of paper into the output tray with one side printed, sucks it back into the machine for a second, and immediately spews it out again with the second side printed. The printer repeats this process with each sheet in turn until the entire job is finished.

The HL-5250DN includes Postscript 3 emulation for printing vector graphics, and a driver setting allows the user to optimize output for text or photos. Default print resolution is 600 dpi; 300 dpi and two flavors of 1200 dpi are also available. I didn't test the printer for graphic or photo quality, but text quality is crisp and clear from 4 point to 128 point type at 600 dpi. Differing combinations of indicator lights convey a large number of maintenance alerts

and diagnostic information.

Another area where the printer shines is quietness and power saving. When the printer is in standby mode or power saving mode, it is totally silent. The fan only spins when the printer is actually printing. When in power saving mode, the printer consumes only 9 watts of electricity – little more than a nightlight. The user can set the sleep time in power saving mode; the default is five minutes. Transition from power saving mode to actual print mode is very quick; the printer takes only a few seconds to wake up.

Another positive attribute is that the printer ships with a standard 3500-page toner cartridge, as opposed to a "starter" cartridge of much lower capacity. When it comes time to replace the cartridge, 3500-page and 7000-page capacity units are available.

Another big plus is Brother's Mac support. The OS X driver and print utilities are full-featured. The manuals are up to date for OS 10.4, and the web site contains a lot of Mac-specific information. Speaking of manuals, a printed quick setup guide is in the box. A complete user manual, network user's guide, and detailed configuration manual come on the included CD and/or can be downloaded from Brother's web site. (The quick setup guide contains one item I've never seen

before in any manual: a blow-up illustration showing how to re-pack the printer in its styrofoam inserts and cardboard trays in the event that you need to return it!)

What's not to like? Although fit and finish are top notch, the moveable plastic parts don't strike me as particularly robust. Although Brother touts the HL-5250DN as "a printing workhorse for advanced users and small workgroups," I have trouble envisioning the unit surviving heavy use in an office environment. But for a lesser load, such as my 4-computer home network, this will not be an issue.

What *is* an issue is the need to replace the drum at 25,000 pages or less. (The user manual candidly admits that the replacement threshold will probably be less.) In many/most laser printers, the drum is an integral part of the toner cartridge. When you replace the toner cartridge, you're also replacing the drum. In the HL-5250DN, on the other hand, the drum is an internal printer part. And once you approach the 25,000-page mark, those indicator lights will signal that it's time to replace the drum.

If you use the HL-5250DN at anything close to its maximum duty cycle of 20,000 pages per month, that time will come relatively quickly. Here on the home front, it will take me many years.

But when the drum finally expires, buying a replacement may be an iffy proposition. As of this writing, the price of a new Brother drum is $153 from Amazon, or $126 from Buy.com ("temporarily sold out"). (Many other vendors also carry this item.) Will it be prudent to spend half the original price of the printer on this one part? In many situations, the rational answer will likely be "no," which has led at least one commenter to label Brother lasers as "disposable" printers.

On the other hand, brand-name Brother toner cartridges do appear to be fairly priced. One would expect the lack of a drum in the toner cartridge to result in a lower price, and this appears to be so, at least to some degree. The standard 3500-page capacity Brother cartridge is available from Amazon for $59 or from Buy.com for $49 (again, "temporarily sold out"). This is considerably less than I was accustomed to paying with respect to my last laser printer, and somewhat less than HP-branded toner for the HP 1320 line.

Low-priced toner cartridges may take some of the sting out of the drum replacement cost. Although I haven't used the printer enough to opine as to its reliability, it offers a broad feature set and robust performance at a value price. But only time will tell if my big brother and me grow old together.

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Rivals to take bite out of Apple
By Alfred Hermida
Technology editor, BBC News
website in Las Vegas

MP3 players
The Consumer Electronics Show
ends on Sunday
Gadget-makers seeking to rival
Apple's iPod have been showcasing
their gizmos in Las Vegas.

Dozens of audio and video players
of all descriptions are everywhere to
be seen at the Consumer
Electronics Show (CES).

They range from devices with big
hard drives capable of holding
thousands of songs to sleek thin
models.

Americans spent $3bn last year on
gadgets so they could listen to
music on the go.

Over the coming 12 months, they
are forecast to spend $4.5bn on
MP3 players, according to figures
provided by the CES organisers.

Thick and thin

With more people putting these
desires on their wish lists, a raft of
manufacturers are looking to mount
a serious challenge to the best-
selling iPod.

Among those taking Apple head on
is Sandisk. The company, which is
better known for making memory
cards, has launched a slim,
lightweight iPod nano clone.

Creative Zen
Creative's player was chosen as
best gizmo at CES by website Cnet.

But it is going one better than
Apple, offering its Sansa e200
which can hold up to six gigabytes
of songs or video.

"Music is an incredibly important
part of the digital lifestyle, where
the emphasis is on accessibility of
music, styling and ruggedness on
the go," said Sandisk's Eric Bone.

Others are looking to offer up to
30GB. South Korea's Samsung has
its YM-P1 player, while Singapore's
Creative Labs has its Zen Vision: M.

Both devices hold 30GB and play
video, as well as audio.

Creative's player was chosen as
best gizmo at CES by technology
site Cnet.

The Singapore-based company has
also taken the battle with Apple to
software, launching an initial

version of software to organise
podcasts.

"It's another way to aggregate
content," said a Creative
spokesperson. "A lot of people have
Zen players which are not
compatible with iTunes."

Just accessorise

At least 30 million iPods have been
sold since late 2001, giving Apple
about 75 percent of the U.S. market
for portable music players,

In a sign of the iPod's dominance in
the world of digital players, the CES
show floor was packed with a raft
of accessories.

They ranged from designer cares to
protective shells to in-car adapters.

"One of the largest growth areas is
iPod accessories," said Consumer
Electronics Association analyst
Sean Wargo.

"In cars, we are seeing iPod
integration in car dashboards."

CES, the world's largest consumer
technology trade show, closes its
doors on Sunday.