Memorex counters 3380 release

Boosts DASD performance, cuts prices, adds buffer to IBM compatibles

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MILPITAS, Calif.— Continuing to respond to IBM's new generation of 3380 disk drives, Memorex Corp. has announced a string buffer, 4.5M byte/sec. transfer speeds, expanded cache memory and an integrated disk and controller.

In October, Memorex announced price cuts and added a 12-month warranty to its 3380-compatible disk drives. That announcement was the first of what Memorex said would be a three-part counterattack to IBM's September disk drive announcement.

At that time, IBM announced the 3380 Model J and K disk drives; a 4.5M byte/sec. channel speed; the CJ2 integrated disk and controller subsystem; and the 3990 controller, which offers several enhanced functions, including a 256M-byte cache. The Models J and K are available now, and the CJ2 and the 3990 are slated to be available in the third quarter of 1988.

The Memorex String Controller Buffer can improve performance by 15% by virtually eliminating missed disk rotations, according to the vendor. Upon locating a piece of information on a disk, the buffer records all the data on the track. The buffer retains the track, which is immediately available to the CPU for additional access.

Priced at $25,000, the String Controller Buffer can be installed on existing Memorex 3683 and 6240 HDPs and on future 3685, 3686 and 3683-HP controllers. It is scheduled to be available for single-capacity units in the first quarter and for double-capacity units in the fourth quarter of 1989.

"We think the most exciting thing is the buffer," said Louise Biggs, an industry analyst at Dataquest, Inc. in San Jose, Calif. She said the $25,000 price might be justified if a user is concerned with maximizing performance.

Responding to the IBM CJ2, Memorex announced the 3686 Direct Attach String Controller, which attaches directly to the host channel and performs the same functions as the Memorex 3888 storage control unit.

Comparisons

Memorex claimed the 3686 offers identical performance to IBM's CJ2. However, the vendor said the 3686 may house two head-disk assemblies of single or double capacity, while the CJ2 houses only one single-capacity head-disk assembly.

Users can attach up to three 3680-HP drives or 3682 double-capacity units. The 3686 reportedly will also support the String Controller Buffer. Set for availability in the third quarter of 1988, the unit is priced from $87,000 to $252,000.

Memorex also announced the 3680-HP disk-storage subsystem, which includes the 3683-HP string controller and up to four 3680-HP disk drives. The new subsystem offers a 12-msec. access time. According to the vendor, the subsystem will be available in the first quarter of 1988 and will be priced from $70,000 to $235,000.

In addition, Memorex announced a feature that it said will increase the data-transfer rate for its 3888-23 cache controllers. Set to be available in the first quarter of 1988, it can reportedly be installed in the field for $3,000.

Memorex also announced a cache increase for 3888-23 cache controllers from 64M to 192M bytes. The memory can be installed on existing units in 16M-byte increments, Memorex said. The expanded cache will be available in December

Memorex
FROM PAGE 45

1988 at a price of $3,000 per megabyte.

A Memorex spokesman commented that the firm will eventually offer a 256M-byte cache to match the capacity of IBM's 3990.

Biggs said the Memorex 3680-HP subsystem does not have a quad path feature like IBM will offer when the IBM 3990 controller becomes available next fall.

Memorex is unlikely to offer the quad path as an enhancement because of architectural constraints.

Therefore, Memorex is offering improved performance now through the buffering feature, according to Biggs.

COMPUTERWORLD
December 27, 1987