Taking a different tack from its competitors, Epson has come up with the new Equity II with a two-speed NEC-V20 processor. Epson decided to use the NEC-V20 processor because it can be programmed to run at twice the speed of the original Equity. This allows Epson to use the processing power of this IBM PC compatible system.

The Equity II is aimed at those who want faster performance in a brand-name computer without paying the premium price tag of an IBM PC AT. By using the Equity II, you get all the features of the Equity, plus a 20-megabyte hard disk drive. This gives you a great deal of storage space for your work.

FEATURES: The Equity II is an IBM PC XT compatible computer with an 8-bit ISA bus. The CPU is a NEC V20, which can work just like the Intel 8080 that is the basic chip used in the PC and PC XT. However, the V20 can process information faster. For one thing, the V20 has a 16-bit bus. The 8080, while a 16-bit processor, communicates with the rest of the computer through an 8-bit bus. For another, the V20 is capable of running not only at the standard PC speed of 4.77 MHz, but also at 7.16 MHz. The V20 still manages to be fully compatible with the 8080 and, since the same basic memory chips are used, the PC software we were able to test. In addition, the Equity II has an option for dual-speed operation, allowing the user to select between two different speeds: 4.77 MHz or 7.16 MHz. The V20 can be seen as an 8-bit microprocessor for faster calculations. The Equity II also accommodates the internal, half-height storage devices. Our test machine came with an IBM-compatible floppy disk drive with a 1.2-MB floppy and a 20-megabyte hard disk.

The Equity II includes a clock and battery-supported memory that you can set to turn on the computer at a prearranged time. The Equity II also offers an integrated I/O port that is compatible with IBM and PC style devices.

PERFORMANCE: Running at the standard PC clock speed of 4.77 MHz, the Equity II outperforms the original Equity, which had a 4.77 MHz NEC V20 processor. Epson's addition of the 20-MHz bus and the extra memory have greatly increased the computer's performance.

As a result, the Equity II can handle the demands of most modern applications. The Equity II is also compatible with most software programs, including those designed for the IBM PC XT.

REVISED EQUIPMENT: With faster speed and more memory, the Equity II is an excellent choice for anyone who wants a high-performance IBM PC compatible computer at an affordable price. With its dual-speed capabilities, the Equity II can handle a wide range of applications, from word processing to drafting, and even video editing.

Epson's Equity II features dual-speed operation on the NEC V20 processor, 500% of memory, and easy disk drives. The Equity II runs Epson's Equity II operating system, which is compatible with MS-DOS.

To summarize, the Equity II is a powerful, dual-speed IBM PC compatible computer at an affordable price. Its fast performance and compatibility with MS-DOS make it a good choice for anyone looking for a high-performance IBM PC compatible computer. With its dual-speed capabilities, the Equity II can handle a wide range of applications, making it an excellent choice for anyone who wants a fast and powerful computer.
Matching the Equity II with the Epson hard drive is like hitching a bot rod to a plow horse.

Epson's good reputation for making reliable hardware, extensive dealer network, and long warranty earn it a very good rating in reliability.

VALUE: This computer purports to offer improved performance to individuals in the market for a stand-up PC but not willing to spring for the price of an AT. Epson delivers on this promise only in part. The processor markedly improves the Equity II over a stand-alone IBM PC, but Epson's hard disk drive offering is not worth considering either for performance (it is slower than an XT at $500) or for price (the list price for the drive and controller is $600).

An Epson spokesperson shrugged off our complaint about the hard disk drive with the faster spiners than the slow drives, which is cheaper than the cheaper drives, this seems like a good plan. We strongly recommend that users consider the Equity II pass over the Epson hard drive and select a third-party drive instead.

Hard disk drive aside, Epson is effectively charging for the faster processor between 3850 and 3840 over the price you'd pay for a 477-IBM 68020-based computer from a national name-brand vendor such as Leanding Edge or Digital, and $200 to $300 more than you would pay for a dual-speed 68020 system. For the increased processing power and the security of buying an Epson, this seems like a fair premium, so we rate value as unsatisfactory. Bear in mind that you can buy add-on boards for considerably less and even some AT compatible cards for the same or less on the Equity. We only recommend this system in its basic configuration; buy your own hard disk drive separately.

John Lambard is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1987.

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InfoWorld

REPORT CARD

COMPUTER

EQUITY II

The keyboard on one unit was nearly unused. The keys stick in the down position, producing a crisp sound. We detached the keyboard and managed to get it to work reliably, but most users would have no choice but to replace the faulty keyboard. The appearance is typically flared; the Epson warranty covers parts and labor for one year, a longer warranty period than most computer manufacturers offer.

The Equity II's main board is relatively inaccessible, underneath the disk drive assembly. It is easy to replace the disk drives for repair but still awkward getting at some features on the main board, such as the floppy controller.

No phone number is provided in the documentation for technical support, but Epson said there is a toll-free number (300) 481-5678. The claims 1,000 dealers are authorized to provide support, with those regional centers and branch offices as alternatives for service.

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