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System 7.x: Can't Start with Install 1 Floppy Disk Copy (7/93)

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Article Change History

07/09/93 - REVISED

- To add more history and technical explanation.

TOPIC -----

I'm trying to make working copies of System 7.1 disks via the disk-to-disk copy method. After copying the Install 1 disk, I attempted to start up from the disk. The "Welcome to Macintosh" message appeared, a vibrating blank dialog box appeared, and then my system froze. Why did this happen using the traditional disk copy method? (When I used Disk Copy to make a backup copy, there was no problem.)

DISCUSSION -----

This anomaly has been around since System 7.0 was introduced. It isn't a bug. There isn't enough room on a floppy disk to fit the Installer, a Finder, and a System file. A decision was made to put a System and Installer on the Install 1 disk and have the disk start up directly into the Installer application. To do this, the boot blocks on the floppy disk were written to have the Installer (not The Finder) as the startup application.

Prior to System 7, the Macintosh was capable of starting up to any application by using the Set Startup feature of the Finder (not Multi-Finder). The Set Startup feature actually wrote the application's name to the startup volume's boot blocks. Since System 7 is a multitasking operating system and no longer supports a single tasking environment, it always assumes that the Finder is the startup application. The Set Startup feature was removed from the System 7 Finder.

The problem of not being able to boot from a copy of Install 1 or InstallMeFirst occurs because of what happens when you copy these disks to another disk using the Finder. When you copy a System file to another disk, the standard boot blocks are written with the Finder as the Startup application. This means that when a Macintosh tries to boot from the new disk, it will be trying to launch a file called Finder. Of course, there's no Finder on the Install 1 or InstallMeFirst disk, and the Macintosh will

hang up.

Since the boot blocks contain the name of the Finder as the startup application, you can rename the Installer to Finder. When a Macintosh boots up from the copy of Install 1 or InstallMeFirst disks, the Macintosh will launch the renamed Installer application and the install will proceed as normal. However, Apple doesn't recommend or support this solution. The supported and recommended solution is to use a sector copy program such as Disk Copy.

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