Signs point to a sooner-rather-than-later M5 MacBook Pro refresh

Mac power users waiting on new high-end MacBook Pro models may have been disappointed last fall when Apple released an M5 upgrade for the low-end 14-inch MacBook Pro without touching the M4 Pro or Max versions of the laptop. But the wait for M5 Pro and M5 Max models may be nearing its end.

The tea-leaf readers at MacRumors noticed that shipping times for a handful of high-end MacBook Pro configurations have slipped into mid-to-late February, rather than being available immediately as most Mac models are. This is often, though not always, a sign that Apple has slowed down or stopped production of an existing product in anticipation of an update.

Currently, the shipping delays affect the M4 Max versions of both the 14-inch and 16-inch MacBook Pros. If you order them today, these models will arrive sometime between February 3 and February 24, depending on the configuration you choose; many M4 Pro versions are still available for same-day shipping, though adding a nano-texture display or upgrading RAM can still add a week or so to the shipping time.

Apple could choose to launch new Pro hardware on January 28 to go with the new Creator Studio subscription it announced last week. Aimed primarily at independent content creators who make their own video, audio, and images, the Creator Studio subscription bundles Final Cut Pro, Logic Pro, Pixelmator Pro, and enhancements for the Pages, Numbers, and Keynote apps (along with some other odds and ends) for $13 a month or $130

a year. None of these apps require a MacBook Pro, but many would benefit in some way from the additional CPU and GPU power, RAM, and storage available in Apple’s high-end laptops.

Of course, an imminent replacement isn’t the only reason why the shipping estimates for any given Mac might slip. Ongoing, AI-fueled RAM shortages could be causing problems, and Apple probably prioritizes production of the widely used base-model M4 and M5 chips to the larger, more expensive, more complex Max models.

But the only other device in Apple’s lineup that offers the M4 Max and similar RAM configuration options is the high-end Mac Studio, which currently isn’t subject to the same shipping delays. That does imply that the delays are specific to the MacBook Pro—and one explanation for this is that the laptop is about to be replaced.

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