

Motherboard Fails

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Hardware is reasonably reliable if you're careful to buy components of decent quality. Recently, a bargain motherboard/CPU combo purchase at Fry's Electronics came back to bite me in the fanny.

I live in Grants Pass, Oregon, about 35 miles north of the southern border to California. Fry's Electronics is located near Portland, Oregon, at the other (north) end of the state. So, I only get up there occasionally.

One morning, while perusing the Fry's store advertisement page in the (Portland) "The Oregonian" newspaper, I see an ad for a Motherboard/CPU combo--it's an Athlon 6000 CPU/ECS NForce 6M-A motherboard combo for around \$200.

I think to myself, "not bad--I want to upgrade my CPU from an Athlon 3200, and a socket AM2 motherboard will be ready for future Athlon processors." Then I recall thinking, "...the motherboard must be pretty cheap for the price--oh well, it'll probably be just fine."

The next week, my wife had a medical appointment in Salem, Oregon, just 40 miles or so south of Fry's. So, I took this opportunity to make a side trip to Fry's to purchase this CPU/motherboard combo.

Back home, I upgrade my system, installing the new motherboard, CPU, and a new video card and RAM I'd also picked up along the way. It worked great too--for precisely a month and a half.

Last week, this system just abruptly stopped. I attempt to power it back up--no go. After an hour or so, I finally conclude it's a bad power supply. Down to a local store to get a new one (500W Antec at my local Staples) for \$99.98. Install it in the box, reconnect everything, and...no joy.

Finally, after some fiddling around and experimentation, it dawns on me that it's the ECS motherboard that's failed. A day later, I make it into Medford, Oregon, and purchase a decent quality Asus motherboard (\$126).

So, how much did this "bargain" cost me? Over \$400. Partly because I'd misdiagnosed the problem as a failed power supply. But mostly because it doesn't pay in the long run to use cheap motherboards.

Later, I was talking with a local small computer parts store owner who asked me, "Was it an ECS motherboard? I've had more problems selling their board than any other brand. I don't carry them anymore."

"Yes", I replied. "It was my first ECS motherboard, and my last."

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