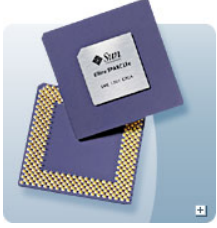


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By: Alexandru Pancescu, Hardware Editor

Sun's Niagara 2 Chips

"World's fastest multi-core commodity chip"



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The Web

Sun Microsystems announced the launch of its new chip, codenamed Niagara 2, that is intended as the first of a new generation of processors. The Sun company is probably best known around the world for its software products (the JAVA programming language is a prime example) and less for its server lines or processors. Now, Sun hopes to change this trend with the new Niagara processors that are intended to power high performance servers and to compete head on with the similar products from well established chip makers like Intel and AMD. Not all the servers that Sun Microsystems makes were or will be powered by their new processor, some of the lower cost ones will house chips made by the rivals Intel and AMD. This situation is best explained by the company's chief executive officer, Jonathan Schwartz, who was cited by the news site [TechNewsWorld](#) as saying: "We are too big to have anyone be just an ally or a competitor. We partner with Microsoft, we partner with IBM and we also compete with IBM and Microsoft." While Niagara 2 may well be the codename of the new Sun chip and while it may become the popular name too, the official designation for this new processor is UltraSparc T2. This processor is just the first of a series that is planned to surface over the next two years, including the much waited high performance chip named Rock. All those computer processors are designed to power servers and mainframes and more importantly, Sun hopes that its Rock processor will determine HP to finally abandon the use of the Itanium class processors in its top line of servers. "We hope in the not-too-distant future, their customers will pressure them to dump Itanium", said David Yen, executive vice president of Sun's microelectronics group. According to Sun Microsystems, the Niagara 2 chip is the world's fastest performing computer processor and one of the most energy efficient. The Niagara 2 has eight cores and can process at any given time up to 64 distinct threads, that should translate into very high computing performance. "This is the first true server-on-a-chip," David Yen said. As the battle between chip makers is more about the actual work done per clock tick and not on the actual running frequency, Sun's claims may very well be truthful. As the computer industry as a whole becomes more interested in green technologies and power conservation, the success of the UltraSPARC T2 processor may very well be linked to its energy efficiency.