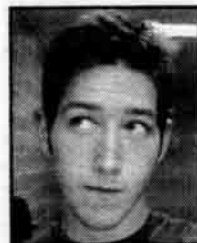


Back in Mac: She Was a Fast Machine...

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First of all, I didn't just 'switch' to Mac. I switched back. I remember our very first computer. It was grey, it was heavy, and it was shaped like a trapezoid. Last Christmas we'd gotten an air hockey table. This year we got a computer.



WHERE THE HELL IS WAYNE, MAINE?

Computers, I soon found, were impressive feats of modern engineering. Our Apple IIe was capable of such marvels as the Oregon Trail, Math Blasters, and Carmen Sandiego. Computers were great. The following year we got one in our classroom at school; nothing could be more thrilling than 16 second graders hunched around a 12 inch screen, watching a little white wagon inch its way pixel by pixel past rocks and trees. Sometimes we'd shoot bear, and sometimes we'd contract cholera. Sometimes uncle Ned would die in a tragic Injun Raid. We rarely made it to Oregon, but we got the fix.

Then, later, as computers progressed, our family became a 'PC' family. Not to say that we stopped making off-color jokes; far from it. We simply got ourselves a newfangled computer and had to buy another copy of Oregon Trail. Muppets Print Shop wouldn't work on this new contraption; apparently these 'PCs' were better, faster, had more software, and lacked licensing from the Jim Henson Corporation. I traded in my educational games for Doom II and Minesweeper and thought nothing of it. I've had PCs ever since.

I used to be a geek about computers. Ok, I used to be a real geek. Ok, I am a real geek. My therapist says I shouldn't discuss it. Happy place. Happy place. Ok.

Anyhow, to me Apple people were on a different planet. As far as I was concerned, they just didn't get how cool solitaire was. I should mention that, being from Maine, there's really nothing to do there. Nothing. Bowling is really popular. Really.

So, kids in Maine take one of two routes. One, they smoke a lot of drugs. Lots. My bus in high school smelled like the back of Cheech's RV. Seriously, a cannabis carnival. Kids who just said no to drugs, school, organized athletics, vegetables, and parental supervision turned to computers.

We had geek parties, massive gatherings where we used words like 'networking,' 'frag,' and 'binary.' Picture it: 18 kids lugging their computers to Tim Colomy's barn in the middle of a snowstorm. Surrounded by Mountain Dew and potato chips, we'd play Counter Strike all night and into the morning. It was really, really geeky. Dorkfest. Nerdstravaganza. It was a bad scene.

Imagine twenty or so adolescent boys in a room with both computer knowledge and an incredibly small chance of getting any. This, to me, is what PCs represent. PCs byte; I know that now.

Spurred on by those catchy 'switch' commercials, fond memories of Carmen Sandiego, and the spooky voice of Jeff Goldblum, about a month ago I got a new iBook. An iBook, for those of you who aren't familiar, is a laptop about the size of a head of lettuce, smashed into an eight by twelve inch box two inches high. I gave a call to the folks at Apple and started crossing off little squares on my calendar. When it came in the mail, it was a little like a birth. I even named it. Wayne.

In the weeks since, we've grown very close. The thing is angelically white. I talk to it. I watch it sleep, and gently stroke its simple keys. Whoa. Personal foul.

Somehow, and I still don't understand this, I can be in the library, and the iBook can go online. Rephrase. The iBook just sits on the table. Online. Without little blue wires. Out of thin air, this thing creates email. Fascinating. Is the Internet fluttering through space all the time? Will it give me bionic superpowers? Will it give me cancer? I really hope this thing isn't hazardous to my health. Nah, I doubt it. It's too cute and diminutive.

It's so small and little; I can take it everywhere with me. I think my friends feel a little bit



like the rest of the Beatles when John was schlepping Yoko around like a breast-feeding child. Ok, ok, that was harsh. My friends feel nothing like the rest of the Beatles when Yoko was like a breast-feeding child. They feel embarrassed for being around that kid with the Laptop. But I don't care.

I care about this new computer to the point where if someone came up and kicked it, or knocked it down, or breathed on it or something, I wouldn't kill them. I'm above that. I'd definitely rough them up a little, though. Just a black eye or something, maybe kick them in the shins, that sort of deal. Ok, when they fell down, I'd definitely kick them in the stomach. Definitely.

Last week, to make sure my baby didn't get hurt, I drove down to Albany to the 'Apple Store' and bought a 'laptop sleeve.' It's a little neoprene cover, slightly larger than iBook size. It's supposed to protect said laptop from the bumps, bruises, jolts, and jarrings of everyday life. It sort of looks like a purse. Ok, it really looks like a purse, but that's ok. I can endure a little femininity in order to ensure a little sensitivity. After all, I've got manhood to spare, right? Right guys? Right? Ok, right.

The bottom line is I'm happier. Though it makes me look like a girl, throws my social priorities out of whack, and separates me from my friends, I've gone Mac, and I won't go back. I can't. Sorry, guys, it's just too cool.