

Thoughts on a Mac

Thoughts on a Mac | Tech Tips Podcast by PcCG

Mac vs. PC

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I get asked what I think about Mac often. So let me start by saying that I'm not writing this article because I have a chip on my shoulder. I am sure some of the mac fans out there will view what I have to say here as sacrilegious, which actually gets to one of the core points I will be making.

I am not a Mac/Apple fan. I can work on them, I can fix them, I know how to operate them... I am just not a fan.

The Apple operating System(s) are stable, reliable and efficient. Of course I contend that they are not truly "apple". OS-X is an adaptation of Linux (or Unix for those who want to split hairs), which is a completely different operating system. There was a major change in the Apple OS(Operating System) from OS9 to OSX (10). The change was... Apple ditched its own operating system, grabbed a linux variant and threw an apple interface on top of it. Nevertheless, OSX is good! But it, like any OS is far from perfect.

This will probably shock many of you out there but... Mac's do get Viruses. Don't believe me? See here: [600,000 Macs Infected](#) [2]. In this CNet article we find that Macs are not impervious to viruses. 600,000 Macs are infected with this virus alone. And yes, you can (and should) buy anti-virus products for the Mac to protect against this.

It is true, Mac's get far less infections than PC's, but it's not really because the Apple OS is some iconic beast, fending off such badies left and right. It's much simpler than that. With Mac's consisting of less than 10% of the market, it doesn't make much sense to invest time and money into developing viruses for Apple machines. You get a much bigger bang for your buck by going after the 90% of the computers, the Windows machines. But why are there so many more windows machines?

Price and competition.

Apple is a rather closed system. Nobody but Apple can produce Macs. The Apple OS can't be loaded onto any other computers, only those produced by Apple. Therefore you get HP, IBM, Dell, Gateway, Lenovo, Acer etc. vs Apple. Incidentally it also means if one of them tries to artificially inflate their prices, people will say "forget that noise..." and buy from the competition... except if you are in the Apple world where there is no competition. If you buy into Apple, you are stuck with Apple. I don't like such harsh restrictions being placed on me. I don't like being married to a particular company. I am not ready to sell my soul to Apple computers and just "take it how they give it". In the Apple world, it's their way, or the highway. A perfect example of this is the iPod in which you MUST use iTunes or you can take a hike (I know there are ways around this). I'll come back to iPods later.

Now Apples business strategy does have some strengths. If you do indeed buy all Apple products, they can best guarantee compatibility and inter-operation between all the products. Your Apple T.V. is likely to work fine with your iMac and your iPod. The down side is if you want something with a different set of features besides those provided by apples limited number of products, you are out of luck. If you like the creative Zen better as I do (better battery life by far, native support for many

more formats etc), tough luck. Again, I'm not ready to sell my soul to Apple. I like having the freedom to choose between a huge number of products, and go with whatever company I prefer at the time.

Even if you do go with an all-Mac lineup, things will still go wrong. Computers are incredibly complex devices. Quite frankly, its amazing they work at all. Just the other day Rush Limbaugh, a huge Apple fan, was ranting about Siri not working. My customers who buy into the Apple marketing inevitably call me out to help with things not working. It just happens.

One of my favorite "Computer Nerd" videos is this Parody on the old Apple Commercials (Caution: Video contains a little profanity)

Crash Different! That about sums up this entire article in two words.

The company my girlfriend works at is all Mac-Based (except of course they have to run Windows Virtually for applications they need that doesn't exist on Mac). The owner's personal laptop hard drive crashed. The computer probably wasn't more than a year old. Again - things can, and DO go wrong in the Apple world as well.

I grant you things tend to go wrong more frequently in the Windows world, but it usually isn't because of a Microsoft shortcoming. Much of the time, because PC's offer such a broad range of products, both in quality and price, the problems are due to bad third-party equipment or drivers. If you buy super-cheap knock off things on the PC from unknown companies - you may get a deal, or you may get a lemon that causes the "blue-screen of death." (On a side note, the infamous BSOD is something that rarely happens anymore - and there is a MAC version of this... the stupid sad face that provides no useful information.) It is also more difficult to ensure there are no software or hardware conflicts with hundreds or thousands of different companies making products. There is absolutely no way to test every combination of every product, unlike the apple world where you have 6 choices.

So the lack of competition can be a good or bad thing depending on how you look at it.

Of course that takes us into the price of the computers.

Apple hardware costs literally 3-4 times as much as the EXACT same hardware in the PC world. I hope my Apple-fans are sitting down. The hardware inside your Mac is the SAME hardware that is in my PC.

Back in the day Apple used to have its own proprietary hardware... hardware they claimed was far superior to the PC's feeble little stuff. But then something happened... Apple redesigned their OS to run on an intel processor, the same processor used in PC's. And behold, over-night, the Apple OS nearly DOUBLED in speed. Like literally, over-night. When this change happened, the Mac became a PC with a Mac interface. I can take most of the hardware out of a Mac and use it in a PC, or visa-versa.

The hardware in your Mac is the same as in my PC, yet you pay up to FOUR times as much for it. That's not going to work for me.

So, to recap: The Apple OS was jacked from Unix, and the hardware jacked from PC's to get us the modern day Mac. How ironic, from a company constantly screaming how everyone is jacking them.

A funny side-note, every time Steve Jobs whined about how Bill Gates ripped off Apple I recall how Jobs ripped off Xerox. That's right, Jobs practically cloned what Xerox had created and sold it as an Apple computer.

All of this aside, let me again say - the Apple OS is stable, strong, fast and generally good. It's a fine product, just far over-priced and too restrictive for my liking. In today's world, both machines can handle just about every task. Both are fast, both are reliable. The Mac just costs four times more.

Oh, and Apple is better at graphics? No. In fact, PC's have far surpassed the ability of the Mac in graphics. I have a friend who graduated from the Pasadena Art School, one of the two most prestigious art schools in the country – and he does all his work on his PC. The school used Mac for everything, but he is 100% able to do EVERYTHING on his PC that the Mac could do, just at a fraction of the price. It's simply tradition that Apple and graphics go hand and hand. People are slowly realizing this is long past.

An avid video editor on Adobe's forums was asked why he doesn't use Mac to produce his videos. His response: "Price, performance, options, configurability, just to name a few."
Let me try and wrap this up with a brief bit on the iPod/Touch/iPad/iPhone.

I will take my 6 year old Creative Zen vision:M over an iPod. Not only does the battery last longer, but it also supports many common formats natively. Divx, Xvid, Mpeg2, Avi, Mov, etc etc etc. This means when I want to transfer a video to my Zen, I don't have to wait for it to be re-encoded in some stupid Apple format. Converting takes a LOT of time and results in a loss of quality. Why do I have to convert from common formats just to play a video on my iPod? Because Apple says so.

My Zen also supports many more audio formats that the iPod doesn't.

What happens if you HATE iTunes like I do? It's stupidly slow, it doesn't monitor folders very well, it duplicates entries sometimes, it's full-screen display is obstructive... on and on and on. So can I just drag-drop music and videos to my music device like a flash-drive with the iPod? Snope.. I can't. I HAVE to use iTunes to transfer things. That's just dumb. I'll stick with my Zen, just drag and drop my music onto my device without the need of any bulky slow apps. I can even drag videos to it!

Guess what else I can do? I can drag files OFF of the device back onto the computer. That's right, if my computer crashes (fat-chance being a computer guy... but for other peeps out there), the music can EASIALLY be copied BACK to your computer. Try doing that with your iPod/iPad without having to hack or use third-party tools designed to hack your devices against Apple's will.

Now let me say, Apple's support is FAR better than anything you'll find in the PC world... unless of course you call me. Dell, HP etc offer poor service at best. Apple employs people whom actually speak English, are knowledgeable and quite friendly. You won't find that in the PC world. Of course that's probably because you are paying 75% less for your computer, and therefore they need to cut costs. That's a tradeoff I'm ok with.

Apple makes good products. They are even better at advertising. But the Apple world isn't the trouble-free paradise most people think. I definitely don't think it's worth the massive price-increase.

One thing to keep in mind when making a comparison.. please try to compare "Apples to apples". I'm always baffled when someone compares a 6 year old PC vs. a brand new Mac, exalting the epic speed differences.

In summary:

Macs cost a lot more, for the same hardware.

Macs are much more restrictive.

Macs have fewer options.

Macs are no faster than an equally powered PC.

Macs can get viruses albeit much less likely due to being less common.

Macs have fewer difficulties and viruses due to the lack of options which is good.

Macs have much better support.

PC's can do just as much, or more – for much less.

Both platforms are GOOD, even Great. I'm just not a Mac fan, I'm not ready to invest my entire soul into a computer platform. It's really not that I'm a Microsoft loyalist either, they have their faults as well. Really in the end the point I am trying to get across is that both Apple and Microsoft have strengths and weaknesses, so don't run into the Apple world thinking life will be trouble-free; it's just marketing.

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In the end, if you like Mac, run with Apple! If you like PC's, run with Windows. Ultimately it comes down to what you like to use and are comfortable with - and that, I'm comfortable with.



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