Macintosh still going strong after 20 years

BY JON FORTT
KRT CAMPUS

Twenty years ago, Apple Computer heaved a sledgehammer into the face of the establishment with its revolutionary Macintosh.

It gave birth to our culture of pointing and clicking, desktop icons, and dragging files to the trash. Later the Mac would bring CD drives, candy-colored cases and wireless networking.

But when it first said hello in 1984, it was as if all of Silicon Valley's technical brilliance and all of its verve had been captured in one plucky beige box.

Two decades after Apple's famous Super Bowl ad announced the new computer, the Mac's innovative influence has reached far beyond Silicon Valley. More important, it has continually dared its rivals to make computers not just faster, but also better — easier for real people to use.

Although Macs now have only about 3 percent of the worldwide computer market, today's Microsoft-based computers look more like Macs than they resemble the old IBM PCs — and the Mac is still the only computer the world knows on a first-name basis.

Bringing the legend to life was magnetic Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, who heralded the arrival of a $2,500 computer "for the rest of us." Behind the 28-year-old millionaire was a phalanx of tousle-haired geniuses, college dropouts and artists, blurry-eyed from the all-nighters it took to finish the Macintosh.

They were the forerunners of the next generation's dot-commers and wireless wizards, though these pioneers sought a revolution instead of stock options.

"The mantra at the time was, we were trying to make a computer that even our mothers could use," said Bud Tribble, manager of the original Mac software team, who at age 31 ranked as an elder in the group. "I think the idea that a relatively small group of people with a vision can change a whole industry really grabbed people's imagination."

The seeds of the Mac were planted in 1979 when Jef Raskin, an early Apple employee, decided to name his dream — a new type of user-friendly computer — after a fruit he liked to buy as a boy in Manhattan. "I figured if I was going to name an Apple, it might as well be my favorite," he recalled.

So Raskin christened the project Macintosh, after the McIntosh apple. Though Apple had asked him to build a $500 game machine, he morphed that mandate into a $1,000 computer.

Well, sort of a computer. Raskin envisioned a machine people would love, a machine people would find friendly more than just necessary. Raskin's vision — in broad strokes, at least — carried through into the final product.

But it was Jobs who made the Mac real. Jobs, who recognized the Macintosh project as an opportunity to fulfill his own computing vision, took control of the team from Raskin, and remade it in his own image. Jobs insisted that there should be a mouse, enough memory to run business programs, and other touches — which, naturally, would cost more.

"Steve is really the father of the Mac," said Bruce Horn, who was in charge of developing the Finder navigation tool and other important parts of the software. "Steve was there every day all day and late at night, and he would cajole us and tell us we were great, tell us we were losers, do whatever it took to motivate us to create the best possible product. He also protected us from the bureaucracy that was Apple."

Jobs, who declined to be interviewed, was also the one to show off the computer, and build alliances that would be critical to the Mac's future. Adobe Systems co-founder Chuck Geschke was a tough man to impress back in the early 1980s, because he had seen much of the technology at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. But as he got to know the Mac, it wowed him.

He showed one to his wife, a librarian and artist, and she started using it. "It really dawned on me that for the first time, computers were going to be accessible for people who were right-brain-oriented instead of left-brained like us."

Apple sold 70,000 Macs in the first three months, but sales slowed after 1984. In part because the machine lacked the power and memory to run many complex programs. And Jobs clashed with John Sculley, the executive he had hired as CEO from PepsiCo.

Sculley and the rest of the board never forgiven me for what happened back in 1985, and I suspect never will," Sculley said in an interview. That left Sculley with a Macintosh emergency. Desktop publishing — the combination of Macs with Adobe laser-printing technology and software like Aldus PageMaker — saved the Mac, said Jay Vleeschhouwer, a Merrill Lynch analyst who has watched technology markets for nearly 25 years.

"What triggered the growth of the Mac was the profusion of this software, and the number of users who could take advantage of it," Vleeschhouwer said.

Men's shirts move toward new, bold trends

BY ALLISON KAPLAN
KRT CAMPUS

Take off the blue shirts, men. It's time to put some pattern in your lives.

Shirts in loud colors, wide stripes and even florals are taking the place of boring solid knits. These new cotton shirts with traditional collars are not only daring but also versatile — meant to be worn with jeans or a suit.

"The shirt has become the accessory for men," says Scott Kuhlman, owner of Kuhlman men's stores at the Galleria and Gaviidae Common, which specialize in patterned cotton shirts. "We thought blues would be the best sellers, but the number 1 shirt is apple green with brown and khaki stripes on the bias. Men's fashion is changing. It's OK for straight guys to dress cool."

You don't need your hand held by the "Queer Eye" guys to pull off a wild print — or two.

When we asked Minneapolis carpenter Mark Hendrickson, a self-described sweatshirt guy, to try on a daisy-print shirt, he rose to the occasion. "I wore stuff like this in the '70s," he said, folding the cuffs on his Robert Graham shirt to reveal a contrasting striped pattern.

Retired salesman Stan Marquardt usually consults with his wife when it comes to matching prints. "I do OK with colors," he says, "but she gets more into contrast than I would." Yet he looked like a regular fashion maven in a colorful, striped Tommy Hilfiger shirt and equally bold striped tie. "I'd wear this, sure," he says.

Realtor-in-training Greg Staffa of Roseville, Minn., is colorblind, so he generally sticks to khakis and solid-colored golf shirts. "This will take some getting used to," he said as he slipped into a hip shirt with a diagonal stripe. We let him keep the khakis, which go with just about everything, so it didn't even matter to him that the pumpkin-colored shirt looked "dirty yellow."

Color and pattern take some easing into. "If you wear a crazy-patterned shirt, the safe choice is to wear a solid tie," says men's designer Gene Meyer, famous for his colorful geometric prints. When you're feeling brave enough to attempt pattern on pattern, make sure the two share common colors, says Meyer, who is now designing a men's collection exclusively for Marshall Field's.

Pair a bold striped shirt with something subtler, like a tie with little polka dots. "You don't want to make two big statements," advises Jeff Stone, co-author of "Chic Simple's Dress Smart Men" (Warner Books, $30).

Here are a few more shirt dos and don'ts:
◆ Do wear a splashy shirt with jeans.
Try it untucked — especially if you're young and the shirt has a slimmer fit.
◆ Don't button the top button of your shirt unless you're wearing a tie.
◆ Do tuck in your shirt with dress slacks.
◆ Don't wear a patterned suit or sport coat with a print shirt and print tie. Easiest way to bring in pattern is to go with a solid-color suit and have fun with the shirt and tie.
◆ Do ask salespeople for help if you're unsure. Loud can be fun, but clashing is bad.
◆ Don't go to work with wrinkles. Hip stores might purposely display wrinkled shirts as some sort of fashion statement, but for the office, crisp is always correct.