

CAMP Newsletter (simplified) - JUNE 2006

Next meeting - Wed June 14th, 7pm. Jeff will finally do iWeb (correct?) plus the usual festivities. Board meets at 6:15 to which all members are invited.

NOTE: GAHS has about a dozen, oldr 15 inch monitors, free for the taking. Bring your wheelbarrow, pack mule or duffel bag if you want a piece of this action.

2 articles of note

# 1] **Apple's MacBook Leaves Its Predecessors in the Dust**

By [Rob Pegoraro](#) Sunday, June 11, 2006

Apple's new MacBook ranks as one of the company's most anticipated laptops ever. This machine isn't Apple's first portable computer to run on Intel chips -- with all the added speed and Windows compatibility they bring -- but it is the first to sell at consumer-friendly prices. And it brings the first fundamental change to Apple's entry-level laptops since 2001.

The MacBook almost justifies the wait for it to arrive. Apple has delivered an exceptionally versatile machine, but three issues can't help but hold it back a bit. The most serious among them should be fixable with a software update; the others are less critical but can't be cured without changes to the MacBook's hardware (and one may not matter to many users anyway)

In general, the MacBook represents a tremendous advance over the iBook that it replaces. It starts at \$1,099, \$100 more than its predecessor, but is barely heavier (the review model loaned by Apple weighed 5.14 pounds) and offers a wider, brighter, glossier screen (13.3 inches across). Its most important feature lies inside, a 1.83 or 2 GHz Intel Core Duo processor.

Like the Intel-based iMac, Mac mini and MacBook Pro, the MacBook rips through software revised for these new processors -- including the bundled Mac OS X 10.4 operating system and iLife '06 multimedia suite, plus a growing number of third-party applications. But it also runs most software written for the old PowerPC chips, at the cost of slower performance and a bigger demand for memory. (The 512 megabytes Apple includes aren't enough for sustained use of these older applications.)

And the MacBook can run Windows itself. You can employ Microsoft's operating

system inside Mac OS X using the pre-release version of Parallels Workstation, an upcoming, \$80 release from Herndon-based Parallels (<http://www.parallels.com>), or you can download Apple's free Boot Camp software (<http://www.apple.com/bootcamp>) to add a completely separate, faster copy of Windows XP that can be booted instead of OS X each time you start the MacBook.

Either way, buying the MacBook -- or any other Intel-based Mac -- means never having to say "I'm sorry, I can't run this program on my computer."

Apple offers the MacBook with a 60, 80, 100 or 120-gigabyte hard drive -- which you can upgrade yourself, a rarity on any laptop. The \$1,099 model can burn CDs but only plays DVDs; two more expensive configurations, at \$1,299 and \$1,499, can burn both DVDs and CDs.

Like other Apple computers, this laptop makes some high-end features standard equipment while omitting a few things included by every other manufacturer.

For example, an iSight Webcam graces the top of the screen, allowing you to conduct video Web chats and take goofy self-portraits in Apple's Photo Booth program, and Bluetooth wireless connects such peripherals as cellphones and handheld organizers. The included remote control and Front Row software let you plug the MacBook into a larger monitor or TV -- after buying a \$19 adapter for its miniature digital-video output -- and enjoy your music, photos and movies from across the living room.

But the MacBook provides only two USB ports, lacks a memory-card reader or PC Card expansion slot and even leaves out a modem. That last feature could be deal-breaker; if you ever must use dial-up, your only option is a \$49 external model sold by Apple. And it's not as if there wasn't room on the MacBook's left flank to include a humble phone jack.

Like the iPod, the MacBook comes in white or black; the more striking black model costs \$1,499, \$150 more than a comparably configured white machine. Is it worth that much to carry around something that looks like Batman or Darth Vader's laptop? Something tells me I should expect to see folks using the black MacBook (one blogger has nicknamed it the "DarthBook") the next time I'm on a plane.

The MacBook's weight makes it slightly less suited to travel than its predecessor, but its battery life easily suffices. In a worst-case test, with a DVD playing and the screen backlight turned up all the way, the test MacBook ran for 2 hours and 24 minutes. Turning off Bluetooth and WiFi while dimming the screen halfway -- a decent approximation of coach-class film-going -- stretched that time to 3 hours and 9 minutes.

In other tests, the machine ran for 3 hours and 59 minutes while playing a loop of music with the screen dimmed halfway (with WiFi on and Bluetooth off); a best-case test, with the screen dimmed as low as possible, both wireless systems disabled and only the TextEdit program open, yielded 4 1/2 hours of use.

Unlike most PC vendors, Apple remembers that power adapters add weight and bulk, too; the MacBook's compact hardware weighs only nine ounces. It connects to the MacBook with a new, magnetically attached MagSafe plug that gracefully falls away if yanked instead of dragging the computer off a table or damaging the inside of the power socket.

The MacBook, however, may be less attractive once the flight ends. The review unit repeatedly lost the wireless signal of an Apple AirPort Extreme WiFi access point, even while Windows laptops in the same room stayed online. MacBook users have posted similar complaints in Apple's discussion forums.

Weirdly enough, this problem didn't emerge when I rebooted the MacBook into Windows -- which suggests that Apple should be able to fix it by updating the MacBook's software.

The unit stayed nearly silent most of the time, but a different side of its personality surfaced when copying some music CDs to the hard disk. The CD/DVD drive and cooling fans revved all the way up to a sustained, low-level howl -- as if the computer were readying for takeoff -- and the already hot left rear corner of the machine became outright scorching. The plastic in front of the screen hinge, just above the MacBook's vents, felt even hotter.

It's not that other laptops run much cooler, but after all the time Apple has spent advertising the "performance per watt" advantages of its new Intel processors, you'd expect something a little less sizzling than the average Windows notebook.

It can be instructive to compare the MacBook with PC laptops built around the same Intel chips. Dell's Inspiron E1405, when configured with the closest possible specifications to the base MacBook, costs \$18 more, while HP's Pavilion dv1000t costs \$145 less when set up to match a MacBook.

Those price differences are far smaller than what a lot of people believe about Macs. On the other hand, a lot of people don't need or want all the extras that Apple bundles. And they'll be able to save substantially more by getting a slower, heavier laptop from somebody else.

Price alone won't lead people to get the MacBook (and it certainly won't sell the high-end MacBook Pro, which has a bigger screen and more powerful graphics hardware and starts at \$1,999). You have to want that extra refinement of an Apple machine -- software like the virus-resistant, low-maintenance Mac OS X and hardware such as the MacBook's ingenious trackpad, which lets you scroll through windows or bring up right-click menus by dragging two fingers across its surface.

Glitches such as the MacBook's erratic WiFi reception and almost painfully hot surfaces undercut that appeal. Apple has taught its users to expect better, and it ought to be able to deliver as much before long.

*Living with technology, or trying to? E-mail Rob Pegoraro [atrob@twp.com](mailto:atrob@twp.com).*

## 2/ Biting the Apple

They were known as dropouts, artists, evangelists, geniuses, iconoclasts, pirates - and friends. Sometimes even best friends. The early team of four, which grew to dozens, wanted to make a personal computer easy enough for a civilian to use without fear or loathing and inexpensive enough to be affordable. But the happy few who worked on the Mac also saw in the new world of computing a potentially profound force. Their ultimate goal was to unleash, in themselves and others, limitless individual creativity.

The Mac team, headed by Apple (Research) co-founder Steve

Jobs, operated like a superstealth startup within the company. Holed up in an ascetic, two-story building near a gas station dubbed the "Texaco Towers," the team was intensely competitive with other Apple divisions, such as the Lisa computer.

Jobs set ridiculous deadlines: The caffeine-fueled software team once debugged for 48 hours straight rather than face him without having finished the task. There were epic battles and broken friendships - Jef Raskin, who started the Mac research project in 1979, got frustrated and left Apple in 1982. But Jobs' famous rebel yell - "It's better to be a pirate than join the Navy" - captured the renegade spirit that saw the team through 90-hour work- weeks at stunningly low pay.

In 1983, after three years of labor, the Mac was born. Priced at \$2,495, it featured a clean, intuitive graphic user interface that allowed nonprogrammers to use it almost instantly, without geek supervision. When it was turned on, a friendly little icon smiled out at the world. And the world smiled back - the Mac sold faster than any PC that came before.

Although the Mac went on to a difficult adolescence, it was the collective expression of the people who loved it - and marked a turning point in the history of the PC. -- By Ellen McGirt