Critics, fans weigh in on Apple's iPad

January 28 2010, by Chris Lefkow

Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs holds up the new iPad as he speaks in San Francisco, California. Tech experts and gadget fans dampened the early hype Thursday over Apple's new iPad, saying the touchscreen computer tablet is not the must-have device the company claims it is.

Heady from the success of the iPhone and iPod, Apple is getting spanked with criticism, even mockery, by pundits who expected the company to change the world anew with its iPad tablet computer.

Critics and fans were rushing Thursday to fill the 60-day void between the unveiling of what Apple chief executive Steve Jobs hailed as a "revolutionary" device and the time the first models will begin shipping globally.

While some heralded the iPad as a powerful "Kindle killer" with multimedia capabilities that eclipse current electronic readers, others scoffed at adding to their lives a mobile gadget seemingly named for a feminine hygiene product.

"Clearly, women are not finding this name attractive," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group in Silicon Valley. "The name looks like a mistake a man would make. Steve should have spent more time talking to his wife and daughters."

Reaction by women echoed a video clip from an old Mad TV comedy television show skit about a fictitious high-tech tampon called an "iPad." The video has gone viral since Jobs uncloaked the iPad on Wednesday.

The mixed reaction to the color touchscreen tablet was reflected in two of the most popular gadget websites.

Gizmodo published an "Eight things that suck about the iPad" story while rival Ubergizmo crowned the device "the best tablet ever built."

Popular complaints included the lack of a camera, multi-tasking capabilities, a USB port, and support for videos made with Adobe Flash software.

Enderle recalled that "there is an extensive list of people who just pissed all over the iPhone when it launched.

"The iPad will advance a lot," he said. "Generation three will probably be the killer product."

It was a third generation iPhone, tied to an online store for fun applications, that catapulted the Apple smartphones to the top of the market and have brought billions of dollars to the firm's coffers.

"There are a number of things that have to come together to make this the 'Jesus Pad' people imagined," Enderle said. "The iPhone wasn't that great when it came out either."

Apple worked its marketing magic and built up hype and anticipation before the iPad unveiling, but has left two months for pundits, "fan boys," bloggers and others to nitpick a device that Jobs said must be held to be appreciated.

Still, some technology analysts predict the iPad will be the best-selling electronics device of 2010.

Unveiling the notebook-sized iPad, Jobs admitted he was taking a gamble by trying to carve out an entirely new device category between the laptop computer and the smartphone.

"We think we've got the goods," Jobs said. "We think we've done it."

Reviewers were mixed on whether the iPad will be a smash hit like the iPod, which controls over 70 percent of the market for MP3 players, or the iPhone, which completely transformed the smartphone arena.

The tech blog of Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung said that after months of pre-launch hype, "expectations for the new Apple product were so high they were difficult to fulfill."

Spain's El Pais said the iPad opens up a new avenue for content creators struggling to adapt to the digital era, while a Los Angeles newspaper referred to the device as a large iPhone without the phone.

Om Malik of tech blog GigaOm said the iPad is "made for the consumption of digital media: games, music, photos, videos, magazines, newspapers and e-books.

"The iPad's primary purpose is to help you consume the ever-expanding amount of digital content on offer," he said, calling it the "ideal device for today's world."

Claudine Beaumont, technology writer for Britain's Daily Telegraph, hailed the sleekness of the iPad, its reading software and virtual keyboard.

"It won't replace your laptop, but I think it may have sounded the death knell for notebook computers," she wrote.

MG Siegler of tech blog TechCrunch, after playing with the iPad, said "it felt like I was holding the future" but the iPad may not be a "must-have" device yet.

Users eager to judge for themselves will have to wait two months before the first iPads are shipped worldwide at an entry-level price of 499 dollars.

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