

I'm a PC, and this time Microsoft's buying

March 26 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Apple's Macintosh computers may be cool, but Windows PCs are easier on the wallet.

That's the recession-sensitive message [Microsoft](#) Corp. is pushing in a new series of commercials that debuted Thursday. The ads also continue Microsoft's work to reclaim the "I'm a [PC](#)" catchphrase from Apple Inc. and undo the stodgy image its competitor has bestowed on the [Windows operating system](#).

To shoot the ads, Microsoft's agency, Crispin Porter + Bogusky, recruited unwitting subjects by posing as a market research firm studying laptop purchasing decisions.

It picked 10 people who answered a call for volunteers on Craigslist and other Web sites and sent them out with a camera crew and budgets ranging from \$700 to \$2,000. If they found a computer that fit their criteria, they could keep it.

In the first 60-second spot, a red-haired recent college grad named Lauren is on the hunt for a speedy laptop with a 17-inch screen and a "comfortable" keyboard, all for less than \$1,000. She strides into an Apple store; then, the scene jumps to her walking out empty-handed, telling the camera that the only laptop in her price range has a 13-inch screen.

Back in the car, she sighs and says, "I'm just not cool enough to be a Mac person."

Lauren, an office manager and actress, heads to Best Buy next, where she ends up buying a Windows notebook made by Hewlett-Packard Co. for \$699. And she wasn't alone. While some might have been able to find an [Apple computer](#) that fit the budget, Microsoft said none of the people they filmed picked a Mac.

Brad Brooks, a Windows marketing executive, said the soon-to-be-stars weren't told they might appear in a Microsoft ad until after the shopping excursions, which all took place in Southern California. When Lauren found out, he said there was "screaming, yelling, jumping up and down, high fives, thumbs up."

Apple has been churning out ads that portray Macs as cool and creative, while pigeonholing PCs as nerdy copycats that never quite succeed.

Last fall, Microsoft kicked off a \$300 million campaign to rehabilitate the Windows brand, which had suffered further after Vista's troubled launch.

The first installments, starring Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and comedian Jerry Seinfeld, were criticized as odd non-sequiturs. But since then, the software maker has pumped out endearingly earnest and upbeat commercials showing all sorts of people - from self-help guru Deepak Chopra to a 4-year-old cutie named Kylie - proudly proclaiming, "I'm a PC."

Microsoft hasn't emphasized the Vista brand in its ads, but most PCs on the market today run Vista. Meanwhile, the next version, Windows 7, is officially due out in less than a year. Brooks said the Redmond, Wash.-based software maker hasn't decided whether it will offer free or discounted upgrades for people who go ahead and buy a Vista computer now.

"I want to make sure in this environment that we're thinking about ways of making that upgrade experience true to principles around affordable and accessible," he said. "We're thinking about that in the background."

On the Net:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/watchheads/>

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Citation: I'm a PC, and this time Microsoft's buying (2009, March 26) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-im-pc-microsoft.html>

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