

Apple debuts iPad-inspired MacBook Air notebooks (Update)

October 20 2010, by Glenn Chapman



Apple CEO Steve Jobs announces the new MacBook Air as he speaks during an Apple special event at the company's headquarters in Cupertino, California.

Apple on Wednesday released a sleek new MacBook Air notebook computer inspired by its winning iPad tablet devices.

"We asked ourselves what would happen if a MacBook and an iPad hooked up," Apple chief executive Steve Jobs said as he unveiled two new laptop models. "This is the result."

A MacBook Air with a 13.3-inch (33.8-centimeter) screen and measuring just 0.68 inches (1.73 cms) at its thickest point and its 11.6-inch (29.5-cm) "younger brother" went on sale Wednesday.

They cost between 999 dollars and 1,599 dollars.

The laptop computers dumped hard drives or optical drives in favor of solid state drives that Jobs touted as faster, lighter and smaller.

The Apple chief executive showed off the new laptop computers at a special event devoted to the latest improvements to Apple's line of Macintosh computer hardware and software.

The invitation-only gathering at Apple's campus in Cupertino, California, was streamed live online but only to devices made by the company. It was only the second time that Apple webcast its notoriously exclusive press events.

Jobs said the theme was "Back to the Mac" with the company using lessons learned from successes with iPad tablet computers and iPhone smartphones to improve Macintosh machines.

A Mac App Store devoted to third-party software programs will open within 90 days and be built into the next-generation operating system, called Lion, which will be released for the computers in the middle of next year.

"Apple is smart to launch the App Store for Macs with apps that sync with iPads and iPhones," said Forrester Research analyst Sarah Rotman Epps.

"In doing so, Apple is trying to maximize the value consumers get from buying more than one Apple device."

The new Macintosh operating system is being designed to be more compatible with multi-touch controls that have proven to be hits on iPads, iPhones and iPods.

"Multi-touch gestures have become really important and we think they

can be really important on the Mac too," Jobs said. "Apps are important on the iPhone and iPad, and we think they can be important on the Mac too."

Extensive user testing has shown that giving Macintosh computers touchscreens would be a lousy idea because such controls on vertical surfaces are "ergonomically terrible," Jobs said.

Multi-touch controls for Macintosh machines will use touch pads.

Apple was also adding FaceTime software to Macintosh machines so people using the computers could make video calls to iPhone 4 or iPod Touch devices and vice versa, according to Jobs.

A beta version of FaceTime for Macintosh was released on Wednesday.

"Now, tens of millions of Mac users will be able to FaceTime with iPhone 4 and iPod Touches," Jobs said.

Apple also showed off improved versions of its popular iLike, iMovie, and Garage Band software tailored for tasks such as photo, video, and music editing on Macintosh computers.

Apple reported selling 13.7 million Macintosh computers in its recently ended fiscal year, and said that nearly 50 million of the machines are being used by people around the world.

Macintosh sales accounted for about a third of Apple's revenue, or 22 billion dollars, in the past year, according to chief operating officer Tim Cook.

More information: Apple adds FaceTime for Macs, shows off iLife '11: www.physorg.com/news206802021.html

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Citation: Apple debuts iPad-inspired MacBook Air notebooks (Update) (2010, October 20)
retrieved 1 May 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2010-10-apple-debuts-ipad-inspired-macbook-air.html>

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