# Geeks the stars as Apple 'Mac' turns 30

January 26 2014, by Glenn Chapman



The Apple logo on the exterior of an Apple Store on April 23, 2013 in San Francisco, California

Geeks who brought the Macintosh computer to life became Silicon Valley rock stars on Saturday, with people asking for autographs or photos while celebrating the Apple desktop machine's [30th birthday](#).

Members of the original "Mac" team got the star treatment for passionately building a home computer "for the rest of us" at a time

when IBM machines dominated in workplaces.

The friendly desktop referred to as the Mac and, importantly, the ability to control it by clicking on icons with a "mouse," opened computing to non-geeks in much the way that touchscreens later allowed almost anyone to get instantly comfortable with smartphones or tablets.

The birthday party was held in a performing arts center in the Californian city of Cupertino, where legendary late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs first introduced the Mac to the world on January 24, 1984.

"Ever since I can remember I've been entranced with how these Macs work," 16-year-old Tom Frikker told AFP as he worked his way through the crowd, getting original team members to autograph the vintage Mac he brought from home.

"It seems like a work of art," the teenager continued. "I thought it would be cool to come out and see all these people that I've heard about."

Prior to the Mac, with its "graphical user interface," computers were commanded with text typed in what seemed like a foreign language to those who were not software programmers.

"The effect the Mac had on the world and on computing is really fascinating," said Warren Sande, a fiber optic telecom company manager who was a school boy when the Apple desktop debuted.

Sande's 14-year-old son was eager to hear inside stories from those who made the Mac.

"The Mac had no video hardware, a tiny amount of RAM and a floppy drive, and it did stuff that my computer with eight gigabytes of RAM and dedicated video hardware has trouble doing," Carter Sande said.

"I need to figure out why," the teenager said. "It is so amazing that they did so much with a tiny amount of hardware."
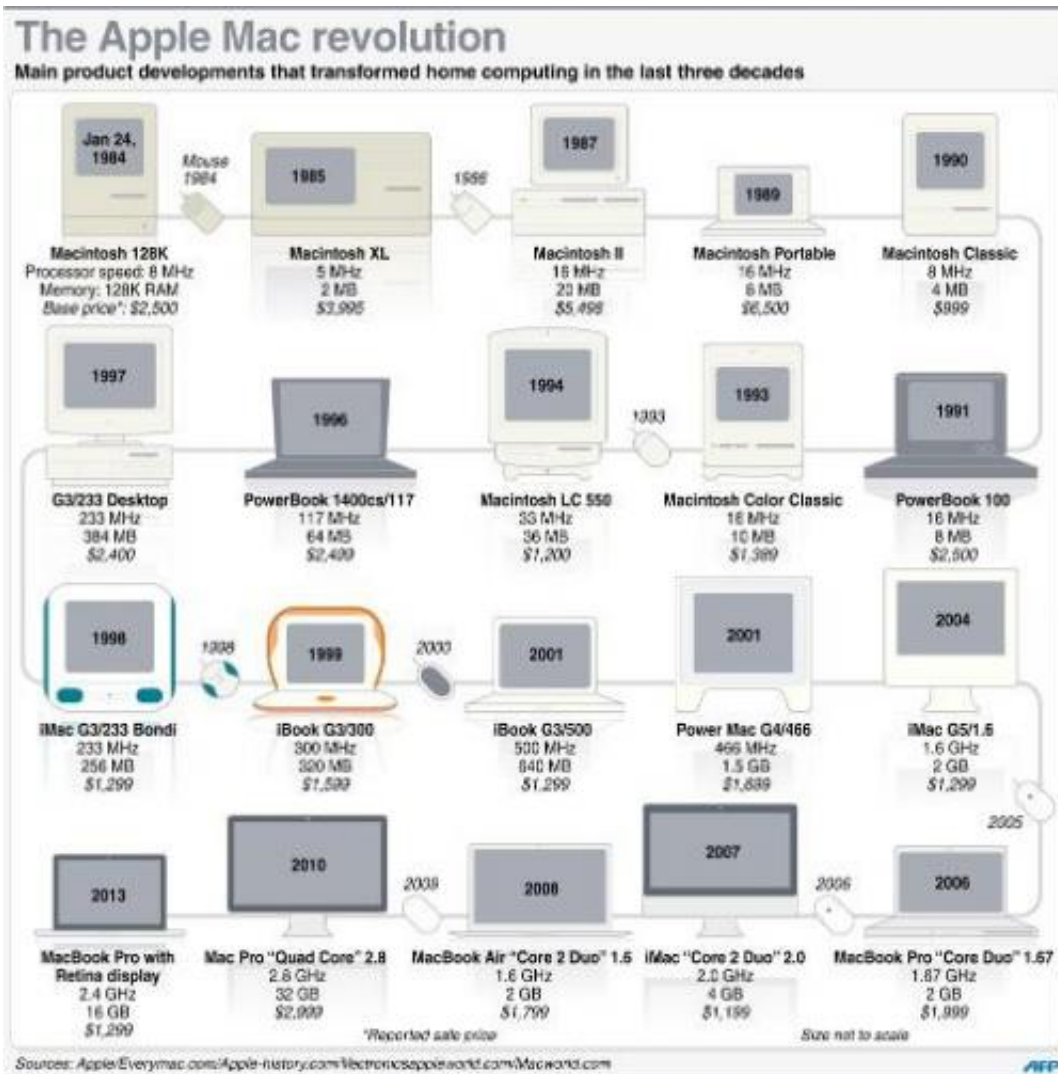


Graphic on the evolution of Apple Macintosh computers since January 24, 1984, when the first Mac was introduced

## 'We were making art'

The original vision of launching a Macintosh with 64 kilobytes of RAM

and a $1,000 price gave way to introducing one with 128 kilobytes of RAM at $2,500.

Members of the Mac team told of being crushed when they got word of the higher price because they had been driven by a belief that they were making a machine that typical people could afford as well as easily use.

Applause erupted from the audience as members of the original Mac team stepped on stage to share memories. Video clips, many starring a young Steve Jobs, were played.

"It wasn't work, we were making art," Mac development team member Bill Atkinson said, recalling how Jobs had their signatures engraved inside the Mac because "real artists sign their work."

The maddening brilliance of Jobs was a thread running through many shared memories.

One worker described an "evolution of Jobs" that started with him bashing a suggestion as idiocy only to claim it as his own days later.

"Sometimes he was exasperating that man, but there is very little I would change," early Apple employee Rod Holt said.

"People put themselves into that computer."

Apple spotlighted the arrival of the Mac with a television commercial portraying a bold blow struck against an Orwellian computer culture.

Early Macintosh computers in front of the Apple Store in Washington, DC on October 6, 2011

The "1984" commercial directed by Ridley Scott aired in an expensive time slot during a Super Bowl in a "huge shot" at IBM, Daniel Kottke, of the original Mac team, told AFP.

Mac prowess at page layouts and photo editing won the devotion of artistic types and ignited an era of desktop publishing.

Macs sold decently out of the gate, but Windows machines hit with a low-price advantage for budget-minded buyers. Microsoft released the first version of Windows in late 1985.

Microsoft took the lead in the home computer market by concentrating on software, while partners cranked out Windows-powered machines at

prices that undercut the Mac.

A long-running rivalry between Microsoft and Apple has yielded to the mobile age, with Google and its Android operating system targeted as the new nemesis, as lifestyles center on smartphones and tablet computers.
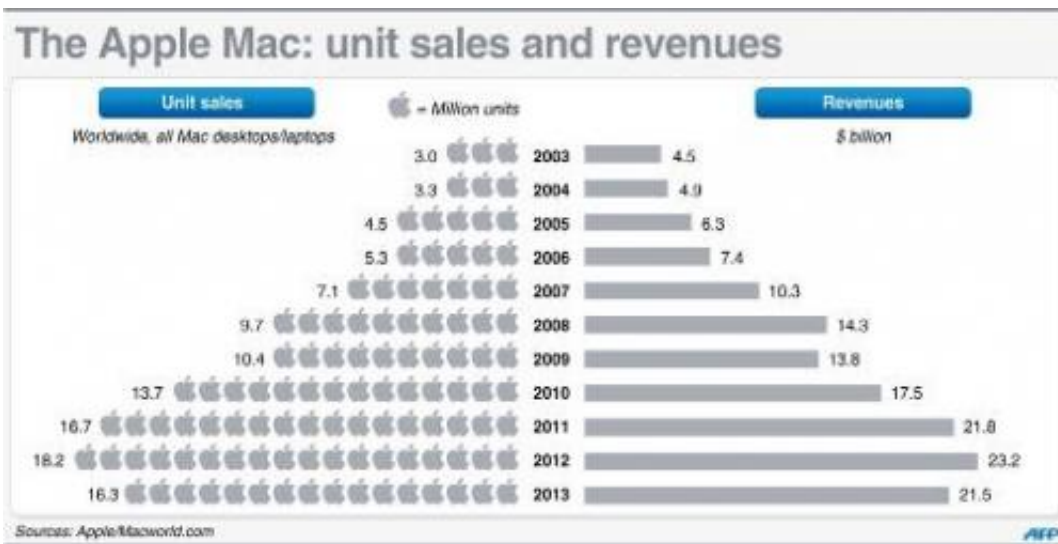


Graphic charting unit sales and revenues of Apple Mac from 2003-2013

The original boxy Macintosh, with its mouth-like slit below the screen for "floppy" data disks, has evolved into a line that boasts slim, powerful laptops in the smooth shape of the Mac Pro desktop model.

"Steve would constantly drum into us how much of a dent we would make in the universe," said Andy Hertzfeld, of the original Mac team.

"Of course we believed him."

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