

THE APPLE STORE

Dear Linux Magazine Reader,



Joe Casad, Editor in Chief

It looks like Apple has finally rolled out the Intel Macintosh computer. I have written about the Intel Mac in this space before (see the September 2005 issue). When Apple first announced they were going to switch to the Intel chip, some worried this could have the effect of nosing out Linux as the Intel alternative.

Now it seems increasingly unlikely that Apple has any such plans. In fact, MacOS

appears less of a priority for Apple than it has been for years. And, astonishingly enough, the Macintosh computer itself is not really the cornerstone that it used to be.

The last time I walked into an Apple Store, I didn't feel like I was in a computer shop at all. My Linux laptop died a while ago (not because of Linux; it was the hard drive). I was planning a trip, so I decided to bring along a Mac portable that I keep around the house because – what can I say – I work in publishing. I never like running out of power in the airport, so I figured I should get an extra battery for the Mac.

At first I thought this would be an easy errand. A computer store in my hometown has always been good about carrying Apple products, but when I went to the store, they told me they had “lost their contract” to carry Apple merchandise. I soon discovered that every store in my whole town had lost their contract to carry Apple, except a small kiosk at the university that can only sell to college students. Where did all those customers go? To the Apple Store, about 40 miles away.

I got in my car and drove to the Apple store.

When I walked in, I really thought I had wandered into the cosmetic section of a department store. The place was crawling with holiday shoppers. Around me were several small counters. The shoppers pressed up close to the counters, pointing and chattering with excitement. The store was so crowded I couldn't even see what they were looking at, so I pressed in closer myself, angling for a view.

To my amazement, the crowd had not gathered around a computer at all. They all gazed instead at a tiny little device displayed on a glass platform that made it seem suspended in air. Beside it was another tiny device. I looked around at the other counters, and

they also had tiny devices that the shoppers were beholding.

These devices were, of course, iPods. The store carried a whole assortment of iPods, all with different prices and specifications. The young people in the crowd knew all the model names and compared them knowingly, while enthusiastic employees instructed the visitors on about how to access music from iTunes.

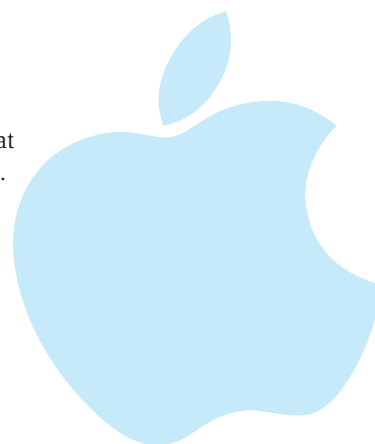
I looked around for some kind of shelf where they might be selling batteries. I finally found a desk at the back of the the store, with a doorway leading to an employees-only room. I showed him my laptop (which is only about a year old) and asked him if he had a battery for it. “No,” he said. “We don't have any of those.”

If it weren't the holiday season, I might have said something about how I had just driven 40 miles, but it was my own fault anyway, since I didn't call ahead. So I went back to look at all the tiny little devices.

I wasn't thinking about my battery anymore. I was just thinking about how Apple's aspirations seem to have gotten well beyond their once core business of supporting and selling Macintosh computers and software to graphic artists and right-brain techies.

I definitely don't think Linux has too much to worry about from Apple. In fact, I don't think Linux is even on their top 100 list of adversaries. Maybe MTV should worry, or maybe Revlon or Amway, or Sharper Image, but not Linux.

Joe



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