

ast month, I wrote about Apple's lack of real marketing know how. Along with that thought, was a side note about having a QuickTime copy of the infamous "1984" commercial that launched the Mac.

That side note seems to have started a fire storm. I've been inundated with e-mail from people asking where to find a copy of the commercial. Never mind that the QuickTime file is more than 18MB in size and that it can take forever to download. Nope, people seem to be coming out of the woodwork clamoring for a copy.

To a critic of Apple, this tells me something. To a certified Macintosh zealot, it tells me something completely different.

Allow me to explain:

Right now, Apple seems to be going through its darkest hour. Coming off the heels of a \$70 million loss, the Cupertino company recently announced a \$700 million loss. And that's for just one-half of its fiscal year. Couple that with management shakeups, cries of foul from large customers and shaky product availability and throw in the public's growing fear that it's going out of business and you have one dire situation.

But, as I've said over and over again, this is cyclical for Apple. You see, much like real apples growing in the orchard, Apple Computer is at the mercy of outsiders.

Apple and the rest of the computer industry rely on the computer press to spread word about its products and services. Good press usually equates to good sales, while bad press

can be disastrous for the bottom line.

Just over a year ago, Power Macintosh was the apple of the press' eyes. Both long-time fans and usually critical writers were telling us how juicy this new Apple was. Apple couldn't make enough and could charge a bit of a premium for the machines, because, hey, that Quadra 950 just wasn't fast enough anymore.

But then the weather changed and the drought set in.

Apple, faced with concerns over product availability and quality, began getting negative press. Along with this came lower sales. And lower sales meant smaller gross margins for the bottom line, which in turn led to...well you get the idea.

So, you ask, what does the "1984" commercial have to do with this?

Simply stated, I believe that we, the consumers, have come to expect too much from Apple. We expect every commercial to be an epic as was "1984." We expect every product announcement to be as earth-shattering as the Power Macintosh. And we expect all these things yesterday and with no installation glitches.

Sure, Apple started it all by introducing the Mac. And they had the nerve to introduce the LaserWriter. And what, after all, gave them the right to develop QuickTime? (Secretly, I'll bet an Apple engineer decided to create QuickTime just to get a copy of "1984" on the desktop.) Apple develops and we buy. We request and Apple develops. We have ourselves to blame and Apple has itself to blame.

Now, I'm not suggesting for a moment that the Research & Development department should become a lump of Applesauce. No, I think Gil Amelio, CEO of Apple, should issue an open letter to the computer press, Macintosh developers and most importantly Apple customers.

That letter should say that Apple is redirecting its efforts to become the technology leader in affordable computer products and that, while development won't cease on new high-tech wonder toys, the R&D staff will be redirected to ensuring that only the highest level of quality leaves the lab and production lines.

And Apple should air this during prime time. Possibly with the "1984" commercial playing in the background.

Now for the Macintosh zealot's point of view.

As I said, I've had tons of requests asking about getting a copy of "1984." I think just about everyone with a Mac has asked about this. And this too, is a powerful message to Apple.

I believe Apple should bundle a QuickTime copy of "1984" with every Macintosh sold. Not only would this reduce bandwidth on the Internet, it would also give every Macintosh buyer a really cool QuickTime movie to watch right out of the box. Talk about blowing your Wintel friends out of the water...just ask them to show you a .avi file anything as cool as "1984."

Apple, as I've said in the past, does a really poor job of promoting itself. Not so long ago, when you bought a new Macintosh you got a number of Apple logo stickers in the box with it. Do you now? No. Probably eliminated in the name of cost-cutting.

But a number of fellow Mac fans I know have used the six-colored stickers to promote

Apple's name brand on their cars, boats, office doors, etc. In fact, I have so many of the Apple Computer stickers posted in my office and lab that some folks refer to it as Cupertino East.

And I'll admit it. I'm not your casual computer buyer. I seem to collect Apple logo things, ranging from promo materials to T-shirts to, well, Macs. I am striving to have the world's most complete collection of QuickTime renditions of Apple commercials in the world.

But, for every die-hard geek as I, there are a million Mac users who love their machines and would probably love to have an Apple T-shirt. Now, there's an idea. Why not give everyone who registers their Mac a snazzy new shirt instead of the tired, boring mouse pad, cheap cheesy pen or six month's free subscription to MacWorld? I don't believe Apple's changed its registration premiums since the days of the Lisa.

No, I still contend that all Apple has to do is spend a little money and promote itself better. Once you use a Mac, all other computers are lame in comparison. Now, if the rest of the world would simply acknowledge that...

Oh yeah, you can find a QuickTime copy of "1984" and other Apple commercials at [ftp.amug.org](ftp://ftp.amug.org) in the `\pub\amug\apple-movies` directory, or on the May 1996 MacSense CD (\$7.95 US; call (800) 439-7555 for a copy).

But be kind. If you're going to leech most of this stuff from AMUG, at least become a member and help support the costs going into maintaining a public FTP site. For more information, point your browser to www.amug.org.

[Jim Hines](#) explores the darker side of the Macintosh and PC culture in 'Blue Sunshine' Write to Jim at jhines@iglou.com, or simply 'Jim Hines' on America Online.