Apple iPad

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To avoid filling up my twitter timeline with random rants about Apple's iPad I'll try to be more concise in this full blown blog post.

I have an Apple iBook G4. I've never been such a big fan of Apple that I wanted an Apple in the first place, but about five years ago there weren't any netbooks around and what I wanted was a small laptop and the only options less than 15" at the time were very expensive Sony Vaios and less expensive iBooks. So that is how I got to own a Mac. For about EUR 1000 a portable 12" that is really nice when you don't need to do on it what should be done on a workstation with a 30" cinema display. A bit of browsing, mail, a couple of xterms with SSH sessions, watching movies, web programming and playing around with OS X all works very nice. In a pinch it can also do Office and Adobe CS things and movie editing and work with a second monitor, but then we enter the non−standard use. I replaced the original 40GB disk with a 250GB disk, expanded the RAM to 1.5GB, hacked the graphics so it isn't limited to mirroring on the second screen and I heavily use Desktop Manager. Which makes it all still very usable, so I've about five years experience with a 12" Apple device that runs a 1024x768 resolution.

No way in hell that the iPad convinces me it is better than my iBook G4, and I doubt any netbook user will see the lack of a keyboard as an improvement. It's not the typing on the keyboard that's essential, it's the way you can rest the base on your lap and have the screen stand up at a flexible angle. With a cup of tea in one hand and the remote of the TV in the other you can still read some text or watch a video on your laptop. Or if you need some more freedom put it next to you on the couch and the screen is still pointing in the right direction. The iPad requires you to hold it to point it at your face all the time and I don't see how you would be able to hold it, type and look at the screen at the same time. And even while just watching it, are you expected to hold it for about 20 minutes while watching an episode or something? All the comparisons that should make the iPad look good is compared to the iPhone, not a netbook. The touchpad on the iBook is already great, but the key to comfortably use a device without a real mouse is learning the keyboard shortcuts. But if the device also doesn't have a real keyboard that is a problem. And how intuitive is a touch screen interface when you watch a movie full−screen?

The other thing I don't get is the use case of the iPad. I can only imagine it as an e−reader or a digital photo frame (which you can't place in landscape mode). It's not a device you quickly whip out while riding your bike or set up on a desk to use as a workstation. While it's a portable device it's not mobile in the way a phone is. It seems to be aimed at using it while sitting down at a place where you can also put it away on a table. And when you go out you leave it there and only take your phone and maybe your laptop with you. The iPad can stay where the remote control stays. It doesn't need 3G because you won't use it on the road.

Even companies that have no problem providing all their staff with an iPhone and a MacBook Pro would have a hard time trying to come up with a reason why they would need an iPad for anyone. And even if they would, will it be worth it to carry all three around, or deciding which of the three to pick in what situation? So there will probably be no massive sales to provide every employee with one, but at $499 it would be a nice gadget to have a couple of them lying around the reception area so visitors can browse company info while waiting for their appointment. The place where there is currently probably a 50" screen showing the same stuff. Any tablet could do that, but Apple still manages to create the device in a way that people will pick it up and try it, which is essential in that situation. But who needs apps in such a digital magazine situation? It will just run the companies intranet in some kiosk mode on the company's WiFi. That's what the $499 thing is for.

On the consumer side you'd have to be a fanboi with $500 to throw away to pick the iPad over a more versatile generic netbook. And if you can throw away $500 you'll probably also have an iPod video and a

MacBook already, and I don’t see at what point you would switch to the iPad to actually use it. For music and video Apple has better devices, so the only use would be to take advantage of the oblong screen and use it as an e−reader. But there is more to an e−reader than just the oblong screen, and the iPad lacks those features the e−reader power users need. And if you’re not a power user, you probably won’t get seriously annoyed any time you’d have to read something on the 16:9 screen of a MacBook Pro, so why use the iPad?

As a regular device it could be OK, and the price is not rediculously high. But coming from Apple in the way they choose to present it it’s totally crap. They present it like they have just now invented the portable 1024x768 color screen and the web browser, and that makes the whole thing rediculous and anyone buying that arrogant crap from Apple is a retard, or has never used a netbook. Steve should have apologized for not having something Apple worthy to present this year and saved the fanbois from humiliating themselves by trying to defend this failure.

But if the iPad gets popular anyway, that would mean I can just keep using the web with my 1024x768 iBook G4 with Flash disabled as I have been doing for years.

by Roland van Ipenburg http://www.xs4all.nl/~ipenburg/blog/posts/dull/2010/01/29/apple−ipad/