



Southern Maryland
Mac User Group

20058-D Point Lookout Road
Great Mills, Maryland 20634
Meetings second
Monday of the month from 7pm to 9pm
at the SMARTCO warehouse.

Why Does Windows Still Suck?

Why do PC users put up with so many viruses and worms? Why isn't everyone on a Mac?

- By Mark Morford, SF Gate Columnist

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So about a year ago, the SO finally upgraded her Net connection to DSL, carefully installed the Yahoo! DSL software into her creaky Sony Vaio PC laptop and ran through all the checks and install verifications and appropriate nasty disclaimers.

And all seemed to go smoothly and reasonably enough considering it was a Windows PC and therefore nothing was really all that smooth or reasonable or elegant, but whatever. She just wanted to get online. Should be easy as 1-2-3, claimed the Yahoo! guide. Painless as tying your shoe, said the phone company.

She got online all right. The DSL worked great. For about four minutes.

Then, something happened. Something attacked. Something swarmed her computer the instant she tried to move around online and the computer slowed and bogged and cluttered and crashed, and multiple restarts and debuggings and what-the-hells only brought up only a flood of nightmarish pop-up windows and terrifying error messages and massive system slowdowns and all manner of inexplicable claims of infestation of this worm and that Trojan horse and did we want to buy McAfee AntiVirus protection for \$39.95?

Four minutes. And she was already DOA.

My SO, she is not alone. This exact same scenario, with only slight variation, is happening throughout the nation, right now. Are you using a PC? You probably have spyware. The McAfee site claims a whopping 91 percent of PCs are infected. As every Windows user knows, PCs are ever waging a losing battle with a stunningly vicious array of malware and worms and viruses, all aimed at exploiting one of about ten thousand security flaws and holes in Microsoft Windows.

Here, then, is my big obvious question: Why the hell do people put up with this? Why is there not some massive revolt, some huge insurrection against Microsoft? Why is there not a huge contingent of furious users stomping up to Seattle with torches and scythes and crowbars, demanding the Windows Frankenstein monster be sacrificed at the altar of decent functionality and an elegant user interface?

There is nothing else like this phenomenon in the entire consumer culture. If anything else performed as horribly as Windows, and on such a global scale, consumers would scream bloody murder and demand their money back and there would be some sort of investigation, class-action litigation, a demand for Bill Gates' cute little geeky head on a platter.

Here is your brand new car, sir. Drive it off the lot. Yay yay new car. Suddenly, new car shuts off. New car barely starts again and then only goes about 6 miles per hour and it belches smoke and every warning light on the dashboard is blinking on and off and the tires are screaming and the heater is blasting your feet and something smells like burned hair. You hobble back to the dealer, who only says, gosh, sorry, we thought you knew -- that's they way they *all* run. Enjoy!

Would you not be, like, that is the goddamn *last time* I buy a Ford?

I see it all around me. All Chronicle employees receive regular email warnings from our IT department about all sorts of viruses that are coming their way and aiming for company PCs. The AP tech newswires are full tales of newly hatched viruses and worms and Trojan horses and insidious spyware programs sweeping networks and wreaking havoc on PCs and causing all manner of international problems, and all exploiting this or that serious flaw in the Windows OS.

Oh yes, the Serious Windows Flaw. This is astounding indeed. It seems

not a month goes by that Gates & Co. isn't announcing yet another [Microsoft Security Bulletin](#), one that could cause serious problems for users and networks and millions of Web sites alike, could compromise your personal data and make it very easy for any 10-year-old hacker to waltz right into your hard drive and swipe your credit card info and wipe out all your porn and read your secret emails to the babysitter and won't you please hurry over to Microsoft.com and download Major Windows Security Bug Fix #10-524-5b?

There have been not a few of these dire warnings. There have been [dozens](#). Maybe [hundreds](#). Each more dire and alarming than the last.

And with very few exceptions, every Mac owner everywhere on the planet simply looks at all this viral chaos and spyware noise and Microsoft apologia and shrugs. And smiles. And pretty much ignores it all outright, and gets back to work. (By the way, yes, I own a tiny handful of Apple stock. Do I need to advocate for Mac? Hardly. I'm already happy as can be thanks to the success of the brilliant, world-altering iPod.)

It's very simple. The Mac really has few, if any, known viruses or major debilitating anything, no spyware and no Trojans and no worms, and sure I've been affected by a couple email bugs over the years, but those were mostly related to my mail server and ISP. For the most part and for all intents and purposes, Macs are immune. Period.

I know of what I speak. I am not a novice. I've been using Macs almost daily for 15 years. I am online upward of 10-12 hours a day. I run multiple Net-connected programs at all times. I receive upward of 500 emails a day, much of it nasty spam that often comes with weird indecipherable attachments that try, in vain, to infiltrate my machine. My Mac just shrugs them off and keeps working perfectly. I dump them all in the trash and never look back.

I'm a power user. And I have yet to suffer a single debilitating virus or worm or spyware or malware whatsoever. Not one problem in 15 years, save the time I spilled water in the keyboard of my PowerBook and I took off the back and let it dry out for two days and it worked perfectly.

Oh, I know all the arguments as to why Macs aren't the dominant system in the world. I know Apple screwed up 20 years ago by not licensing its

OS, and Gates stumbled in and made a killing by stealing the Mac's look and feel but mangling the actual usability and thus irritating about 150 million people for the next 20 years.

I know Macs are (well, were) more expensive, even though they're really not, when you finally jam that ugly cheapass Dell with enough video cards and sound cards and disk burners to make it comparable to a Mac that comes with all of it, standard.

I know Macs are not perfect, that there have been a handful of serious Apple security fixes over the years, and even a few rumored viruses and spyware apps (though rarely any reports of major server attacks or system shutdowns). I know Apple releases regular security updates of its own. The Mac is not flawless. But it's damn close.

And I know, finally, the argument that says that if the world was using Macs instead of PCs, the hackers would be attacking the Macs. It's a game of numbers, after all. Anti-Mac pundits always mutter the same thing as they install yet another PC bug fix: there just aren't enough Macs out there to warrant a hacker's attention.

Which is, of course, mostly bull. I'm no programmer, but I know what I read, and I know my experience: the Mac OS architecture is much more robust, much more solid, much more difficult to hack into. Apple's software is, by default, more sound and reliable, given its more stable core. (Sometime in the later '90s, a Mac org whose name I forget ran a rather [amazing hacker competition](#): they offered a \$13,000 cash prize to anyone in the world who could hack into the company's unprotected Mac server and alter the contest's home page in any way. Needless to say, no one ever could).

Perhaps there is something I'm missing. Maybe there's something I don't understand as to why there is not a massive rush of consumers and IT managers to dump PCs in favor of Macs (or even Linux OS). Surely thousands (millions?) of work-hours have been lost nationwide as tech departments spend untold months debugging and installing PC virus protections and keeping abreast of the latest and greatest worm to come down the pike, all due to Microsoft's lousy software.

Am I being unfair? Maybe. Hell, I'm sure Windows has its gnarled and

wary defenders, war-torn and battle-tested folk who still insist that, because there's more software available for the Windows OS, it's somehow superior -- though I challenge them to name one significant, common activity the Mac can't do as well as, if not better than, PCs. For 97 percent of users in the world, Macs would be a more elegant and intuitive and appealing solution. Period.

So then. Here's hoping the new, incredibly affordable Mac Mini converts a hundred million people to Mac in the next year. Here's hoping the borderline illegal and monopolistic domination of Microsoft comes to an end in the next decade. Apple appears poised, finally, again, ready to take over the consumer world. Hell, thousands of glorious iPods have already [infiltrated the Microsoft campus](#) up in Redmond, causing MS management no end of humiliation and frustration. Can revolution be far behind?

And what about my SO's PC woes? Well, after her Vaio was so violently debilitated, and after being told by various experts that it would require nothing short of a complete (and very expensive) Windows system debugging and OS reinstall followed by a mandatory soak of the machine in a tub of bleach and then spraying it with a thick coat of road tar as she waved a burning effigy of Steve Ballmer over it while chanting the text of the Official Microsoft 'Screw You Sucker' Windows Troubleshooting Guide, she promptly dumped the useless hunk of sad landfill and bought herself a beautiful new iBook.

And of course, in a year of solid use, she has yet to have a single problem.

Oh wait. I take that back. She has had one nagging issue with her Mac. One program keeps crashing in the middle of her work, for no apparent reason. It is baffling and frustrating and makes you shake your head and want to scream.

The program in question? Microsoft Word.
Thoughts for the author? [email him](#).

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Mark Morford's Notes & Errata column appears every Wednesday and Friday on SF Gate, unless it appears on Tuesdays and Thursdays,

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Macworld Daily News

Tuesday - February 08, 2005

G3 iMac, eMac incompatible with iPod shuffle

By Macworld staff

Apple's new iPod shuffle is incompatible with G3 iMacs and eMacs, Macworld has learned.

This has left some readers disappointed in the product, as they were not made aware of this until after they had purchased the product.

Apple representatives on the Apple Store are aware the shuffle requires a Mac running Mac OS X 10.2.8 and a USB port, but the situation as regards older G3's is harder to find.

Annotation number four of Apple's dedicated iPod shuffle page for example reports: "Some computers require either the optional iPod shuffle Dock or a USB cable extender (sold separately)," but doesn't clarify which Macs may need such an accessory.

A note on Apple's support Web site explains: "Because of its design, iPod shuffle cannot be connected to the USB ports on the side of iMac G3 and eMac computers – it will not fit. You can connect iPod shuffle to your

keyboard's USB ports if your computer has Mac OS X 10.3.6 or later, however, iPod shuffle will not charge due to the keyboard's low-power USB ports."

To charge iPod shuffle on an iMac G3 or eMac computer, you need an optional accessory to reach the port, such as the iPod shuffle Dock or a third-party USB extension cable, both of which must connect to a high-power USB port to charge." A USB hub should also serve the purpose.

Why Mac for Science.

Learn more about why the Mac is the ideal platform for scientific research.

<http://www.apple.com/science/whymac/video.html>

From Other World Computing:

New PowerBooks:

This time, it's definitely more than just a speed bump - which I'll get to - there has definitely been an overall enhancement to the entire line.

For starters, all models are now equipped with a 'Sudden Motion Sensor'. Seen those IBM commercials where they drop the laptop? That's what I'm talking about - when an unsafe motion is detected, the heads on the hard drive get parked so a potential jarring impact doesn't get to jar your data.

All models now have built-in (not an extra cost

option) Bluetooth 2.0 Enhanced. Works with all those BlueTooth goodies + works even faster with those with the 2.0 EDR support.

All models now ship stock with a Superdrive. This used to be an upgrade option on all except the higher speed 15" and the 17" models, now it's standard. You can opt to save \$150 to back down to a combo drive on the 15" and 17" Powerbooks, but no optical downgrade option is offered for the 12" model.

Apple has upped the memory too... All models now come stock with 512MB vs. the 256MB that was standard before. And a nicety - in the 15" and 17" model, that is done with (1) 512MB module, so you have one slot to upgrade with. Unfortunately in the 12" model, it's still 256MB soldered and they are stock filling the one slot with another 256MB to get to the 512MB. So you'll be pitching that 256MB from the 12" if you want to upgrade later. Of course, you can get a 1GB SO DIMM from us, for any of these machines, for about \$200 less than Apple charges just to go from 512MB to 1.25GB.

Finally - the hard drives get a bump too! Still standard with a 60GB or 80GB capacity, but with a 100GB upgrade option - all of the drive options are now 5400RPM vs. the stock 4200RPM offered before. We did benchmarks with the Mac Mini comparing its 2.5" 4200RPM vs. 5400RPM options and that's a good illustration for the performance difference this means to PowerBooks too.

With all these improvements, who needs a speed bump?

Just kidding! Not only do they come with more standard, the speeds have been increased and the entry price either stayed the same or went down! These are a better value than ever before. PowerBook G4 12" base was 1.33GHz for \$1599, now \$1499 @ 1.5GHz. PowerBook G4 15" base was \$1999 for 1.33GHz, now same for 1.5GHz, option to upgrade to 1.67GHz w/Dual DVI Support. PowerBook 17" base was 1.5GHz for \$2799, now \$2699 @ 1.67GHz with Dual DVI Support standard..

Dual DVI Video Support lets you connect up a 30" Cinema Display for the ultimate... If you don't mind spending more on a display than any of the PowerBooks cost when loaded to the gills. Check out Apple's site for more info on all these PowerBooks and maybe read Apple's Press Release too for some more detail.