![Apple logo]

Apple II Computer Historical Information

Apple II 20th Birthday Greeting from Woz

24 June 1997

Source
myoldmac.net - Apple II F.A.Q.
http://myoldmac.net/FAQ/apple-a2-WOZ-BirthdayGreeting.htm
03 December 2007

Here's an Apple II 20th Birthday Greeting from Woz, that I wanted to share with every Apple II user! Trackback: http://apple2.org.za/.../WOZ.A2.20th.Birthday.Greeting.txt

Cheers and Apple II Forever,
Tom from http://apple2.org.za

Date: 24 Jun 97
Subject: Re: Apple II 20th Birthday Greetings From: "Steve Wozniak" <steve@xxx.xxx>

Early photo circa 1976 of Steve Jobs (left) and Steve Wozniak (right, bearded)
with Apple I computer keyboard, motherboard and power supply.

Note from Steve Woz:

On Tue, Jun 24, 1997 8:02 AM,

Tom wrote:

>Hi Steve,
>
>Just a short note and sincere request to ask you if you could send me a
> 20th Birthday Greeting to relate to the apple II community from you?
> Anything short, sweet, personal from the Apple II creator (: YOU :) and
> sincere would be grately appreciated! If I'm correct - today is the
> 20th Birthday of the Apple II computer - release for public distribution and sale.
>
>Cheers,
>Tom

Reply by Steve WOZ Wozniak:

It's been 20 years since we saw a new life. The Apple II told us that we'd from then on have the power that Kings never dreamed of. That we'd forever be more independent than ever before. That computers would be fun as well as exiting and interesting. That science fiction was fiction no more.

The Apple II was designed by hand using self taught hardware design techniques. I even did a better design with the aid of programs that I ran on the Apple I. I wrote all the code by hand and assembled it myself with the aid of the 6502 instruction set card. I wrote a BASIC interpreter, something I'd always dreamed of doing but had never studied, which was most of the work of designing the computer. Actually, I'd dreamed of writing a Fortran compiler and had never before used BASIC. But I could sense the direction that things were going.

My goals were to build a machine that didn't have to be a "computer" in the sense of previous computers. It merely had to permit me to program solutions to engineering problems in my job at Hewlett Packard and to play games. I had previously designed hardware video arcade games, before games were programs. One of them was "Breakout" for Atari. I decided that it would be great to be able to 'program' the game of Breakout on my Apple II, in BASIC! I simply added commands to draw colors and sense a paddle (which I designed in for this). I added a speaker. One evening in my apartment I programmed the whole game in about 15 minutes (BASIC is a very easy language to develope and test in). No big deal, I had expected this. But then I spent a half hour changing position of things (like the score) and shapes of things (like the paddles) and motion of things (the ball) and sounds and colors. The variations that I played with would have taken months, at least, to try in a hardware design. I was shaking as I called Steve Jobs to tell him that the world of game design was going to change forever. My life changed a lot that evening.

We learned a little about what we could do with this machine, largely to amuse our friends with programs that we wrote. We explored the future of hi-res video game programs too. We were a part of the emerging world of applications software for games, word processors, data bases and the like. And then we got the floppy disk!

Visicalc taught us all that a computer like the Apple II, which had been our whole world just by itself, wasn't enough. A huger buying community was looking for solutions to problems. A solution was an application plus a computer.

We owned the world of personal computing with the Apple II. This company which had been started in cramped apartments full of wires and tools, and on a lab bench in a garage, went public. The company was worth more after 3 years than it is even today. Personal computing was a field open to hit products as never dreamed of in our lifetime.

In a couple of years the Apple II "way" of color, hi-res, massive memory, paddles, sound, built-in BASIC, plastic case, typewriter look, I/O, floppy, and more were being adapted in every cheap knock off attempt. But never as well as we had done. We came to see that the big difference in computers had to do with software, not hardware. The elegant design of the Apple II, and its importance in the wonderful feel of this machine, lost value in the eyes of many who preferred to see cold specs of a product and miss the forest.

The Apple /// was designed to be, among other things, the Apple II killer. Although our customer base loved the Apple II, and sales accellerated for years as we expanded with the growing computer market, everyone in Apple worked for one product only, the Apple ///. Such a shame for a company to distance itself from the real world.

The LISA/Mac technology came along and it was obvious that once switching, you'd never go back. People in Apple, the entrepreneurial campany of all time, thought in terms of building new things and forgot to expand the Apple II into this GUI software. The Apple IIx, early precursor of the Apple II GS, was killed because we didn't expect to sell 20,000 units per month. Thankfully, the GS was revived by a small group who truly believed in it. And thankfully, they were unhindered for enough years that the OS evolved as much more stable and superior to the Mac platform in many ways, on just a fraction of the machine.

Thinking back, I can't remember a single time when I was truly frustrated with my Apple IIs. The II and II Plus started us off. The IIe was perhaps the most solid machine ever to get started with. It came along as schools started buying computers. Even the first HD's came out for it. My IIc is a memory that is only slightly improved on by today's laptops. The GS and it's various op sys incantations gave meaning to many of today's enthusiasts like yourselves.

The Apple II will live forever, in the hearts of people who can smile while they work, and in the heart of every computer that is a joy to use.

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