

The title of this newsletter were the first words spoken by a good friend when I told him I had purchased an Apple Mac computer. It might have frozen over, not sure... maybe Hell just cooled off a bit. Knowing that I have been a Microsoft guy for so long, I suppose it is a bit shocking. But not as much as you might think: more on that later in this article. First a few words about what I got:

Now to be sure, it is not one the super fancy laptop “air” or desktop models, but rather the “Mac Mini” model. I chose that one because: 1) it’s cheap at \$399, and 2) I had an extra keyboard, mouse, and monitor just waiting to be used. The Mac Mini is the very definition of minimalist, and also happens to be the cheapest Apple product you can buy, including most versions of iPads. Let me describe it: a small silver box, about the size of Webster’s dictionary, and has 4 USB and 2 firewire/display ports, a wired network port, and has wireless built-in. The model I purchased has 4GB of RAM, a 500GB hard disk, an i5 processor and the trademark white power cable. That’s all there is when you open the box. You have to add mouse, keyboard and a monitor.

My original intent was threefold: first, become more proficient in OS-X and Mac in general; second, install and test the beta version of the soon-to-be-released Office2016; and third I want to go to my grave saying I tried all types of computers at least once. Maybe I will make that my inscription on the tombstone... Hmmmm.

After hooking up my spare parts, I had essentially the equivalent of the base model iMac. At first, I had it on a side desk and just did the basics; set it up, install software, try some programs. **This did not go well as far as learning curves go:** I kept going back to my “crutch” Windows machine to do things quickly, because I am more familiar with it. I soon realized after 2 weeks that I would never truly learn the Mac if I did not jump in the deep end, so to say. That is what I proceeded to do: I shut off my Windows PC, moved it off the desk, and proceeded to move the Mac Mini in it’s place as my primary computer. Cold Turkey, as it were.

So now after about 2 more weeks of use, I am fully immersed in the Mac: still learning, still confused at times (someone please tell me why the mouse scroll wheel is reversed on Macs vs every other computer?). I do have an unfair advantage in that I have used Macs frequently; they were just other people’s Macs. OS-X is built upon a version of Unix, and I have used Unix/Linux computers previously, so some things are familiar. **I have been asked whether I like Macs or Windows better:** too soon to tell, but so far I’d say about the same. Some things are better in the Mac world, some better in the Windows world. I will re-visit this topic in the future...

Finally another unfair advantage is that I am using the aforementioned Office2016, which finally is the equivalent of Office2013 for Windows machines. In the prior version (Office2011 for Mac) Word, Excel and PowerPoint for Mac were OK, but Outlook for Mac email program had a mountain of glaring deficiencies vs. the Windows version. I am happy to report Outlook has been fixed and is a giant leap over the past versions. Again, another unfair advantage – I have used Office since forever, so no learning curve there. If you are not happy with your current email, document, spreadsheet, or presentation software, Office2016 for Mac’s is a big winner.

-John Becker