

iPad Arrives

A new age of computing has dawned. Umm, sort of...

In last month's *CCC News*, I reported on the imminent release of the new *iPad*. It's here and this is my review after two weeks of use.

iPad is a tablet computer. It's about the size of a *National Geographic* magazine and looks like a round cornered pane of glass. A strikingly minimal design.

What can it do? The *iPad* is a very specialized computer. It is best used for web surfing, email, entertainment and games. Even so, it can do all of the usual computer jobs: edit your photos, create a database of your stuff, paint a picture, write a novel.

How is *iPad* different than a laptop? It has no keyboard, no mouse or CD/DVD drive. It's all about the screen and nothing but the screen.

You control *iPad* by touching its screen. It works in the same way as an *iPhone* or an *iPod Touch*. Selecting, activating and moving icons is all touch and finger based. This works smoothly and well. Typing is especially good. My speed and accuracy are as good on the *iPad* as on a real hardware keyboard. However, if you prefer a real, live keyboard, most Bluetooth keyboards will link and work fine. Bluetooth stereo headsets work too for listening to music, games and watching videos. Cell phone headsets are not supported; the *iPad* just isn't a phone. Mouses do not work; they are unnecessary as your fingers can do the job better than any mouse could.



Flip it around. *iPad*, like the *iPhone*, can be used vertically (portrait) or turned horizontally (landscape) at your wish. If you are going to be doing lots of typing, using the on screen keyboard, the landscape orientation provides a keyboard that is 90% the width of a standard keyboard.

Landscape mode is great for watching TV shows and movies. *iPad* is also a great *iPod*. So, your favorite *iTunes* music, podcasts and videos can be synched into your *iPad*.

But, mostly, *iPad* is different than previous computers (this is where the "dawn of a new age" hyperbole comes in) because it hides all of the computer drudgery from you. You never see or think about saving files, launching or quitting applications, finding lost files, back ups and what's compatible with what. Like an *iPhone*, *iPad* handles these in a smooth, invisible way. At last, your computer is almost as easy to use as your toaster. This was the goal that the original *Macintosh* tried to reach, but never really achieved.

Applications. It's the 21st century. Apps are now the gauge by which computers are judged. *iPad* can use almost all of

the 186,000 *iPhone* and *iPod Touch* applications (Hooray! You don't have to buy new copies, you get to run the ones that you already have!). You can use them as is or enlarged to fill the four times bigger *iPad* screen. Some apps look great enlarged, some look really lousy.

Plus, there are already thousands of apps made specifically for the *iPad*. So, you will find apps for doing work like Apple's *Pages*, *Numbers* and *Keynote* (\$9.99 each). Apps for watching TV and movies like the free *ABC Player* or *Netflix* app and *IMDB*.

iPad excels for reading. Books, magazines and newspapers are here in app form: Apple's *iBooks*, Amazon's *Kindle, ereader*, *the New York Times*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *TV Guide*, *Popular Science* and lots more. Many are free. Some are ridiculously expensive (WSJI!). All are gorgeous and easy to read. *Winnie the Pooh* is included for free.

Just about anything you need is available: radio listening apps, recipe databases, *Wikipedia*, art,

music creation, photo editing, astronomy and games galore. Even *Major League Baseball*.

Putting it to the test. To see how easy it is to do real work on the *iPad*, I did my usual testing of new hardware and software by designing, laying out and writing an issue of *CCC News*. Possible? Almost. With the exception of the mast-head (the yellow box and logo on page 1; imported as a graphic), everything else was created using only the *iPad*.

Designing and typing were easy after I learned The *iPad* version of *Pages*. It's very different from the Mac version, so I had to learn to use it from scratch. But, this *Pages* doesn't have my full set of fonts or a broad color palette. Substitutions had to be made.

I'm satisfied with the result and pleased that it was possible to do this with the *iPad* comfortably sitting in my lap. All I needed was a nice chair and a WiFi connection for Internet access.

Limitations. The *iPad* is far from perfect. It has the problems of any brand new technology. Some

of it's features feel half-baked or unfinished (printing, file import and export, network support) though better than many first generation products. The main problem is that the *iPad* isn't capable enough to be most folks' sole computer and isn't small enough to be forgiven truncated features in exchange for always being with you like an *iPhone*.

Is the iPad for you? Some people have very limited needs. If email, web surfing, music, film, photos, reading, games and some writing are what you use a computer for, the *iPad* may be all you need. For you ease of use and reliability are most important. *iPad* does these things better than any other computer, ever!

If your needs are more complex, *iPad* will be a useful and fun accessory to your every day Mac.

You see, what *iPad* really is, is the world's first coffee table computer. Always sitting there ready and willing for casual use.

iPad is now in stores in 3 WiFi models starting at \$499.00. 3G versions will be available soon.

California Computer Care
P.O. Box 9445
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

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