

Steve Wozniak



APPLE COMPUTER INC.

From electronic prankster to multi-millionaire: the story behind the creation of the top-selling Apple computers

In the United States, Steve Wozniak is best known to the public for staging vast outdoor rock concerts, not as the man who built Apple I and II singlehanded, in his garage. But in the computer business he is known as the 'electronic wizard' who did more to simplify and popularise the micro-computer than anyone else. Wozniak's machines were the first to have colour, graphics, a keyboard and a video, all as standard features. And the Apple II has been so popular that one million have already been sold.

Steve Wozniak's meteoric rise from garage engineer to dollar billionaire reads like a modern Californian fairy tale. He was born and brought up in the now famous birthplace of 'the chip', Silicon Valley, California. His father was a professional engineer. Although he did teach his son the most elementary rule of electronics, 'Ohm's Law', in the main Wozniak taught himself electronics.

His early years were spent playing with electronic parts and using his technical genius to play pranks at school. On one occasion he built an electronic device called a blue box: an idea he got from a technological outlaw character in a magazine story. The device could mimic certain tones in the telephone system. These particular tones meant that the caller had inserted the required amount into the telephone's coin box. This enabled Wozniak to make free telephone calls all over the world. He talked to people in

England, and even rang the Pope . . . direct!

Wozniak was never trained as a professional engineer; he excelled in maths and electronics at school, but dropped out of college. His first job was as a technician at the huge American corporation Hewlett Packard, designing calculators. They said he was not trained to do what he really wanted to do, which was design computers. So he started working on his own, usually at night, and designed a microcomputer that Hewlett Packard turned down. Undeterred, he left the company, and with his school friend (and partner in pranks) Steve Jobs, made and sold 50 of the design. The Apple I was born. They called the computer and the company Apple, simply because Jobs had once worked in an orchard.



Between 1975 and 1976 Wozniak locked himself in his garage. Here his creative bursts of work lasted days and nights on end before he finally produced the Apple II. He was 26 years old. The experts still regard the Apple as an amazing feat of brilliantly simple circuitry and design.

They say Steve Wozniak can read the system in the timing and circuit diagrams of a chip as easily as some people read fortunes in tea leaves. One of the important innovations in the Apple II was the simplifying of the disk drive. Before Wozniak it had needed 30 chips, but he redesigned it for a microcomputer to use only five. It was not so much that Wozniak invented anything completely new, but that he simplified all the parts and packaged them together so that everyone and anyone could use the computer at home.

Wozniak never intended to go into business. It was his partner Steve Jobs who was responsible for selling the Apples and for setting up the Apple Corporation. The company now has 3,300 employees all over the world and is said to have made at least 50 people millionaires. Wozniak owns just four per cent of Apple and has never been interested or involved in the management side. He still prefers to play with computers and dream up new ideas.

In summer 1983, after a two-year break, mainly organising rock festivals, Wozniak went back to Apple to work on some new projects. No one knows exactly what he is working on. Apparently he is writing some applications software. He is also involved in an Apple II project for a home video production and editing system with high quality graphics that can also do cartoons. But Wozniak is not just interested in making existing machines faster and better. He also believes that in the future it will be possible to design a very intelligent micro-computer. Using only a simple program, it would be able to learn anything. We shall have to wait to see what this imaginative and unconventional engineer comes up with next.

The Chairman

Steven Jobs, chairman of Apple Computer Inc. was Steve Wozniak's partner and school friend. If Wozniak was the electronic genius of the team, Jobs was the boy wonder businessman. In 1975 when the Apple I was designed, Jobs was 20 years old. He saw the potential for selling the machine, first to computer hobbyists, and then quickly saw it could be packaged for a new personal computer market. Wozniak was the Apple's creator, but Jobs was responsible for mass producing and selling it. Apple II was packed in a box complete, ready to be plugged in at home so anyone could use it. When Wozniak and Jobs were still in the garage workshop, the first money for the company was \$1,350 from selling Jobs' VW van and Wozniak's programmable calculator. Soon though, Mike Markkula, a young millionaire, gave them his financial backing for what looked like an interesting project. When the company went public in 1980 it was the hottest issue around, and lived up to its potential by selling \$583 million worth of computers in 1982 alone.

The phenomenal growth of the Apple Corporation has won it acclaim and awards in the United States. Steve Jobs made the cover of the prestigious 'Time' magazine, as one of America's youngest and most successful businessmen.