

Apple MacBook – First Impressions

by Jim Tetzlaff



I still can hardly believe it. I mean, okay, the odds weren't that huge against it, But I won the TNWoU raffle. Wow! It's so rare to win anything and then to win something that couldn't have come at a better time. The MacBook! Our 5+ year-old G3 iBook was beginning to show its age, though the only breakdown ever experienced was its hard drive and then just a couple of months ago. A pretty good run it has been.

My wife, Judy, will be the one putting the MacBook through its paces. She is a photojournalist and must have a portable to do her job from many remote locations. Yep, I get the old one.

The day we brought our new 'baby' home, the first thing I did was reload the software bypassing many of the languages to install. Then I used the migration assistant to bring over the applications, preferences and documents she had on the iBook. By the way, had I not backed up the iBook just before its hard drive went out, I would have had next to nothing to migrate over. Just one ornery wife to deal with. There were no obvious problems with the migration, but I found that some of the apps had to be re-installed because the version on the iBook was, of course, the PPC version instead of the Intel version on the Universal apps. The iBook had Adobe's CS Creative Suite on it and not CS2 because Adobe did not recommend CS2 for the smallish processor it had in it and that ported over just fine too.

After doing all that work, I took some time to just look it over. Its rather pretty in a demure way; sleek and elegant to look at. Since it was right next to our G5 iMac, I couldn't help but notice how much brighter the screen is on the MacBook. It made me think that the iMac had dimmed, perhaps

somehow resentful of the newer occupant in its presence. But, no, that would be our cats' behavior. The computer has a high gloss screen covering. That caused me to worry a bit thinking that glare would be too much for my wife to contend with.

After working on a few assignments in her car and in her favorite WiFi haunt, Panera Bread, she confidently told me that it's actually better than the non-glossy screen of the iBook. I was also very pleased with the feel of the keyboard. Instead of the rather flat keyboard panel of the iBook, this one has raised keys that I find much better to use. And, maybe some of the keys won't pop off in protest at the HEAVY punching that it has to endure whenever my... ..OK, Dear, I won't bring that up!

As for performance and speed, it took 20 minutes to do the reinstall of the software, about 10 minutes faster than doing the same thing on our G5 iMac. And when I installed Creative Suite CS2, it sailed through that job in less than 10 minutes... much faster than doing the same on the iMac. As for the Intel-native apps, the MacBook as we received it was more than adequate for the job. I'm referring to apps like TextEdit, Preview, iTunes and Fetch. We use Entourage as our Email client and although it is not Intel-native, we thought it very quick, as it was with Microsoft's Word.

Now for the real meat. How did Photoshop do? Oh my! It just died. The MacBook came with the standard 512 MB of RAM. For comparison, we had added 512 MB of RAM to the iBook for a total of 640 MB. To be fair, even in the little manual that came with the MacBook, it recommended a minimum of 1 GB for photo manipulation software (like Photoshop) and 2 GB for video manipulation software. It took me exactly two days to get the 2 Gigs of RAM ordered as an act of self-preservation. My wife COMPLAINED that it was taking up to three minutes just to open one lousy image. She was convinced that there was something wrong with either the

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computer or the installation. Keep in mind that we're talking of CS and not CS2 (even higher system demands). The very next day, the RAM arrived from OWC...thank God! And the next morning I installed it. This was a very easy task, taking about 20 careful minutes to get it done in one take. I was hoping that it would do the trick, suspicious of the Intel-based, shared graphics used on the MacBooks. Later that day, to my great relief, that's all it took. Photoshop was now much faster than it had been on the iBook.

About the only thing that's bothering me about our new MacBook is the problem it's having with the VPN software we've purchased originally for the iBook. Although they offered a free download of an Intel-compatible version, it is beta software at this point and it doesn't consistently connect as it did with the PPC iBook, running the same version of OS X.

That's about all I can say with so little time with our new 'baby', so I'll try to get another update out in the next couple of months. Happy Clicking! 🖱️

