The Dawn of Couch Computing

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I haven't blogged about the iPad until now on purpose; I wanted to let the waters calm down, as January's announcement was certainly one that left nobody indifferent.

The iPad is a disruptive device. Not in the sense of groundbreaking, because there is nothing on the iPad that you couldn't find in other devices. I mean disruptive in the sense of creating a new blue ocean[1], a new category of devices where the interaction with the machine is done through a completely different kind of approach. Apple is, once again, redefining the word "personal computer", setting itself apart from the competition, and making us drool all over again.

The iPad is the dawn of couch computing[2], with all what this phrase means.

The critics to the iPad are doing the same level of noise you can hear whenever Apple releases a new product. Remember: it all started with Dvorak critisizing the first Macintosh because of the mouse[3]. Then it continued with the iMac not

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[1] http://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/
[2] http://twitter.com/0xced/status/8915818053
[3] http://bethesignal.org/blog/2009/01/13/qotd-john-c-dvorak/

having a floppy disk[4]. Then it was the iPod and its hard drive or its lack of a color screen. Finally it was the iPhone, which has generated as many critics as sales. All what is written around the iPad follows the same pattern.[5]

To help to filter the noise produced by all the opinions, keep in mind the following elements:

- We geeks are a very small portion of the human population. A noisy one, but very small anyway. Our opinions are biased and most of the time are not the same as the average user. The iPad is not a device for geeks. This is a device for common people, who want a lightweight computer that starts fast, can be used on a couch, looks beautiful and can even be used to create small documents.
- The average user wants to hold in their hands whatever new gadget seen in the movies. One of the best reviews of the iPad I've read so far[6] stated that the device is a step in a trend to bring gadgets found in "Star Trek", "Star Wars" or "2001" to the market.
- The iPad is the ultimate simplification of the user experience. This device completely isolates the user from the underlying hardware. The user interface is the computer. No file system[7], no files, no folders, just apps, documents within those apps, and as much multimedia as possible: videos, images, sound. The same hardware is used for both primary input and primary output.

Is there a use case for the iPad? You are pretty damn sure there is: right now I'm typing this blog post on MarsEdit on a train. I use my MacBook Pro for that. But I know I would use an iPad instead if I had it. I know designers planning to buy some iPads to showcase their portfolio in them. Not to mention on-demand business opportunities, gaming, social networking, and much more.

Couch computing means more than dumb consumption of media: it is also a whole new relationship with the way humans create and share information. The iPad is the first real electronic canvas, and its übersimplification of the user interface, together with an übersimplification of the distribution of software, will create a whole new market. A whole, new, different paradigm. The iPad is not a computer, it is not a netbook, it is not a laptop. It's an iPad. The user experience patterns will be different, the use cases are yet unforeseen.

I have been contacted by many clients already to take their iPhone apps to the next level, and some ideas are just incredible. In any case, akosma software is your partner of choice for your next iPad application! Contact us, we'd love to hear about your next idea.

PS: by the way, did you know that in the next Dev Days for iPhone in London[8] and Geneva[9] (if the iPad NDA drops) Daniel Steinberg[10] will talk about the

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[4]http://www.everymac.com/systems/apple/imac/faq/imac-g3-pci-based-chrp-rom-why-no-floppy.html

[5]http://www.fastcompany.com/article/quiz-are-these-comments-about-2001-ipod-or-2010-ipad

[6]http://www.boingboing.net/2010/02/02/arthur-c-clarks-2001.html

[7]http://twitter.com/gil_les/status/9193995097

[8]http://iphonedevday.com/iphone-london-2010/

[9]http://iphonedevday.com/iphone-geneva-2010/

[10]http://iphonedevday.com/iphone-geneva-2010/speaker/Daniel+Steinberg

iPad instead of Core Data?