

ack in the late 1960's a government committee investigating cannabis use discovered that the drug's users were suffering from a psychological addiction rather than a physical addiction. They used the comparison with people who wear trousers. Just as a trouser-wearer would never dream of being seen in public without their trousers on and would go to great inconvenience to buy their trousers, the cannabis user is the same. Bringing this analogy up to date, the MacJunkie wants to do everything on their computer. In the past, where a paper and pen would suffice, their psychological dependency on their beloved machines mean that they would rather spend 5 hours getting their work into a recalcitrant computer rather than the 2 minutes it would have taken to write it by hand.

But it is not the wish to spend as much time as possible with their idols of silicone-chipper that makes them MacJunkies. That is purely a dependence that is easily broken by pulling out the plug. No, the MacJunkie has a far worse personality disorder and to date no one has been able to find a cure.

It starts quietly, as do all addictions, gradually creeping into every element of the MacJunkies daily life. Perhaps it is the unpacking of the first Mac, or maybe the arrival of a new piece of kit. Whatever sparks the addiction off, the end is inevitable and almost indescribably bad for any poor person who has to live with a MacJunkie. The evidence is clear to see for anyone who does not suffer the addiction – the MacJunkie surrounded by the paraphernalia of their weakness. Just as an opium user has their pipe, the MacJunkie has their peripherals

however, this addiction is not like any other. There are wonderful benefits to counteract the drawbacks. Friends can be won and customers retained by MacJunkies who will always be able to help some lesser-addicted Mac user by supplying them with a small fix. And this is all legal and completely harmless to everyone.

The "stuff" the MacJunkie cannot live without is not their computers or even the using of their computers. It is the pile of SCSI leads, the box of old AppleTalk transceivers, 10-base-2 connectors, terminators and above all, boxes. The junkies fix is the junk!

Why is it that everything you buy for a Mac seems to come with at least five different layers of cardboard and packaging? All of which must be saved for a decent amount of time in case it is needed to return faulty goods to the mail-order house. Buy a scanner and it is certain to have a selection of mains leads which will go into any power socket, anywhere in the world – except in the country you live in. What does one do with the millions of floppy disks that once held all the back-ups you could ever hope for but now won't even look at a copy of 1984 On-Line magazine?

One Mac user who had the luck to have not one or two but five Macs in their home, complete with boxes, leads and so on, was selling their house. They discovered that piling the empty boxes strategically and precariously in front of the place they did not want the surveyor to see was a great success. These same boxes were then used to great effect as temporary furniture in their new home. Cover a monitor box with a cloth and you have a serviceable table. An empty scanner box turns into an excellent paint-spraying area. The box an Epson Stylus ProXL arrives in makes a superb off-the-floor low level table for the machine. The added bonus to the MacJunkie is that it is much easier to bung together a few sturdy Mac boxes than it is to assemble anything called "easy to assemble flat-pack furniture". The simplicity of the Mac box design would probably thrill even Terence Conran and would without doubt boost your green credentials.

Neil Young, icon of popular 1970's music, a self-confessed heroin addict who sang about addiction in his track "The Needle and the Damage Done", in reality a formative MacJunkie. Neil wrote in the opening line "I caught you knocking at my cellar door." Surely he meant to say "I store Mac boxes on my cellar floor."

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