ure, everyone knows that the traditional song for the new year is Auld Lang Syne. The song, written by famous Scottish Poet Robert Burns, is usually the tune that heralds the new year at parties where bleary-eyed revelers belt out the words as best they can remember them.

Of course, that is normally the case. This year is a little different. You see, way back in 1982, the Artist Formerly Known as Prince (who, surprisingly enough, was known just as plain old Prince back then), had the foresight to write a song titled 1999, guaranteeing a new lease on life 17 years later for the early 80's dance tune.

Much to my chagrin.

Enough of my rant. Once again, we find ourselves at the beginning of a new year. Another time to take stock of the past year, and look ahead to the promise the new year holds.

And, it would be difficult not to admit that 1998 was pretty impressive as far as Apple Computer is concerned.

Can you say, "Profit?" Awash in a sea of red ink no more, Apple with its still-interim CEO Steve Jobs at the helm has turned the corner and gotten its financial house in order. A little cost cutting here, a little new product introduction there, and BAM, the media no longer tags the word "Beleaguered" with Apple Computer.

The profitability springs from three major developments which pushed Apple above and beyond what formerly existed last year at this time.

First, the introduction of the iMac, the Bondi Blue Bombshell. Never has a computer design captured the imagination and attention of consumers like the iMac has. Even with some issues which marred the introduction and the elimination of a SCSI port and floppy drive, the iMac has continued to be a winner.

G3 PowerBooks have allowed people to bring blazingly fast Mac performance on the road. Not only that, but now, on an airplane, you can set up a mini theater on your DVD player if you don't like the offerings the airline has selected. The PowerBook does indeed eat Pentiums for lunch.

And, hey, for $99, you can get a brand new Macintosh with the installation of OS 8.5. And you can search the Internet from the OS with the Sherlock search feature. Quite a nice development.

These are all big doings. And the future for Apple looks brighter still. OS X seems to be on track, unlike the on-again-off-again Copland project. The rumor mill is abuzz with reports of the current iMac dropping in price, and a new second generation iMac being introduced early this year. Word of a new consumer level laptop in the near future and a return of Apple to the palmtop market helps buoy the spirits of all Mac enthusiasts. The G4 chip comes one step closer to reality every day.

I can tell I have been writing Apple Cider for too long. Lately, I tend to see how events in my life have been affected by the goings on of Apple Computer, and how my actions will affect my relationship with my favorite computing platform.

For instance, my wife and I had our first son, Dominic, this past April. He is truly a joy to be around, and has definitely made this a memorable year. He's always smiling. When I look at him, I see my eyes, my wife's mouth, and, of course, a nice big fat tax deduction. This deduction will help us buy a new computer with our tax return come February. Coincidentally, this is when Apple is rumored to drop the price of the iMac from its current $1,299 to a sweet $999. Aww, shucks, what a great February it's gonna be at our house!

The new year also brings a host of new beginnings with it. For instance, in December, I accepted an offer to work for a new department in the county government where I have been for the past five years. This new position will be with the Public Relations department. I'm going to be writing video scripts, press releases, and copy for brochures promoting the work of various county agencies. Heck, I'm even scheduled to host a weekly update show to be aired on county access TV. Look out Tom Brokaw, here comes the new star!

The only thing about this new job that has me feeling a little hesitant is that I will now have to work on a PC. After five years of banging out my work on at first a IIcx and later a Performa 6116, which only recently was accelerated with a G3 card, now I will have to switch gears and learn Windows 98.

You know, now more than ever, I'm really going to have to both put my faith in and give my thanks to Apple and the Macintosh environment. Think about it. If it weren't for Macintosh offering the alternative to DOS, would Microsoft have as energetically persued the development of Windows? Would companies such as Adobe have worked as hard to port their products to the PC environment so they look similar to their Macintosh versions?

And, since every version of Windows that comes out is touted as "Almost Mac-like in its ease-of-use and simplicity," it is up to Apple to continue being the lead sled dog on this path of software development. Let's face it, all improvements that Apple makes in the Mac OS are either copied into the Windows environment (a common occurrence), or spur the Microsoft developers to develop new features which will later enhance the Mac OS (hey, sometimes it happens).

But, does this mean that I will lose all professional contact with the Macintosh? Hardly. After all, the graphics department in the office at my new job is 100% Mac. I was even surprised to see the new, empty G3 minitower box standing in the hallway outside of the graphics office. A quick peek around the corner at the sleek new machine on the lead graphic artist's desk, and I knew that Apple was going to continue to be a major player in the creative content field. At least the boss trusts the important graphic work to the most capable creative computer around.

To paraphrase Prince, or the Artist formerly known as Prince—err, whatever—for Mac users, we should be partying like it's 1999. Things have never looked brighter for Apple, and I definitely want to be the one dancing with the lamp shade on my head at this bash. And,

apologies to The Artist, I don't think things are going to be over for Mac users in 2000.

Now, what I'm really looking forward to is the theatrical re-release of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey, in about two years…