

•By Beth Lock <beth@infowest.com>•

It's probably a little late for me to be sticking my two cents in about the iBook, but they don't call me "Last Minute Lock" for nothing. I'm so far behind I still haven't seen "Forrest Gump" or "Titanic," and I consider my rebuilt 7200 as state-of-the-art. But fashion conscious I surely am. The fashion police have absolutely no reason to come knocking at my door. No sireee. I may be an old broad, but I dress with distinction and style.

No surprise then that my reaction to the iBook was "oh, it's cute!" As a fashion accessory it has the same classic elegance as a Coach handbag or Chanel. I could definitely see myself sauntering down the street, slinging this little beauty by the handle. Yes, the iBook could add a certain je ne sais quoi to any outfit, mini-skirt to power suit.

I was amused by Mr. John Dvorak's review of the iBook as something no "real man" would be caught dead carrying, implying that any man that did might be suspected of being... uh.... effeminate. Hello Mr. Dvorak, my name is Beth, and I'd like to politely remind you that this is 1999. Men are now allowed to wear something besides the boring jacket-pants-shirt-tie combo.

"Honey, which tie looks better with this Blueberry iBook, the red or the green?"

sigh...."Well, dear, you carried the Blueberry yesterday, why don't you carry the Tangerine today and accessorize with the braided leather suspenders and the pale peach henley collar shirt? Oh, and wear those nice rust colored pants that move so pretty when you're walking away."

Accessorize! Accessorize, gentlemen. Fashion clue number 1. Even geeks look good when their pants fit right, IF they have the right computer. Geek chic. Ya gotta love it.

It was the Barbie comment that I liked the best of all, though. Because if Barbie has it, I want it. That girlfriend gets everything! Barbie has been maligned for years as an insult to liberated women. Ms. Barbie has, however, weathered this in stride and continues year after year to lead the way in cutting-edge fashion. (After all, she and Ken have yet to tie the knot. She isn't hurting for hot tubs or sleek sports cars. And still not a sag or bag on her! Can you imagine this chicka with the iBook?)

If Mattel is smart, they're cutting a deal with Apple right now to release iBook Barbie as this year's Christmas present for up and coming young women everywhere. I suppose they'll stick poor Ken with something boring in grey, a notebook you have to lug around in a carrying case. Poor, poor, whipped Ken.

Even loyal Apple aficionados got a little huffy about the iBook. Yeah, the Airport is cool, but it doesn't have this, it doesn't have that, the price is too high for what you get. Natter natter, guys. Apple didn't build this little sweetie for you. They built it for the rest of the rest of us!

I'm sure it's obvious to those who read my column that I'm not even close to being a power user. I installed some RAM once, and was sweating the entire time the case was open. There are so many more of us computer users who don't know or care what a megahertz is than those who do. Computers perform a function, like automobiles. They get us from point A to point B. So what would you rather drive, a broken down '87 Datsun, or a hot little V6 Celica convertible with killer speakers, five on the floor, and 256MB RAM (doubled) in the passenger seat? Ohhh La La.

I read a statistic which stated that 60% of the American population is not yet connected to the Internet. What a huge marketing potential for the iBook. 60% of America's computer unsavvy waiting with open arms to embrace a computer so simple even they would not be intimidated to buy one. The computer for "the rest of the rest of us." The computer with fashion sense. Not only the computer with fashion sense, but an Apple computer. (The operative word here being "Apple." Shareholders take note.)

The iBook is a computer any proud daddy would be happy to give his darling daughter as a high school graduation gift.

"Here ya go, sweet-pea. Take this to college and set the world on fire. And don't let any young men try to get his hands inside your iBook! There's nothing in there that needs reconfiguring, if ya know what I mean."

(Insert touching scene where darling daughter throws her arms around daddy and hugs his neck. Daddy coughs and wipes away a tear, etc. Daddy goes out and buys more Apple stock the next day, 'cause he believes in his little girl.)

I'm glad that Apple has gone beyond more than needs. So what if the Mr. John Dvoraks of the world don't see the iBook as viable for the mighty male power user. If 60% of the population is still not Internet savvy, then it's time Apple made this giant leap forward and gave the rest of us a tool that's not only easily usable, but fashionable as well. What's wrong with owning something that embodies the best of form and function?

Thanks for the iBook, Steve. By the way, nice pants. I love a man with a little fashion sense.

Now if you'd just envision a glitter case...

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