

PC in a Mac world

Interview Louise Lawton

Steve Martin, creative director of Terabyte Interactive, explains why his company is proudly PC in a creative industry more known for its dominant use of Macs.

Q. Are you pure PC at Terabyte, or a mix of PC and Mac?

A. Predominantly we are PC-based at Terabyte and have been for some time now. We used to be multi-platform, each designer equipped with both systems at their disposable. However, as you can imagine, that became difficult to maintain, unnecessary and quite expensive. However we haven't completely abandoned the Macintosh as there is still a small old school resistance hanging in there (Hi Rach ☺). We still prefer using Mac's for video editing and of course are a necessary part in our website development and testing.

Q. Why is the interactive industry running on PC – what superiority does it have over Mac in this area?

A. Superiority? Are you trying to get me into trouble? The end user is one of the major reasons in dictating the PC domination in our industry, there is no hiding the fact that the majority of web users browse on PC's, so it makes total sense for us, as a company, to design and employ the same platform as them.

In saying that, there is a coming of age in the use of our tools and I know many developers that use Macs to programme and designers who use PCs with equal results and without bloodshed. Then there are other reasons:

Cost and performance: These two are our main drivers within the business. Over the years it has been cheaper to buy PCs that can out-perform the Macintosh. It's not

based upon a dislike for the Mac but purely a business decision which is hard to argue with.

IT Support: Again this is around making life easier for the business and only needing one type of technical support that is widely available and cost effective.

Development: Our infrastructure is .net based and whilst we are equipped to provide solutions in many languages, we use what we develop in, from tools right down to user experience.

Q. What programmes do you use? And is there any difference in terms of functionality?

A. Apart from not being able to participate in any of that hip integrated have-fun-with-your-laptop kind of carry-on, the majority of the software we use is the same on either system and I don't feel that one offers major advantages or disadvantages over the other.

Where we go one way or the other is in some of the speciality software we use; Final Cut Pro for example, 3D and audio applications. More and more software is being developed for both systems and with options like Bootcamp you only need one piece of hardware to do all things. So it's about preference and maybe an adversity to the colour beige.

Q. Prior to Terabyte you used a Mac. How did you feel moving to PC?

A. I have a licence to use a 'manual' (PC) and 'automatic' (Mac) and throughout my career I have been across both systems and don't really have a preferred option. The computer for me is a tool which I use to design. Whilst I appreciate the Macintosh finish and adore the design/functionality of the African Animal operating system,

that can't equate to the some of the performance and price factors that are important to me.

I'm also amused of the whole branding 'I'm a Mac and he's a PC'; GET OVER IT ALREADY, because in the end, I just want a good quality hammer, being titanium, shiny with a lovely drop shadow does not make it better hammer or make me an 'Awe-inspiring Designer'. And the last time I looked inside a Mac, I'm pretty sure I saw a PC doing all the work.

Q. Is transferring creative /fonts between the Mac and PC and issue?

A. Apart from loving the challenge of trying to open our industry peers' files, the old days brought many inconsistencies and frustrations. But now with advancements in technology, software and support for things like Open Type and True Type Fonts we play much better together. As we progress further, I hope to see any troubles get smaller and finally disappear.

Q. Are the majority of your clients / users PC or Mac – and does it matter?

A. The majority of our clients and users are PC based and yes it makes a huge difference to us. In either case, and as painful as it may be, you need to test on both operating systems. You cannot only favour one if you're a designing a piece of online work for all to access. It is part of our internal process at Terabyte and supported browsers are outlined in the scoping and specification of a project. If clients can dictate that their user base only uses Internet Explorer, say for an intranet, then that simplifies things.

In the end you need to respect both systems for what they each bring to our industry... sorry got to go, my iPhone is ringing! pd

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