

INTRODUCTION

Over the past six years, I've reviewed dozens of books about the Macintosh and related topics as a columnist for the Macintosh-oriented Websites AppleLinks, MacOpinion, Low End Mac, Mac OS Daily, MacSimple, and The Mac Times Network.

There have been hundreds – maybe thousands by now – of books written about the Macintosh. There are books about how Macs work, books about how the Internet works, books about operating systems, and other software, and digital photography, and making movies or music on the Mac, and how to troubleshoot and upgrade your Mac. So many different books.

Some of these books are excellent; many very good, and a few mediocre, but Aaron Rosenzweig's "Old Fart's Guide to the Macintosh" stands out as unique. I've not encountered anything quite like it in the Macintosh book canon.

Many computer books are technically competent but lack an imaginative spark. In short, they provide an informative but dry and dull read. What I noticed very quickly about "Old Fart's Guide" author Aaron Rosenzweig is that he is genuinely enamored with computers and especially with the Macintosh, as well as a whole lot of other topics. Aaron says he wants to recreate for the reader the same feelings of wonder and passion that were so evident in the early days of Apple Computer. I think he's succeeded admirably in that quest with this book.

Among many other things, Aaron revisits the time when Apple's founders had to prove to the world that consumers wanted and needed their own computers. You won't just learn about the Macintosh in this book, you'll get a capsule personal computer history in general. While I'm familiar with the story of how DOS/Windows PCs, Macs, and Linux computers came to be, I really enjoyed reading Aaron's particular take on the topic. He has a unique writing style that somehow incorporates an incredible amount of information into relatively short passages of text, while making it all very readable and interesting.

Aaron is, how shall I say? – a bit of a character, and that is reflected in his text, which also has character, something that helps make it a pleasure to read.

Most of the books I review on Applelinks and other Websites are targeted to a readership of intermediate to advanced users, or at least to folks who are familiar with the basic computer use. The Old Fart's Guide to the Macintosh: Second Edition, is pitched as "a book for those who recognize the word 'computer' but do not know exactly what they do," in other words, the complete newbie, neophyte, or computerphobe who is looking for a guide to help them scale the learning curve.

However, an extremely interesting thing about this book is that while it fulfills its stated purpose well, Aaron Rosenzweig has compiled a body of expository and instructional material that is so well written and organized that even veteran Mac users like myself for instance will find it a good, entertaining, and informational read.

You might pick up a book on how to use Apple's AppleWorks productivity software suite. I bought such a book for AppleWorks 5 several years ago, and have reviewed another that covers AppleWorks 6. These books are great if you want to master AppleWorks, but what if you're only interested in learning the basics? To research how to use your Mac might require six or seven books - or you could pick up one copy of the Old Fart's Guide to the Macintosh, which does a masterful job of providing the complete Mac novice a solid understanding of what the Macintosh is and how to get the best from it.

See for yourself; thumb through the pages of this guide and you'll quickly see what I mean. The historical theme Aaron has woven through the text acts like a glue that puts technology into perspective and makes it all fall into place. I'm honored by Aaron's request that I write this introduction, and that I've been able to play a small consultative role in the late stages of the book's gestation.

This delightful book is an excellent gift idea for any new or prospective Mac users on your list, but check it out for yourself as well. You'll be glad you did.

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