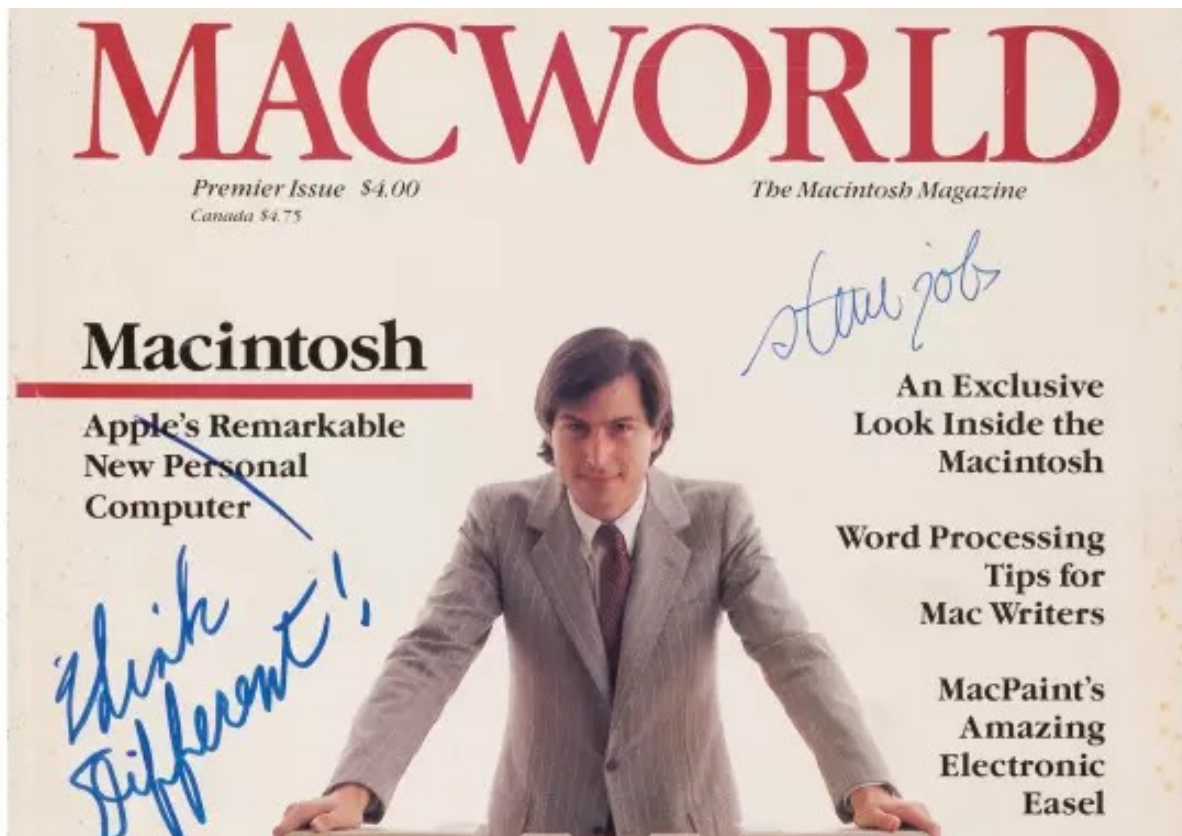




Fifty years ago, Steve Wozniak knew he built a great personal computer, but the young engineer couldn't convince his employer, Hewlett-Packard, to buy into the big idea.

“Five times they turned me down for the personal computer. I wanted Hewlett-Packard to do it. I loved my company, but now Steve Jobs and I had to go into business,” Wozniak told The Times.



BUSINESS

How bits of Apple history can be yours

Wozniak and Jobs, both in their 20s, co-founded Apple with Ron Wayne on April 1, 1976.

Back then, personal computers were very expensive and rare. Apple would go on to revolutionize the tech industry, creating innovative, intuitive and beautiful gadgets billions of people would buy again and again.

ADVERTISING



Apple Inc.'s then-CEO Steve Jobs speaks in front of an early image of himself and Steve Wozniak during an Apple event on Jan. 27, 2010, in San Francisco. (Justin Sullivan / Getty Images)

Apple, now one of the world's most valuable and powerful companies, turned 50 on Wednesday.

From its humble beginnings when the founders worked out of Jobs' family garage, Apple has ballooned over the last five decades, opening a sprawling ring-shaped headquarters in Cupertino, Calif., and employing roughly 166,000 workers.

Its market value has surpassed \$3.5 trillion, making it the second-largest company in the world after Nvidia. In the fiscal year ending in September, Apple reported revenue of \$416 billion and a net income of \$112 billion. The company has attracted a large loyal fan base with more than 2.5 billion active Apple devices worldwide.

“Apple is more than just a technology company. It's really a cultural icon,” said Jacob Bourne, a technology analyst at eMarketer.

By creating well-designed products that blur the lines between work and enjoyment, Apple helped foster an emotional connection to the brand, he said. The company's strong stance on privacy and security has cultivated trust among legions of its fans who line up at Apple's retail stores to buy its latest products

“Every company claims to strive for excellence. It's just a trope. But, man, you go inside Apple and talk to these people, and it's almost a mania. It's intense to work at Apple. A lot is expected of you,” said David Pogue, a journalist and author of “Apple: The First 50 Years.”

This attention to detail is apparent in Apple's products.

When Apple built a way for people to unlock their devices with their faces, the company tested the technology at Harley-Davidson motorcycle rallies and even hired Hollywood special effects artists to ensure life-like masks couldn't spoof its facial recognition system, Pogue said.

Pogue's book, released ahead of Apple's anniversary, goes through Apple's long history, chronicling the company's key players — including Jobs' leadership style and temper — and the challenges it faced as it rose to the top.



Expansive offices for Apple are rising in Culver City

“Apple’s story is an epic tale of frenetic all-nighters and creative rebellion,” he wrote in his book. “Of titanic successes (iPods, iPhones, iPads) and instructive failures (Lisa, Apple III, MobileMe). Of funny, idealistic, scary-smart workaholics — coming up on three generations of them — who want to make things better by making things better. It’s about management, marketing, and strategy — and also about creativity, drive, and obsession.”



Jobs shows an Apple iPhone at the MacWorld Conference in San Francisco on Jan. 9, 2007. (Paul Sakuma / Associated Press)

Apple went through periods of financial trouble and uncertainty.

In the 1990s, the company laid off a third of its workforce and was days away from bankruptcy before the return of Jobs, who left the company in 1985 after clashing with the board and then-Chief Executive John Sculley.

In 2011, [Jobs died](#) of pancreatic cancer at 56, fueling more uncertainty around the company's future. Apple has faced scrutiny over working conditions at Chinese factories where Apple devices and other electronics are produced.

The company had massive breakout moments of success, including the release of the iPhone in 2007, outpacing rivals such as BlackBerry and sparking the shift to smartphones.

“Apple kept up with it all. Apple was always flexible,” Wozniak said. “Now we’ve got so many different avenues, from the surfaces to other machines and AirPods and all that.”

The secret to the company's success was it managed its brand well and didn't make “lousy junk” that breaks down, he said.

The tech giant — which is [building a new office complex in Culver City](#) — also expanded its footprint into Hollywood in 2019 with the launch of Apple TV+, the streaming service known for such TV shows as “[Severance](#),” “The

Morning Show” and the comedy “Ted Lasso.” In 2022, it became the [first streamer](#) to win an Academy Award for best picture for family drama “CODA.”

Apple, known for looking forward, took time to reflect and celebrate its half-century.

Earlier in March, Apple held a surprise concert featuring artist and producer Alicia Keys, who performed at its Grand Central Store in New York.

The company has held celebrations in different parts of the world, showcasing artists in China, Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Mexico as well.

Apple worked with artists to light up the Sydney Opera House in Australia with art designed on the iPad.



Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook with Alicia Keys at a 50th anniversary celebration at Apple Grand Central in New York on March 13. (Theo Wargo / Getty Images for Apple)

“Through every breakthrough, one idea has guided us — that the world is moved forward by people who think different,” wrote Tim Cook, Apple’s chief executive, in a [public letter](#) about the milestone.

It’s not just Apple that’s been celebrating.

In January, RR Auction held an auction to celebrate the anniversary that included rare items such as Jobs’ bedroom desk and bow ties. A 1976 check signed by Jobs and Wozniak before the founding of Apple and an Apple I computer prototype board each sold for more than \$2 million, according to the [auction’s website](#).



## ‘Nowhere to hide.’ How Apple and others in Silicon Valley are bracing for Trump tariffs

April 5, 2025

The Computer History Museum in Mountain View, Calif., has been hosting events and opened a new exhibit to celebrate Apple’s anniversary.

Inside the museum, rare prototypes of Apple products, including its personal computers and smartphones, were on display to showcase the Silicon Valley powerhouse’s long journey. A wooden Apple I case, a clear acrylic Macintosh, a large iPod prototype and other items from Apple’s past fill the room.

Earlier this month, Pogue hosted a sold-out evening [event](#) that featured key people in Apple’s history, including its former chief executive Sculley.

Wayne, the Apple co-founder who left the company days after its founding, also made a rare appearance. He departed from Apple early, he said, because he thought it was too financially risky.

“If the whole thing came unglued, Jobs and Woz didn’t have two nickels to rub together, so who are they going to come after? Obviously. And I didn’t feel that I could stand the risk of such a disaster,” he said.

Sculley, who became Apple's chief executive in 1983 and held the position for a decade, was initially reluctant to leave PepsiCo, but Jobs eventually persuaded him.

“He said, ‘Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?’” Sculley said on stage.

Today, the world is very different, and technology has evolved.



HOLLYWOOD INC.

Apple unveils ambitious new video service intended to take on Netflix

March 25, 2019

The rise of artificial intelligence that can generate text and images has prompted anxiety about the future. And it's spurring the creation of hardware such as smartglasses and robots.

But AI can also create problems such as "deepfakes" that make it seem like a person is saying something or doing something they're not, Wozniak noted.

People spend a lot of time scrolling through videos on social media, addicted to their phones instead of interacting with their friends and family.

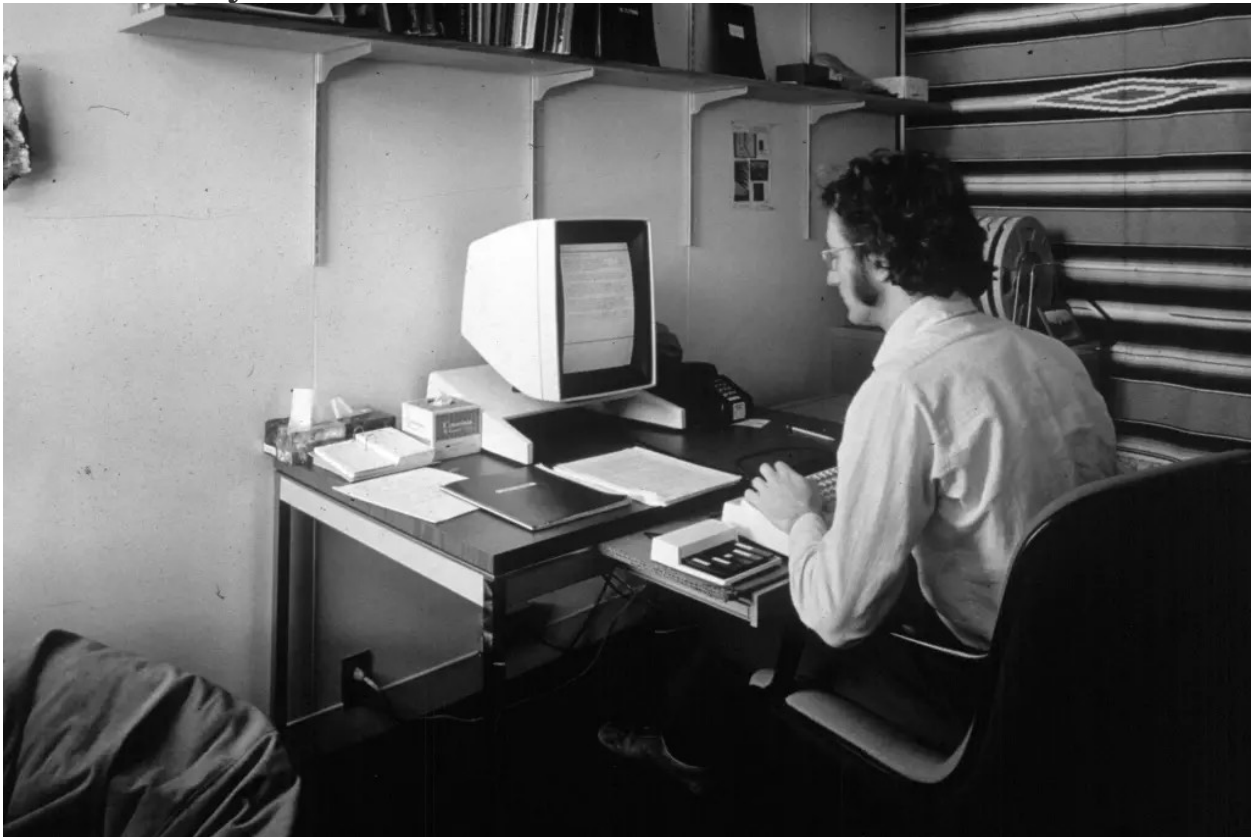
"The world is run by people who want to sell things," Wozniak said. "They're not going to let us get away from that."

Apple is also contending with the AI race and is seen to be trailing. Its shares rose around 54% over the last three years, but the broader Nasdaq Composite index rose 77%, and it ceded its throne as the world's largest company by market value to Nvidia.

Meanwhile, there are questions swirling around when Cook, 65, will retire.

For now, Apple appears positioned well, analysts said.

“I see Apple being able to weather the current pressures at least for the foreseeable future,” said Bourne, the eMarketer analyst.



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VOICES

Hiltzik: Inside the 1979 Silicon Valley demo that made Apple what it is today

March 24, 2026



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Apple Card switches hands but no immediate changes for users

Jan. 8, 2026

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