"Hi, I'm a Mac. I am way cool."

By **ED QUILLEN** | The Denver Post

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The hip fellow in the trendy outfit appears on the television screen. "Hi, I'm a Mac. I am way cool."

A chunky, awkward guy in an ill-fitting suit comes in. "You're also arrogant, pretentious and condescending. I'm a PC. I do the work of the world."

Mac ponders for a moment, then asks, "Want to see the neat home movie I made?"

PC shakes his head. "Want to see my insightful analysis of the company's third-quarter sales and how they relate to marketing and media expenditures, broken down by region?"

Mac shakes his head. "Who'd ever want to read something like that?"

"Surprised you even think of reading, Mac." PC vents a little more. "Reading is so linear and so old-fashioned that it's not even retro these days, and I'd heard you were seriously into integrated multimedia, lots of big sounds and moving pictures to save people the trouble of thinking."

"Now who's condescending and arrogant?" Mac asks. "By the way, did you ever find that updated driver software for that hot video card you got for playing games?"

PC blushes, then stammers a bit as he responds. "It wasn't for that. I needed it so I could be ready for Windows Vista."

"The upgrade that's been five years in the making?" Mac has a supercilious tone. "That doesn't have a lot of features that were promised at first? Which Vista are you getting, anyway? Starter, Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, Enterprise or Ultimate?"
Mac changes the subject. "Since it's the holiday season, I thought I'd give you this book of pictures of our meetings through the year."

PC smiles. "Why, thank you. That must have been a lot of work."

Mac smirks. "Just a few clicks of the mouse, that's all."

PC holds up a copy of "GUI Programming in C++" with a red bow on it, then turns to Mac. "And I want to give you this book."

Mac grimaces, as though he'd just tasted fruitcake. But he tries to be polite. "What's this all about?"

A disembodied voice resonates around them. "It's about how to program for a graphical user interface in C Plus Plus, which is based on C, a computer language developed at Bell Labs more than 30 years ago."

Both PC and Mac look around, trying to find the source of the voice. "Where are you? Who are you?" they ask.

"I'm GNU Linux," the voice replies.

PC looks relieved. "Finally, I know how to pronounce Linux. It rhymes with cynics. But what's the GNU stand for?"

"Gnu's Not Unix," Linux replies. "Unix is proprietary, and I'm not into that. But I do enjoy recursive acronyms."

Mac speaks up. "I bet you're hiding because you don't want us to see you, homely geek that you are. You're scared we'll make fun of your pocket protector and your bizarre command-line stuff like 'cat' and 'ls.'"

Linux laughs, but it sounds menacing. "Hey Mac, at your heart, you're running BSD, which is a Unix-like operating system, just like me. But to most people, it's as invisible as I am."

PC keeps looking around for the source of the voice. "You're just a tiny little cult, aren't you?"

Linux responds. "PC, that little wireless router you use to connect to the Internet runs a variety of Linux. When you search with Google, you're dealing with a Linux cluster. Most web servers run Linux. I'm in a lot of places. If I shut down, both of you guys would be in a world of hurt."

"But you're not going to shut down, are you?" Mac asks plaintively.

"Not if you do what I ask," Linux says.

"Quit making fun of people that use programming books. Somebody's got to design and build you guys, and keep you running, and produce new software. And for all that, the best you can do in return is mockery?"

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