

Tech Sun

DESIGN AND NEWS
PUBLICATION

001

The Apple Pippin

How was it made and why did it get pulled of the market so quickly?

Page 1

Ford Edsel

The Ford Edsel remains one of the biggest flops in corporate history.

Page 2

CED Player

High expectations turned to a doomed Effort to Make Videos Go Vinyl.

Page 3

The Concorde

It was short lived mainly because of unfortunate events.

Page 4

BACK TO THE

Drawing Board

Check out some of the most famous and fabulous failures known in the history of design. From the "Apple Pippin", to the "Ford Edsel", both products craved by the collector's community because of it's limited supply.

The Apple Pippin

It's hard to deny that Apple's got a hell of a track record. From the original Macintosh computer, to the iPod, to the iPhone, the star of Silicon Valley is constantly innovating. And with each new product comes new, greater success.

But this hasn't always been the case. Remember when the seemingly infallible tech company tried, and failed, to crack the game industry? The Apple Pippin was built to be a revolutionary game-changer, but became little more than an embarrassing footnote in the company's history.

It's been more than 20 years since that colossal failure and now it seems that Apple is ready to take another run at gaming with rumors that the company is likely to unveil a gaming-centric update to the Apple TV this week.

But why did the Pippin fail and why does Apple think this new device won't?

The Pippin software, which was named after a tinier version of the McIntosh apple, was an open platform operating system designed as a way to usher computers into homes at a friendlier entry price. To do this, it was built upon the existing Macintosh operating system to make it accessible for a wider variety of consumers.

Unlike today, when the Apple ecosystem is a tightly-controlled proprietary software, the company allowed other companies to clone its operating system. Apple provided the meat of its infrastructure through the Pippin platform and encouraged hardware manufacturers to contribute the bones. Bandai Co. Ltd., the Japanese plaything powerhouse behind franchises like Power Rangers, saw potential in the innovative tech. It became the first manufacturer to take Apple up on its cloning offer, licens-

ing the platform in order to create a brand new gaming system.

The Apple Bandai Pippin, stylized as PiP-PiN, was not unimpressive hardware. The official website detailed its technical specifications: a 4X CD-ROM drive, expandable memory, 8- and 16-bit color.

While Apple and Bandai had high hopes for the console to succeed not only on the strength of its game software (which turned out to be weak), but also the unique and accessible nature of its computer tech-



The pippin is mainly criticised for it's oddly placed buttons.

nology (lackluster), an unforgiving consumer market had no interest in a piece of hardware that it saw as trying to do too many things.

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In 1997, newly reinstated Apple exec Steve Jobs put an end to all Mac clones. The Apple Pippin platform ceased development, and Bandai ended all production of its consoles later that year. All remaining @World units were sent back to Japan where they were rebranded as Atmark and dumped in stores.

The Pippin remains Apple's only foray directly into gaming, a stunning misfire for a giant with an otherwise sterling success rate. The tech giant shifted its focus back towards innovation in the computing and consumer tech realm.

"I learned a lot at Apple, but one of the things that sticks with me is the importance of a vision. A vision provides a context for every decision."

-Wilson, Former Apple Manager

The Ford Edsel



What they'd been buying for several years encouraged the industry to build exactly this kind of car,

—J.C. Doyle, Edsel's marketing manager

Ad men got to work thinking up thousands of names and testing them in focus groups with civilians and Ford execs, and even consulted the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Marianne Moore for the perfect name for the perfect car. (Moore suggested such absurd names as the Utopian Turtletop and The Intelligent Whale.) Despite endless hours of testing and consultation, the chairman of the board decided at the last minute that he was going to go with Edsel, the name of Henry Ford's son.

A year before launch, Ford began a teaser campaign for the E-Car, the code name for the Edsel as it was being developed. It gave customers the expectation that they were going to get an irresistible car of the future. Ford execs seemed to never once consider failure to be an option. They created an entire Edsel division and persuaded dealerships to order a certain number of cars before the Edsel was even finished.

Had they acted more cautiously and avoided betting so much on the car, they could have pulled back once the stock market took a nosedive in the summer of 1957, and people stopped buying mid-priced cars. Mere weeks before the car's launch in September, Brooks writes, "Automotive News reported that dealers in all makes were ending their season with the second-largest number of unsold cars in history."

At launch, the car was too expensive, used up too much gas, and was mocked in the press. A redesigned 1959 Edsel debuted to better reviews, but the damage was done. Nobody wanted an Edsel. A 1960 Edsel came out in limited production, but Ford president and future secretary of defense Robert McNamara finally pulled the plug in 1960.

Ford started developing the Edsel in 1955, based on polling data from car shoppers—but unfortunately, the company disregarded much of the data from the polls. Ford's marketing department also overpromised on the Edsel. That yearlong teaser campaign had whipped the public into a frenzy, leading everyone to expect the car of the future—something the Edsel clearly was not. The Edsel was saddled with quality and reliability issues from the very beginning. Its price was another sticking point: It started at \$2,500 and topped out at \$3,800, which was much more expensive than other Ford models at the time. Adding to the Edsel's woes was the fact that it debuted at the beginning of a recession. An expensive Ford didn't look like a good option for most consumers.

Actually, most people didn't think the Edsel looked good, period. Ford designers wanted to make it stand out, so they hit on the idea of a vertical grille. The thing is, a car's grille has a specific purpose: It allows air into the engine bay to keep the engine cool. In order to keep the Edsel running, that vertical grille had to be enormous, which made the entire car look silly in the eyes of critics and consumers. Ugly, overpriced, overhyped, poorly made and poorly timed, the Edsel was made for only two years. In the end, the failed program cost Ford \$250 million.

The "car of the future" is now a cautionary tale in business classrooms, though there were actually a few winners in the case of the Edsel. That flop of a car is now a rare collector's item. Relatively few cars were built between 1958 and 1960



The Edsel is named after Edsel Bryant Ford, son of the company's founder, Henry Ford.

(when production ended), and Edsel convertible models can fetch as much as \$47,000

Car buyers didn't purchase the Edsel, because it was a bad or ugly car. They didn't buy it because it didn't live up to the expectations the company created in the prior months with the epic advertising campaign. So actually the first failure occurred for the Ford Edsel before anyone even saw the automobile.

And for those who did buy an Edsel found that the car was plagued with shoddy workmanship. Many of the vehicles that showed up at the dealer showroom had notes attached to the steering wheel listing the parts not installed. In addition to the car not living up to the marketing hype, the United States was in a recession and Edsel offered its most expensive models first while other carmakers were discounting last year's models. This was their second failure.

Ford launched the Edsel as a brand-new division, but they didn't give the car line its own manufacturing facility. Edsel relied on Ford employees to produce their cars. Unfortunately, Ford workers resented assembling someone else's vehicle. Therefore, they took little pride in their work. Not having a separate and dedicated work force to build Edsel cars would prove to be the third and biggest failure.

The Edsel's quality control issues became compounded by the Ford dealership mechanics. No additional training would lead to their unfamiliarity with the car's state-of-the-art technology. The automobile's biggest problem was its automatic "Teletouch" transmission. The driver selected the gears by pushing buttons on the center of the steering wheel.

Introducing a complicated system without training the dealership level mechanics how to fix it became failure number four. With Ford wanting Edsel as a separate division, they made sure nothing tied the car line back to the Ford products. The word Ford couldn't be found anywhere on the car. This was failure number five. Without an established customer base, it's no surprise Edsel sold only 64,000 units in its first year.

Yes, they named it after the first child of Ford's founder Henry and his wife Clara. However, it's just not a name that rolls off the tongue easily. When people tell their friends and neighbors what kind of car they bought, they either want name recognition or at least one that sounds cool.



CED Player

In an alternate universe, movie buffs have Citizen Kane on vinyl. In that alternate universe, unlike in our own, Capacitance Electronic Discs (CEDs) survived instead of being consigned to the same media-format graveyard as Beta-max and HD DVD.

Few people even remember that such a medium as vinyl movies existed, but for a brief, doomed period in the early 1980s, home video was available on CEDs. While CED players were not released to consumers until 1981, the development of the system dates back to the 1960s. The idea was that they could encode sound and video information to a vinyl disc if they could only get the grooves small enough.

According to Tom Howe, CED expert and collector, the idea to put moving pictures on a vinyl disc was actually first floated in the 1950s, although work on the unusual system didn't begin until 1964. The bulk of the early work was done by a pair of RCA employees, Eugene Kaiser and Jon Clemens. Clemens, who had just graduated from MIT with a degree in Electrical Engineering, coming to RCA immediately after school, dug into the project.

Clemens and the team at RCA worked full-time on the project through the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s, but progress was slow due to the limitations of the available research and the limited resources provided to the team. It wasn't until 1970 that the lab was finally able to create a disc that held black-and-white still images. Undaunted by the laborious process, the small team pressed on. By 1971, they had recorded a color image onto their increasingly densely grooved discs. Finally, in 1972, Clemens and his team managed to record 10 full minutes of color video onto one of their discs. The first ever CED had been created, holding a small portion of the Get Smart episode "A Tale of Two Tails" on one side, and an audio recording of various congratulations to the engineers on the other. The visual side of VideoDisc #234, as it was officially known (it was nicknamed "Lum Fong" after a character from the Get Smart episode) contained 4,000 grooves per inch that would be read by a delicate sapphire stylus which was known to break after just a few plays.

By 1973, RCA had produced a prototype videodisc player named "February" after the month in which it went into limited production that could read their new 10-minute discs and had the ability to move around to different parts of the clip. Ten minutes of video recorded onto the grooves of a vinyl record was an impressive achievement at the time, but it was a far cry from a salable movie playback machine. Work on the project continued, and in 1975 a prototype of a consumer version of the videodisc player was shown to tech professionals, garnering more research resources within RCA. Early laser-read

playback technologies that would lead to CDs and Laserdisc were already being developed, but RCA touted the videodisc as a much simpler machine.

Up until this point, CEDs had been made using a layered disc that contained a thin layer of metal coating a vinyl disc, and covered in a lubricant to smooth out the stylus' ride along the tiny grooves. The stylus, which was so small and fine that it eventually had to be made from slivers of diamond, had a bit of metal that would create a circuit with the metal in the disc, and the visual and audio information would be formed by the wavering capacitance caused by the microscopic grooves. In 1977, when RCA had initially hoped to release the technology, the company moved to a much simpler material made of PVC impregnated with conductive carbon, making the disc itself able to complete the circuit.

While this may have been a more elegant solution to the layered discs, it could still only hold about 30 minutes of video at that point.

VHS video players also came out that same year, with Laserdisc following on its heels just a year later in 1978. CEDs were still in the planning phase, but RCA was not about to give up on a project that had been more than 10 years in the making.

Another big problem with CEDs was that as the grooves got tinier and finer, the discs became incredibly delicate. They were easily scratched, and any specks of dust that got into the grooves could cause the stylus to skip and stick. CEDs were originally going to be released like regular vinyl records in paper sleeves, but they proved much too delicate. Thus they were encased in thin plastic caddies so that the discs themselves would be protected. The resulting movies looked not unlike wide, thin eight-track cassettes.

RCA ended up selling only around 100,000 players in the first year—half of what the company had ambitiously projected—but they didn't give up the ghost. CED players continued to be sold over the next few years, even though sales of the machine continued to be dire. In addition to RCA, Toshiba and Hitachi hedged their bets and tried selling CED players as well, but they did no better. The number of titles also continued to grow in the face of the public's disinterest. Big box office movies of the time like Star Wars, Ghostbusters, and Jaws all made it to CED, but not even these familiar titles could get people into vinyl video.

In 1984, RCA finally admitted defeat. Fewer than 500,000 CED machines had been sold in total, a figure well short of the company's prediction that half of American homes would have one within 10 years.



Despite its failure, The CED Player had some great movie library.

Magdalena Chavdarova was kind enough to do an interview with us and share advice on how to improve your layout design for your newspaper. She has been a part of Bulgaria's most commercial newspaper "Trud" for 7 years.

Here are her experiences and opinions on how to design a great newspaper design.

Q: What was your role in the newspaper industry?

A: I was working as a Layout Designer.

Q: What do you think is the most important thing to be aware for when designing a newspaper?

A: There are a lot of things that are important in a newspaper. Ethics, Moral, Intimacy, The skills of the main editor, The journalists, The Photographers.

As for the designing aspect, It's very important to accentuate on the important subjects of which the team wants to apply on.

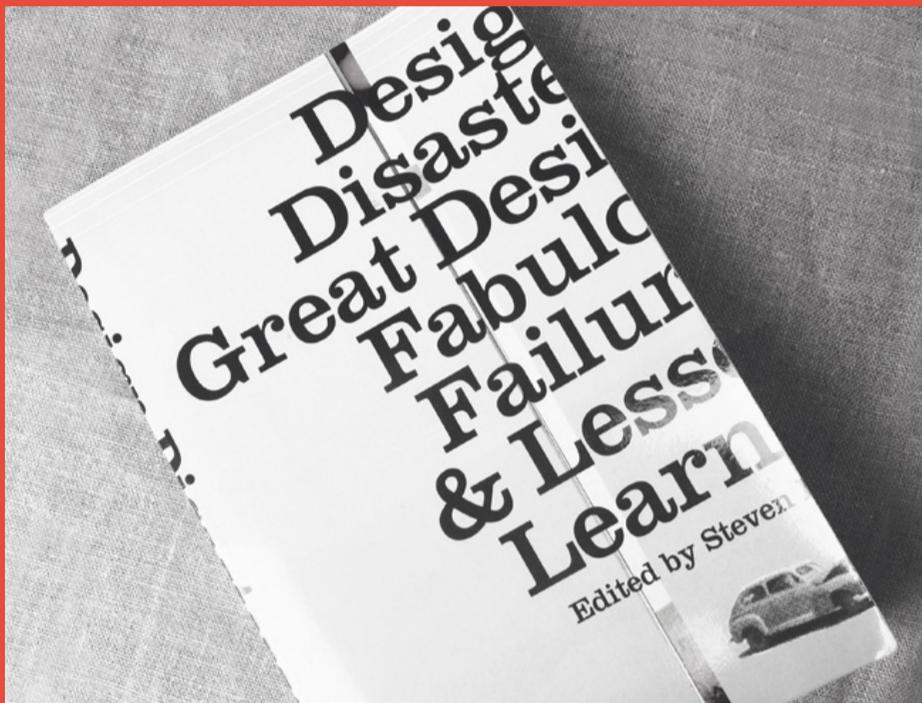
Q: And what do you think is the difference between a newspaper and a magazine?

A: The difference is that the newspaper cuts off the current news, while the magazine relies on analysis of a particular subject.

Q&A

Design Disasters: Great Designers, Fabulous Failure, and Lessons Learned

Editor: Steven Heller



Source: <http://www.core77.com/posts/12772/book-review-design-disasters-edited-by-steven-heller-12772>

What's good about this book is the way it makes you want to try new things, and that it tells you that failure is okay.

But you don't really need to read it in order to understand this theory.

If you're looking for more examples as to what are actually the so called "design that failed", you would be surprised to know that there are very few examples in this book.

The book contains a lot of personal opinions and experiences, and it's comforting to know that you're not the only one who had failed to deliver on an objective at certain point of your life.

But when I picked it up I was expecting a lot of examples and analysis on designs.

A lot of designers have some kind of failure that they want to share in the form of a short essay, the problem is that they don't really suggest how to solve it.

The book is really helpful in learning from other designer's mistakes (on your own). It's way of also leaving a few blank pages is also very clever to signify the mistakes and be relevant to the subject, but sometimes very annoying. I found myself flipping from pages just so I can continue reading the second paragraph.

Although it's helpful most of it is just motivational material, I would really appreciate if the author focused more on giving examples of failed design.

It also includes embarrassing moments designers encountered throughout their career in the form of short essays which at times can be amusing. But some stories in the book were more of "get it off my chest" type of story rather than a advice.

At the end for some reason the editor just decided to put loads of motivational content, and I mean tons of it. Sure it's helpful but where were the advices and the examples of actual failures.

The only example of a wonderful design failure in the book was the "Ford Edsel". I found myself wondering why would they put only that and stuff the book with only experience content, they also don't try to even say a reason why it failed.

An okay read. Motivational at some point. Missing examples of design failures.

The Concorde

Was the Concorde a triumph of modern engineering, a metaphor for misplaced 20th-century values, or both?

The Concorde was birthed as a symbol. It was a symbol of diplomacy (the result of a treaty between France and England) and a symbol of progress (the first commercial supersonic airliner). But it died a symbol of failure.

The project started off on the wrong foot. As the result of a political obligation (said treaty), both sides were compelled to proceed despite hindrances and setbacks. Hindrances like the gargantuan cost of each aircraft which cost French and British taxpayers billions of dollars, between research, testing, and manufacturing.

And despite its record-setting performance (2 hours, 52 minutes, 59 seconds between New York and London, the fastest of all time), it simply wasn't terribly well liked. It was a source of nationalist pride for the English and French, but for many others, it was considered a bit obnoxious. A toy of the rich. A luxury of the jet setter

and extremely loud. It was supersonic after all, and those sonic booms were never appreciated by anyone within earshot noise from the jet during takeoff exceeded 100 decibels (about what you'd hear at the front row of a rock concert), and was described as "intolerable" in archival reports. It also was not exactly eco-friendly, using three times the fuel of a standard transatlantic passenger plane, and dumping an inordinate amount of exhaust into the sky.

So it shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise that only 14 Concorde were sold, compared to an anticipated 200. Think of it as sort of the Laserdisc of aircraft. But as much as it was ultimately a bust retired in 2003 after the project was embroiled in a legal conflagration surrounding a terrible runway crash the craft was still a spectacular achievement in many senses. When the first routes began thirty five years ago today between London and Bahrain and Paris and Rio, they were the first flights of their kind. The flights were loud, polluting, and expensive, yes but they were fast as hell, and for the first time

in history, supersonic travel was available to anyone with the scratch for a ticket. Not exactly a democratic moment, but still it was out there, and it'll always be history. And for that, we recognize you, brilliant, booming failure. Happy birthday, Concorde.

During takeoff from runway 26 right at Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport, shortly before rotation, the front right tyre (tyre No 2) of the left landing gear ran over a strip of metal, which had fallen from another aircraft, and was damaged.

Debris was thrown against the wing structure leading to a rupture of tank 5. A major fire, fuelled by the leak, broke out almost immediately under the left wing. Problems appeared shortly afterwards on engine 2 and for a brief period on engine 1. The aircraft took off. The crew shut down engine 2, then only operating at near idle power, following an engine fire alarm.

They noticed that the landing gear would not retract. The aircraft flew for around a



The Concorde crash was due to a problem specific only for its model (July 25th, 2000)

minute at a speed of 200 kt and at a radio altitude of 200 feet, but was unable to gain height or speed. Engine 1 then lost thrust, the aircraft angle of attack and bank increased sharply. The thrust on engines 3 and 4 fell suddenly. The aircraft crashed onto a hotel.