

The Lost Lisa

Before the Mac, Apple came out with a pioneering but pricey PC.

IT REMAINS ONE OF THE SUPER BOWL'S most famous commercials: Apple announcing its breakthrough computer, the Macintosh, with a depiction of an Olympic-like hero smashing through an Orwellian scene while a narrator promises, "You'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984." Fueled by that mind-bending ad (which aired nationally only once) and the marketing genius

aimed at the corporate market. Mostly forgotten today in the sweep of tech-industry history, the Lisa (named for the daughter Jobs initially denied was his) was the forerunner to the Macintosh. It was the first commercial personal computer to incorporate an innovative graphical user interface with icons, folders, dropdown menus, and point-and-click on-screen navigation controlled by a mouse. It would become the template for nearly all the computing devices that followed.

Jobs had been inspired by the technology he saw on a visit to the Xerox PARC research center in Palo Alto in 1979. Xerox researchers were working on their own early experimental PC, which had its own GUI and mouse. "I was so blinded by the first thing they'd shown me, which was the graphical user interface," he said in a 1995 interview. "I thought it was the best thing I had ever seen in my life."

Jobs improved on what he saw, but the Lisa had a problem from the very start: its \$9,995 price tag. Despite its attempts to give Apple a foot in the door with business users, it couldn't compete with the IBM PC, which sold for less than half the price and had already captured most of the corporate marketplace. And it couldn't compete with its own stepchild, the Macintosh, which had captivated home users who loved the smaller box, the more reasonable price tag, and the intoxicating GUI.

Apple pulled the plug on the Lisa after just three years of sluggish sales. But its true death knell may have been Jobs's departure from the team developing it a year before it was introduced. He took his genius and hard-charging personality to the Macintosh development team instead ... and the rest is history. ▀



of Steve Jobs, the Macintosh would become an instant huge hit that revolutionized the trajectory of personal technology.

But the year before, without quite as much fanfare, Apple had unveiled a different innovative machine that raised eyebrows among the technorati. It was called the Lisa, and it was

THE LISA

Released: **JANUARY 19, 1983** Price: **\$9,995**

Weight: **48 LBS** Discontinued: **AUGUST 1, 1986**