

Exhibit 32

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[Hardware News and Reviews](#)

[Previous post](#)

[Next post](#)

Why We Are Obsessed With the iPad

By [Dylan Tweney](#)   April 1, 2010 | 12:37 pm | Categories: [Media Players](#)
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Yes, the iPad has fewer features than a comparably priced netbook. Yes, it's tied to an app store controlled by a single company that has proven to be both capricious and prudish in the kinds of content it approves. And yes, it won't run Adobe Flash, instantly crippling many websites.

Instead of living inside a box, content *takes over* the device. There's almost no noticeable interface.

But the iPad is an important device just the same, because it's simple and it's fast.

[Early reviews of the iPad](#) confirm my experience using the device during Apple's press event two months ago: there's something seriously different about Apple's tablet.

That difference can be summarized in two words: It disappears.

It's basically a screen. There's a home button, and some buttons on the side that you don't pay much attention to while you're using it.

For more on Apple's new tablet, check out [Wired's iPad full coverage page](#).

On the iPad, websites look pretty much the same as they do on my computer display, with one important exception: They fill the screen. Instead of living inside a box with a URL bar and a bunch of buttons alongside other boxes and applications, content *takes over* the device. There's almost no noticeable interface.

On top of that, the screen is the most responsive touchscreen display I've ever had my hands on. Put your finger down on a page and wiggle it around, and the page follows your finger exactly, and instantly.

Those two facts — the lack of interface and the instant responsiveness — lend a psychological concreteness to whatever you're looking at. You're not just looking at Wired.com through a browser, you're holding Wired.com in your hands.

Ditto for photos, calendar entries, e-mail messages and even video: You feel as though you're holding the actual pictures, calendar pages, messages and movies.

It's a subtle difference and, rationally speaking, it is irrelevant to the content that appears beneath the glass face of the LCD. You get exactly the same words and pictures (but not, of course, any Flash video or animations.) But it's a profoundly different feeling for the human on this side of the glass. It makes the content feel more immediate, more real and more "in the world."

Over time, that's going to make profound changes to THE [way web designers create and deploy their sites](#), to the [way we think about "online content,"](#) and to the way we think about computers.

In fact, it's the beginning of the end for computers as technology. Technology, after all, is stuff that doesn't work yet, as [Douglas Adams observed a decade ago](#). Once it starts working all the time — like chairs or electricity — you stop thinking about it as technology and start taking it for granted.

The iPad promises much, and we have yet to find out if it lives up to its expectations. Make no mistake: Once we have unfettered access to the device, we will be testing the iPad thoroughly to find out where, and how, it breaks down, and we'll report the results here.

But if it works as well as promised, the iPad could be the first computer that people will be able to take for granted. And that's why, like many people who live and breathe technology, we're both excited by it — and a little bit scared of it.

Photo: Jonathan Snyder/Wired.com

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- [The New Media Mall: What I'll Be Expecting From the Apple iPad](#)
- [Wired.com Buyer's Guide: Choose the Right iPad](#)
- [Five Essential iPad Accessories](#)
- [How the Tablet Will Change the World](#)
- [13 of the Brightest Tech Minds Sound Off on the Rise of the Tablet](#)
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Dylan Tweney is a former senior editor at Wired.com and current publisher of [tinywords](#), the world's smallest magazine.

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