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# The 'wow' factor never ends

RIDZWAN A. RAHIM looks at how laptops have evolved through the decades. Why, they are even environmental-friendly now!



It was more than 20 years ago that *Tech & U* writer Hazimin Sulaiman had his first brush with a laptop computer, a Toshiba T1100.

"I was in Standard Six at the time (in 1986) and my father was lecturing in UPM (Universiti Pertanian Malaysia). I remember coming home from school and seeing this small computer on his desk. I went 'Whoa!'," recalls Hazimin.

The laptop was 31cm wide, 6cm high and 30cm deep. It weighed about 4kg.

Its power plant was a 4.77MHz Intel 80C88 processor aided by 512KB of RAM. That's kilobytes folks, not megabytes.

It had no hard drive. In order to boot its MS-DOS 2.11 operating system or to run programs like WordStar or Word Perfect, you had to use 3.5-inch floppy disks.

Which was not at all a cause for complaint, because the cutting-edge floppy drive on the T1100 was the first in the world for a mass-marketed PC.

You could even play games like *Karateka* and *Pinball* while you are on the move.

"The laptop was popular among family members when we took it back to the kampung in Ulu Bendul, Negri Sembilan because of the games. We would all queue up to play!"

The screen was a monochrome LCD with no backlight. However, it was 23cm x 12cm in size with a resolution of 640x200 pixels.

That made it a wide screen display.

"In a way, it was ahead of its time. If only there were DVDs at that time, people could make good use of the wide screen," jokes Hazimin.

Fast forward to the present day and the Apple MacBook Air is arguably the most desired laptop at the moment.

It has a wedge-shaped profile that is an incredible 0.4cm at its thinnest point.

But don't be fooled by its tiny frame.

The MacBook Air uses an Intel processor, but this is no ordinary Intel processor. Apple has instructed Intel to shrink the processor by about 60 per cent so it would fit into the design.

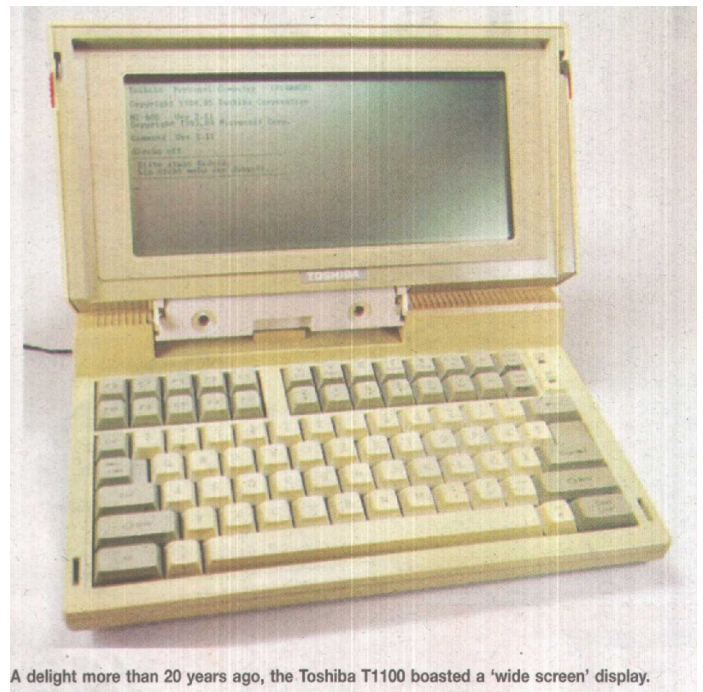
With the T1100, every command had to be typed. Not so with the MacBook Air. Its huge trackpad not only allows normal mouse pointer navigation, it also incorporates never-before-seen gestures such as pinch, rotate and swipe.

But unlike the T1100, the MacBook Air doesn't come with a disk drive. So we have come full circle; we're still not able to watch a DVD on our laptop.

As a sign of the times, Apple has designed the MacBook Air to be environmental-friendly. It is made of aluminum, a material highly-desired by environmentally-conscious people.

Its display is mercury-free and the glass is arsenic-free. In addition, it consumes the least amount of power of any Mac and its retail box is made primarily of recycled material.

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A delight more than 20 years ago, the Toshiba T1100 boasted a 'wide screen' display.