

What do the Beatles and McIntosh Laboratory have in common?

We Can't Work It Out



In 1978, fledgling computer company Apple computer was two years old, and already facing trademark trouble over its very corporate identity. Worse, the troublemakers were a quartet of Steve Jobs' heroes: The Beatles.

The Fab Four, who had formed Apple Corps Ltd. in 1968 to oversee their business affairs, thought that Apple Computer's name and activities were uncomfortably similar to those of their company. So Apple Corps sued Apple Computer. It settled in 1981, then sued again in 1986 as the music capabilities of Apple's computers became more sophisticated. That suit was settled in 1991.

Then Apple Corps sued *again* in 2003, as Apple entered the music business in a big way with the iTunes Music Store. In 2007, the two companies made peace once more--this time, in an apparently permanent fashion that is said to have made the surviving Beatles even more prosperous.

Of course, the only sign of a harmonious Beetle-Apple relationship most music lovers and/or computer nerds care about is still nowhere to be seen: a deal to put the lads' albums on the iTunes Store.

Mac Attack



Early Apple employee Jef Raskin had a favorite apple. It was the McIntosh--but since that was also the name of a manufacturer of high-end audio equipment, he bestowed the new computer he was spearheading with an intentionally misspelled code name: Macintosh. He figured that would sidestep any trademark problems.

He figured wrong: The McIntosh loudspeaker folks weren't thrilled with the prospect of a similar-sounding computer, despite a letter Steve Jobs wrote them: "We have become very attached to the name Macintosh. Much like one's own child, our product has developed a very definite personality." According to Apple historian Owen Linzmayer, the computer company and the audio company struck a

licensing deal in March 1983; early Mac ads include a credit for McIntosh Labs.

In 1986, Apple paid McIntosh a fee--how much remains a secret to this day--for permanent rights to the name "Macintosh." Twenty-three years later, the computers and the fancy audio gear continue to coexist.