FORBIDDEN FRUIT

It's not easy being Apple Computer. You toil for decades to build a brand, turning your simple curvy logo into an icon of humanizing technology and creative exuberance, and for what? To have some of your best users hide that logo in public, that's what. Sure, it's one thing when shows like *Dawson's Creek* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* display Apple products with the logos covered or simply out of frame; maybe the brand is too jarring for the Windows-users of middle America. But British DJs Plaid performing with duct tape slapped across the backs of their Titanium G4 PowerBooks is something else. Here you have Mac users playing for a crowd that probably has lots of Mac users in it. Yet Plaid covers the most envy-inducing laptop of the moment like a bad haircut under a baseball cap. Tsk, tsk.

There's no legal reason for this secretiveness: Although Apple won't comment, Temple University law professor David Post assures us that you can show a company's logo without fear. The problem is simply that

Apple gave the creatives what they want. It won the hearts of computer-using aesthetes by rejecting the mediocrity of the beige box, producing hardware that pushed the boundaries of product design while flaunting brand association like peacock feathers. Unfortunately, the same folks who appreciate Apple's sensibilities—artists, musicians, writers, designers—have labels of their own to worry about. They know that a brand is a jealous mistress, and to serve more than one is to court disaster. So you get artists like Matmos' Martin Schmidt, interviewed in the previous issue of this very magazine, exuding a memetic territoriality as he complains about the status quo at electronic music shows: "...there's often so little on the stage at a show that it does become about [the PowerBooks]. Like, 'Well, what am I supposed to look at? I'm just staring at the fucking glowing Apple logo.'"

Well, mister, that "fucking glowing Apple logo" made everything you do possible. Sure, that's easy to forget, now that the bankruptcy of Apple seems like a remote possibility, and loving the MacOS doesn't require a siege mentality. But there was a time not too long ago when Apple was the only company that thought computer users deserved aesthetic liberation instead of cubicle drudgery. They believed users were too special to waste time editing AUTOEXEC.BAT files. And this is how you repay them: like teenagers on vacation with your parents, trying to pretend that you were never in diapers. That's gratitude for you.

—*Francis Hwang*