

I hate Sony. I really, really do. I hate everything about the big, ugly, dysfunctional corporation, except, perhaps, for its products. Funny position to be in, don't you think?

Sony really knows what it is doing when it comes to digital lifestyle products. Take the PEG-NX70V Color CLIE. This is a color handheld computer with MP3 player, camera and a pivoting screen. It's a gadget nut's dream. You'd never see something like this from HP or Palm.

I've also been salivating over the DCR-IP55, a tiny camcorder with a MicroMV tape and swing down handgrip. It's genius.

And then there are the Sony VAIO notebooks. My globetrotting mom has a PictureBook and loves it. Our CEO David Bunnell bought and swears by his SR Series system. They're amazing computers.

Still, I hate Sony. I hate them because they hate me, and perhaps by extrapolation, they hate you. Or so it seems.

You see the way it works with all the reviews in this magazine

when I said "eh?" and was nice to everyone. Still, Sony Canada was awful to deal with, as was their public relations agency.

Our Editor Bob Kane dealt with Sony in the UK—he normally got the shaft until he finally befriended the Managing Director, and then got some cooperation. Bob's no lightweight; he was the Editor of *PC Magazine UK* for four years.

Our founders David Bunnell and Fred Davis are responsible for publishing the biggest magazine brands in technology: *PC Magazine*, *PC World*, *Macworld*, *MacUser*, *PCWeek*. The list goes on. Sony doesn't care. Fred and David may as well be crack whores.

We asked Sony PR—first by email then by phone—for 22 products we thought you would like to hear about. Here's their voicemail response elicited only after a snotty email to their VP of marketing.

"Hi Andy, this is Heather from Sony Electronics...one of our people was planning on sending you two products from the list—we don't send out that large of a volume as we have a limited assortment of products and they are not available at the same time and that's a huge quantity to mail out to one place. I will

I HATE SONY!

By Mr. Andy Walker

is we contact a company because we're interested in giving you the skinny about their gear.

The company sends us their products at their expense (sometimes for a very limited time) and we put the product through its paces. Then we write about it. We tell you what we think. Sometimes it's good. Sometimes it's bad. Ultimately you get an honest opinion.

Sony seems afraid of this process. They carefully dole out their products for review on a restricted basis (two weeks is standard). Rarely do we see all their new products unless we get invited to some dog-and-pony show where the products are displayed in a controlled, frictionless manner, unmolested by the unpredictable real world.

There's also a hierarchy of how the products are loaned out. We're new so they treat us like we just let our big stinky dog knock their ice cream to the pavement. That might change if we prove that he's a nice puppy and he won't snap at their goonies.

Of course they don't take into account that we've been around a while, though not in this sparkly form. I suffered Sony Canada for years in a previous life as a Canadian—back in the days

remind my colleague to get you what she has for your deadline by the end of the week. However despite the sweet tone in my voice and my diplomatic choice of words, we're not going to help you in any way. You're a shit-disturber and we think the press, as general rule—and by extrapolation our customers that read them—are annoying."

Okay, so it's not a direct quote. The last two sentences are made up, but the message was clear. What amazes me are the perfectly manufactured excuses. Exquisitely crafted. By the way nothing was shipped to us by the deadline, though the gal with the paltry two products called. She made promises that weren't kept.

Finally we said screw them. Take your fabulous Cybershot cameras, your spectacular WEGA televisions and your gorgeous MP3 players and all the other wonderful crap and jam it up your press release, Sony.

That said, you will still find some Sony products in this issue. We found other ways of getting our hands on Sony products. But, with the exception of the Sony AIBO robot and the PS2, we had no help from Sony.