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Canon Cat



# Jef Raskin Information

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"THE MAC BATHROOM READER"*

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### Canon Cat

In 1987, Jef Raskin finally got his chance to more fully realize the embodiment of his original Macintosh design goals with a "work processor" called the Canon Cat, which had word processor, spreadsheet, and telecommunications features built in. Most people have never heard of the Cat, and with good reason. After only six months on the market, Canon abruptly dropped the Cat without explanation. It's not as if the Canon Cat was a dog, if you'll forgive the pun. The \$1,495 Cat was well received by the public, selling a respectable 20,000 units and winning many design awards. Why, then, did Canon put the Cat to sleep?

Over the years, Raskin received two anonymous telephone calls from people claiming to be Canon employees. They offered conflicting motives for Canon's actions. One explained



Courtesy of Jef Raskin

The Canon Cat looks suspiciously like Raskin's early Mac prototypes.

that the electronic typewriter division and the computer division were fighting for control of the Cat. The new president of Canon USA wanted to exert his power and told the two divisions to settle the matter quickly or he would do it for them. They continued to fight over the Cat, so he killed the project outright to teach them a lesson.

The second caller painted a more sinister scenario involving Raskin's old nemesis, Steve Jobs. Shortly after the Cat was introduced, Canon was exploring the possibility of investing in Jobs' new venture, NeXT. Unwilling to share the corporate attention of Canon with Raskin, Jobs told Canon that unless they dropped the Cat, he wouldn't allow them to invest in NeXT. Although Raskin has never been able to verify either story, Canon did pay \$100 million for a 16.67% share of NeXT in June 1989. Kinda makes you wonder...

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