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## America ®: The Ultimate Killer App: A conceptual poem

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## America ®: The Ultimate Killer App

A conceptual poem  
Mark Gonzales on Mar 9 2003

issue 18

**America ®: The Ultimate Killer App. A conceptual poem which explores America's ® role as the dominate "product" in the world "market." In a series of guiding questions and comments, this piece illustrates how America ® created an entire market for itself and continues to grow its market share worldwide.**

"First of all, this conceptual poem is not intended to be definitive or conclusive; it is merely a series of guiding questions and comments which explore the possibility of America ® being the ultimate killer App. This piece does not have any definitive answers, it simply raises questions." -Mark Gonzales

### The Killer App. (definition):

"The Killer App. (short for application) is yet another grail of the computer industry: The hardware/software combination that creates an entire market segment for itself", (Snap to Grid, A User's Guide To Digital Arts, Media, and Cultures, The World Wide Web: In Search of The Telephone Opera, The Killer App?, Peter Lunenfeld)

### America ® Version 10.1 The Ultimate Killer App.

William Samuel Johnson, George Washington, Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Oliver Ellsworth, Thomas Jefferson, George Read, Gunning Bedford, Jr., John Dickinson, Richard Bassett, Jacob Broom, William Few, Abraham Baldwin, William Houston, William L. Pierce, James McHenry, Daniel Carroll, Luther Martin, John F. Mercer, Nathaniel Gorham, Rufus King, Elbridge Gerry, Caleb Strong, John Langdon, Nicholas Gilman, William Livingston, David Brearley, William Patterson, Jonathan Dayton, William C. Houston, Alexander Hamilton, John Lansing, Jr., Robert Yates, William. Blount, Richard. Dobbs Spaight, Hugh Williamson, William R. Davie, Alexander Martin, Thomas Mifflin, Robert Morris, George Clymer, Thomas Fitzsimons, Jared Ingersoll, James Wilson, Governor Morris, John Rutledge, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Pierce Butler, John Blair, James Madison Jr., George Mason, James McClurg, Edmund J. Randolph, George Wythe

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### America ® Timeline:

- America ® Version 1.0 (date of release, 1783)
- America ® Version 2.0 (date of release, 1812)
- America ® Version 3.0 (date of release, 1848)

**CADRE Invitational**  
Five sessions revolving around  
Interface: Software as cultural  
production  
++++

**A Pierre Lévy Project**  
SWITCH proudly presents  
Lévy's current research project  
called the *Collective  
Intelligence Game.*  
++++

**Digital Insights**  
Seven explorations into  
information space  
++++

America ® Version 4.0 (date of release, 1865)  
America ® Version 5.0 (date of release, 1898)  
America ® Version 6.0 (date of release, 1918)  
America ® Version 7.0 (date of release, 1945)  
America ® Version 8.0 (date of release, 1953)  
America ® Version 9.0 (date of release, 1975)  
America ® Version 10.0 (date of release, 1991)  
America ® Version 10.1 (date of release, 2001)

### **America ®: Laying the Foundation**

The American Revolution ® raised many questions about the role of government and the place of the military within it. Remember, there was no president until 1789, and no congress as we know it today. A nation was truly in the making—and it might have failed. But with the great energy and sense of common purpose that defines us, Americans ® eventually forced the British to sue for peace and grant America ® its independence. (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/pad/defenders/revwarcover.html>)

### **America ®: The Unofficial Story**

"The unofficial history of America™, which continues to be written, is not a story of rugged individualism and heroic personal sacrifice in the pursuit of a dream. It is a story of democracy derailed, of a revolutionary spirit suppressed, and of a once-proud people reduced to servitude." (Culture Jam: The UnCooling of America™, Kalle Lasn, William Morrow/Eaglebrook, 1999)

### **America ®: It's Not Just a Country Anymore**

America is no longer a country, but a multi-trillion dollar brand. America™ is no different from McDonald's, Marlboro or General Motors. It's an image "sold" not only to the citizens of the U.S.A.™, but to consumers worldwide. The American™ brand is associated with catchwords such as "democracy," "opportunity" and "freedom." (Kalle Lasn, Culture Jam)

### **America ®: So perfect that it limits your ability to depict and imagine a future.**

"I lay the blame for our inability to imagine anything beyond the moment on two, almost perfect visual systems, both more than a decade old. The first is a movie; the second an interface." (Peter Lunenfeld, Permanent Present, Art/Text no. 63 28-30 N '98/JA '99)

Blade Runner and The Graphic User Interface (GUI).

Described by Syd Mead, the visual futurist for the film (Blade Runner), as "a maze of mechanical detail overload onto barely recognizable architecture producing an encrusted combination of style which we...labeled 'retro deco'—is perfectly postmodern. "As such, it (Blade Runner) has inoculated every cinematic depiction of the future to emerge since." (Peter Lunenfeld, Permanent Present, Art/Text no. 63 28-30 N '98/JA '99)

"The market is dominated by one particular flavor of graphic user interface, or GUI, as it's called."

"For all of its success, this interface model, like Blade Runner, becomes an impediment to thinking beyond the present. While there are regular software upgrades that incrementally increase the design efficiency, nothing radically different has penetrated the computer market, nothing really says, "This is the future, pay attention." (Peter Lunenfeld, Permanent Present, Art/Text no. 63 28-30 N '98/JA '99)

### **Adobe Photoshop: Another Killer App.**

"Adobe Photoshop is easily the most life-changing program in publishing history. It sits at the cornerstone of both print and Web publishing -- its power matched only by its elegance. "God bless the United States of Photoshop." --DAVID BLATNER (<http://www.macword.com/2000/08/28/photoshop.html>)

### **America ®: The Marketing Campaign**

America ® the Marketing Campaign has had a very good run so far, it has inspired many people around the world to "seek out a better life", to "live the American ® Dream", to "be all that you can be", to "find that gold mountain". The marketing

campaign was started by America's ® parent company, England and has never let up. So dominant that everything that happened before does not matter, it wiped clean the past and all of its baggage, like a huge sea swell. America ® has always been about "now"; the past has only been used to help create the future. We have a selective past here in America ®; a past which usually benefits us. Some of America's ® past advertising campaigns have included: The Boston Tea Party ®, The Boston Massacre ®, The Alamo ®, Remember The Maine ®, December 7th: A day that will live in Infamy ®, and Cold War ®. Our latest marketing campaign, 9/11 ® is interesting because we live in an age of information, sound bites, and virtual wars (Operation Desert Storm ®). We are a product without any competitors. This has put us in a very abnormal situation. We as a company have been forced to create our own competition. So we created The Axis of Evil ®. These marketing campaigns have become rallying calls for innovation and refinement of America ® the Killer App.

## **America ®: We Ran Out of Competition, So We Created Our Own, Axis of Evil ®**

America ® version 10.1 is in a unique position after 9/11 ®. How are we responding to a direct assault on our Killer App. Status? Can Bush version 2.0 guide America ® 10.1 through this difficult time? Will his team of programmers, system administrators, interface designers and software engineers be able to help him through this?

As America ® faces a potential conflict with the Axis of Evil ®, one must ask some questions: What are we trying to do with our status? Is this about innovation? Is this about market share? Is this about emerging technologies?

Does the Axis of Evil ® have a technology that we want to acquire? If so, what is it? Why would we want this? Is it their access to oil? Oil is an "old technology" and most do not see the necessity for acquiring old technology. Maybe this is a signal that America ® has stopped innovating? Maybe this is our last great effort to use old technology to retain our market share? Will it work?

## **"The Terrorist" ®: The Next New Killer App.**

Is "The Terrorist" ® the new Killer App? Can marketing campaigns help countries and underground movements become Killer Apps? Sure they can. "The Boston Tea Party" ®, "Remember The Alamo" ®, "Manifest Destiny" ® and other marketing slogans and concepts became America ®. Will the "War on Terror" ® backfire on America ® and create a new Killer App? Is "The Terrorist" ® the Ultimate Killer App? Have they replaced America ®? Are they a new type of Application? Is "The Terrorist" ® an open-source App? Will open-source Killer Apps. replace traditional Killer Apps?

Open-source Killer Apps. Vs. Killer Apps. based on copy written proprietary software code, which will be more effective in the future?

## **America ®: Using the Business Strategy of Crashing and Combining Systems**

Crashing, combining and inventing systems has also been the cornerstone of America's ® success as the killer app. Established systems ensure stability and prosperity. They also help justify actions and repercussions. Some of the systems, which were crashed and combined, included:

The Virginia Company (Jamestown) and the Pilgrims and Puritans (religious freedom)  
The Transcontinental Railroad and Manifest Destiny ®  
Slavery and Capitalism ®  
Exploitation and the Industrial Revolution  
Genocide and Expansionism ®  
Ecocide and War

## **America ®: The Industry Standard**

Does Adobe Photoshop™ know that it is a killer App? Of course it does, it worked very hard to place it in its unique position as the Industry Standard. This is very similar to America's ® unique position as the Industry Standard country. As a professor of graphic design, I teach my students to use only Industry Standard software. As a citizen of the world, why would we want anything less? Who would want to use sub-standard software? Who would want to be anything other than an American ®? Why would we want anything less? Why is it bad to want to share this with the rest of the world? Why would you want anything else, when you can have it all in one beautifully designed interface?

## **America ®: An Impediment to Thinking Beyond the Present.**

What is the point of being a Killer App? Is this the human condition? Do we all strive as individuals to be the Killer App? Is this a survival skill? Or is this a manifestation of some primal need?

Is it possible to innovate as a Killer App?

Does innovation stop once we attain Killer App status?

Does maintaining our status count as innovation?

Do we innovate only to become a Killer App?

If the answer is yes, than what is the point of innovation?

Is true innovation non-commercial?

## **America ®: Value Added**

Some killer apps. actually help us with our daily lives. Photoshop™ and MS Word™ actually help us create communication and offer us some benefits. America ® also offers it citizen's benefits as well such as: one of the highest standards of living in the world, fairly low taxes, government subsidies and allowances for education and health, and a government conducive for capitalistic ventures.

What is in it for the rest of the world? How would citizens of other countries benefit from America ® being the worldwide leader? Benefits might include: increased stability, easy access to information, one stop shopping, resources for innovation and research, affordability, accessibility. Are these not the same benefits that Adobe™, Macromedia™, and Microsoft™ offer with their suites of Killer Aps? Do Adobe Photoshop™, Adobe Illustrator™, and Adobe Go Live™ make the world a better place to live in? Is the world a better place with America ® as the Ultimate Killer App?

## **America™: Lessons Learned**

Since our early developers arrived and created the original 13 colonies, America ® has ensured it's place in the market by swallowing-up innovation and eliminating competition. Did we learn our lessons from other Killer Apps such as Greece™, The Roman Empire™, and Spain™? What caused their demise? And what will cause ours? Can we learn from the past? What will we do with this knowledge and foresight?

What can we learn from other Killer Apps? What did the The Romans™ learn from the Greeks™? What did the Spanish learn from the Romans? What is unique about our tenure as the Killer App? We are the only country that has had prior knowledge of the concept of the Killer App. What will we do with this unique position? Or is it really unique? Did the Greeks™ and Romans™ know that they were Killer Apps? What about failed Killer Apps? Were Hitler, Mao Tse Tung and others the architects of a failed Killer App? What were their failings? What was the fatal flaw that caused their products to fail in the market place? Is America ® is the same position now?

## **America™: Value Migration**

Why would others not want to have America ® as the Ultimate Killer App?

Who would benefit from this situation?

How will this serve the world-wide community?

Which country will become the next Killer App?

Will any other country have the ability to be the next Killer App?

## **Appendix:**

### **America ® Graffiti:**

"That is not the America ® I know. That is not the America ® I serve. We refuse to live in fear. (Applause) This nation, in World War and in Cold War ®, has never permitted the brutal and lawless to set history's course. Now, as before, we will secure our nation, protect our freedom ®, and help others to find freedom ® of their own."

"May God bless America ®." (Applause)  
(President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat, Remarks by the President on Iraq, Cincinnati Museum Center - Cincinnati Union Terminal, Cincinnati, Ohio,  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020629.html>)

"Think back to February 1990. A fellow named George Bush was in the White House ®. An all-boy band named New Kids on the Block was tearing up the pop charts. Nobody could find Kuwait on a map. And Photoshop 1.0 had just arrived. Now flash ahead 10 years to fall 2000. Another fellow named George Bush is trying to get into The White House ®. An all-boy band named 'N Synch is tearing up the pop charts. Nobody can find Kuwait on a map. Still. At least some things change -- like Photoshop." (<http://www.macword.com/2000/08/28/photoshop.html>)

### Author's Bio:

Mark Gonzales is a Professor of Graphic Design at Evergreen Valley College in San Jose and a graduate student in the Art Department at SJSU. He lives in Oakland, California, USA ® with his wife.



## ::CrossReference

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