



Starring Apple



Suzanne Forlenza has cast Apple in more than 1,500 movies and TV shows.

Speaking to Suzanne Forlenza about seeing Apple products in movies can leave you feeling like the kid who catches the magician putting a rabbit into his hat. Fact is, those Apple products that show up in the movies and on TV don't just turn up on the set as if by magic. Most of the time, Suzanne Forlenza has a hand in it.

It's called product placement, and it started back in 1982 when a shot of Reese's Pieces in *E.T. the Extraterrestrial* sweetened sales of the candy by 65%. Suddenly the idea was hot, and companies started jockeying to get their products placed in movies.

Sounds like a cinch, right? It isn't, even for Apple. Or maybe especially not for Apple: At a time when the company's energies are focused on getting every Mac and iMac it can manufacture out the door and into the hands of customers, new machines are hard to come by on the Apple campus.

First Big Hit

Of course Apple has an advantage. The brand is part of the popular culture, Forlenza points out, and production companies seek it out. "The Apple brand makes a statement about the character in the movie," she notes. "The director might say he wants a PowerBook G3 with a 14.1-inch screen." Forlenza sees that he gets it.

Suzanne Forlenza, who has been doing this job since June 1994, remembers her hardscrabble days. "It was hand-to-mouth," she recalls. "It was very difficult—I had to beg, borrow or steal equipment. I'd see stuff lying around in the hallways at Apple, and I would go, 'Can I take this—does anyone want it?'"

And then she had her first big hit. "With *Forrest Gump*, there was no product, just the Apple logo," Forlenza recalls. "They called up and said, 'We have a

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kind of wacky idea—what do you think?’ They wanted to use our letterhead for the part where Forrest Gump finds out he’s become a millionaire because he’s invested in what he thought was a fruit company.” Paramount used the Apple letterhead, and 78,873,439 people saw it.

Suzanne Scrooge

One day Forlenza finally got a budget. A small one. “The way I extend my budget is, when the shooting’s over, very often they’ll call back and say, ‘Can we buy this PowerBook from you now?’ We sell the PowerBook to them and bring the money back into the program.” (So OK, we squeeze pennies all around; how else could we give you Bondi Blue beauties for just \$1299?)

Computers in Movies

There have been computers in movies for about as long as there have been computers in real life. And until recent times, most of those computers have had a dark side: In *Westworld* (1973), a robot gunslinger goes postal, courtesy of a malfunctioning computer. In *Logan’s Run* (1976), the computers that run the city decide that all people must die at age 30. And no one who’s seen *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is likely to forget the HAL 9000, a machine with a mind of its own.

The Movie Star for the Rest of Us

Then came the Macintosh. And computers went from being portrayed as archetypal cinematic villains to benevolent friends of humanity. Dubbed “the computer for the rest of us,” the Mac was a snap to use, and it won the loyalty of millions of people who’d never previously used a computer. And before long, the Apple logo found its way onto the big screen.

“The brand makes a statement about the character in the movie.”

Apple has starred in more than 1,500 movies and TV shows. In fact, Macs show up on television in record numbers. *Northern Exposure*, *Home Improvement* and *Seinfeld* were among the early adopters.

Jerry Seinfeld still had the old 512K Mac on his show when Forlenza started this gig: “We got that updated to a more current system, and then things really started to take off. TV is now a huge part of what we do.” Apple products have appeared in episodes of everything from the *X-Files* and *NYPD Blue* to *Spin City* and *Beverly Hills 90210*.

The Summer of '96

“One of the things I love most about my job is that I get to see the results in a very high profile manner,” she says, and points to the summer of 1996 as an example: “That was an incredible summer. We did *Mission: Impossible*, *Independence Day* and *Ransom*. Apple had significant product placement in the number one, number three and number five biggest-grossing movies of that year.” She knows what that means for Apple: “You get your product shown in every country in the world. You look at that and say, wow, our product has been seen by this many people.”