

Technology

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From fake Apple stores to WireDoo: 2011's craziest tech stories

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2011 was a big year for tech news—Steve Jobs died, Facebook and Twitter revolutionized the revolutionary experience in the Middle East, a new iPhone came out, and the world got to meet SIRI, Google+ and the Kindle Fire.

It was also a hilarious year, as tech reporters and savvy Facebook sharers and Tweeters found a steady stream of crazy tech stories to keep them entertained.

From the spate of fake Apple Stores in China to the news that Amazon founder Jeff Bezos was building a 10,000-year clock, here is a list of 11 great tech stories of 2011 that made us grateful to be alive and paying attention in this completely insane age of the Internet.

1. Fake Apple stores popping up in China: We'd heard of people knocking off purses and shoes and wallets, but a whole store? That was new. So when an American living in China blogged about a spate of [fake Apple stores](#) that had opened in her adopted city of Kunming, the Internet went crazy. The photos she had on her blog that showed the familiar pale wood surfaces, the glowing white Apple logo, and even workers dressed in those distinctive blue shirts.

2. The IE IQ hoax: For one brief, glorious moment, tech reporters thought it just might be possible that people who used the Internet Explorer browser were actually dumber than those who used other browsers. A company called Aptiquant put out a study that seemed to prove it. The story spread like wildfire.

- was revealed to be a [hoax](#). When the truth came out, the guy behind it all had this to say: "It was just a joke, and I didn't really mean to insult anyone."
3. Jeff Bezos spends millions on a 10,000-year clock: This year we learned that Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has invested \$42 million in a clock that is ticking for 10,000 years. Brian Eno (of all people) dubbed the project, which broke ground earlier this year, "the long now." "If you think something is important, and you think nobody else is going to do it, then it's a useful thing to do," Bezos told [Wired](#).
 4. MC Hammer's search engine: Remember this little gem? In October former rapper and ordained minister MC Hammer (AKA Stanley Kirk Burr) announced [WireDoo](#), a new search engine that he hoped would put Google and Bing out of business. Four months later the search engine is still in beta and you are invited to sign up for a test drive when it's ready.
 5. Wife of Rovio executive dons Angry Birds dress: This was just a blip, but it was such a fun blip. While attending a formal event at the Finnish Palace in Vesterbacka, Peter Vesterbacka, chief marketing officer of Rovio, the company that makes the wildly popular Angry Birds game--he's usually dressed in an Angry Birds sweatshirt of some sort, but was wearing a dress that night.
 6. The rise of Rebecca Black: It feels like Rebecca Black's song "Friday" is a part of our shared past--like the kids from "Saved by the Bell" or the Spice Girls. YouTube sensation Black is a totally 2011 phenomenon. The video for "Friday" went up on the video-sharing site in mid-February of this year. It spent four weeks in obscurity before achieving world domination.
 7. Nathan Myhrvold puts out a cookbook: What does a cookbook conceived by Nathan Myhrvold, former chief technology officer of Microsoft and author of hundreds of patents, look like? Well, it's 2,400 pages collected into six volumes, and costs \$625. It's called "Modernist Cuisine," it came out in March this year and it focuses on the science and technology (of course) of cooking. Unexpected, and [reportedly](#) brilliant.
 8. Patent wars come to emoticons: If you've been following tech this year you are aware that there has been a huge patent war raging between Apple and its smartphone rival Samsung Electronics. A particularly low note in the battle? This year, Samsung went after Apple for the way it uses [emoticons](#). It's silly to us, but believe it or not, Samsung does indeed own a patent on smartphone use of emoticons. : \
 9. HP's TouchPad mania: First no one wanted it. HP dropped the price. Still, no one wanted it. And so HP dropped the price again. And again. The company announced it would no longer make the product and dropped the price for a final time to \$99. Then it sold out.
 10. Charlie Sheen looks for an intern on Twitter: Charlie Sheen's crazy call for a marketing intern went out on Twitter in early March, just days after he was fired from "Three and a Half Men." The listing read: "Do you have #TigerBlood? Are you all about #Winning? Can you #PlanBetter than anyone else? I want you on #TeamSheen as our social media #TigerBloodIntern!" The whole thing was basically a [marketing ploy](#) for Internships.com, which paid for the ad, but it worked. After about an hour, his Twitter message had resulted in more than 127,000 clicks through to Internships.com via the shortened link in the tweet.
 11. Alec Baldwin's American Airlines Twitter rant: The ultimate technology story of 2011 weaves together a tale of bad celebrity behavior, some funny impulsive Twitter rants, the mobile Scrabble-like game Words With Friends and corporate explanations via Facebook pages. You can read all about it [here](#).

ALSO:

[MC Hammer's WireDoo: Can it take on Google and Bing?](#)

[Wife of Rovio chief dons Angry Birds gown at Finnish Palace](#)

[Alec Baldwin kicked off plane: A tale of our technological times](#)

--Deborah Netburn

Images clockwise from top left: A fake Apple store in Kunming, China, photographed by [BirdAbroad](#); Charlie Sheen arriving at his Comedy Central show, photographed by Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times; emoticon face made by Deborah Netburn; Alec Baldwin as Pan Am head Juan Trippe in Scorsese's movie "The Aviator," photographed by Andrew Cooper / Miramax Films.

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\$625 for a cookbook? It definitely sounds like a Microsoft product. Nathan Myhrvold is coming out with an upgrade next year to be called...Cooking 2.1. It's in beta kitchen testing now and nobody has suffered from acid indigestion yet.

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Drew James

three and a half men. ha

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