

## Background Information on the “1984” Macintosh Commercial

### **1984 by George Orwell**

The title of this commercial is an allusion to the novel written in 1949 by George Orwell. The novel takes place in the year 1984 and depicts a dystopian society in which citizens’ freedoms are restricted by a totalitarian government ruled by a dictator referred to as “Big Brother.”

In the society Orwell describes, everyone is under complete surveillance by the authorities. People are constantly reminded of this scrutiny by the cautioning phrase “Big Brother is watching you.” This warning refers to the two-way computer screens placed throughout the society which display the dictator’s image and which are used by the Thought Police to monitor citizens for subversive thought and speech (referred to in the book as “thought crimes”). Many critics draw parallels between today’s society and the world depicted in the novel, suggesting that we are starting to live in what has become known as an Orwellian society.

### **Fast Facts about the “1984” Macintosh Commercial**

- The commercial was first aired during half-time of the 1984 Super Bowl to announce the arrival of Apple’s new personal computer, the Macintosh.
- When this advertisement aired, Apple was in a fight with IBM to win control of the personal computer market.
- In the 1980s, Apple had the image of the maverick, anti-corporate company. For example, the company encouraged employees to wear jeans and t-shirts to work.
- In the 1980s, IBM was famous for its rigid company structure and insistence on that its employees maintain the “blue-suited corporate look and attitude”. The nickname for IBM is “Big Blue.”
- The advertisement was directed by Ridley Scott (*Alien*, 1979, and *Blade Runner*, 1982) and cost \$1.6 million to produce.

## Scene-by-Scene Summary of the “1984” Macintosh Commercial

1. Endless line of workers marching in a long, circular tunnel. The sound of marching feet and the words “information purification” are audible in the background.
2. Cut to a woman running, carrying a long-handled hammer. Her entrance is heralded by two electronic notes, a high D, followed by another one octave lower.
3. Close-up of the workers’ faces as they march by. Their heads are shaved, and a few are wearing gas masks.
4. A brief shot of guards dressed in black riot gear with rifles in their hands.
5. Shots of the workers marching in the tunnel past television monitors, which are attached to the walls.
6. The camera cuts to a close-up of their feet, marching in lockstep.
7. After a quick glimpse of the woman running, a long shot shows a huge hall filled with workers already seated as others march in. An enormous computer screen on the wall is filled by the talking head of an elderly man in glasses. As he speaks, his words appear in white typeface on the screen below his mouth.
8. The woman runs down a corridor chased by a cadre of guards in riot gear.
9. The camera cuts to a panning shot of the seated workers staring at the computer screen.
10. The camera cuts to a full shot of the computer screen which shows the tyrant’s face filling most of the frame.
11. Cut to the runner stopping and beginning to spin with the great hammer. The guards can be seen approaching in the background. The runner makes her final windup and releases the hammer with a loud cry.
12. In slow motion, the hammer flies through the air towards the screen as the man’s image says “We Shall Prevail.”
13. The hammer explodes the screen in a blinding flash. A synthetic chorus of wordless cries is heard, behind which is a sound like rushing wind.
14. The camera pans over the workers, flooded with white light, their mouths opened in awe, hands gripping the benches beneath them, uniforms blown back against them.
15. Black typeface text appears on screen, read by a voice-over: “On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you will see why 1984 won’t be like “1984.”
16. The text is followed by the rainbow-striped Apple logo.

## **Voiceover Text from the “1984” Macintosh Commercial**

Today, we celebrate the first glorious anniversary of the Information Purification Directives. We have created, for the first time in all history, a garden of pure ideology, where each worker may bloom secure from the pests of contradictory and confusing truths. Our Unification of Thoughts is more powerful a weapon than any fleet or army on earth. We are one people, with one will, one resolve, one cause. Our enemies shall talk themselves to death, and we will bury them with their own confusion. We shall prevail!