



# BIG THINKERS

## Was Steve Jobs this generation's Thomas Edison?

**W**hen Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, died on October 5 at age 56, countless tributes cited his achievements. Many put his name alongside that of another great achiever. One obituary said of Jobs, "The 20th century's Thomas Edison has stepped from the stage." Is the comparison an apt one?

Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), the world's most famous inventor, created or improved devices that revolutionized the way people lived. His work brought electricity and electric-powered devices into people's homes and everyday lives for the first time.

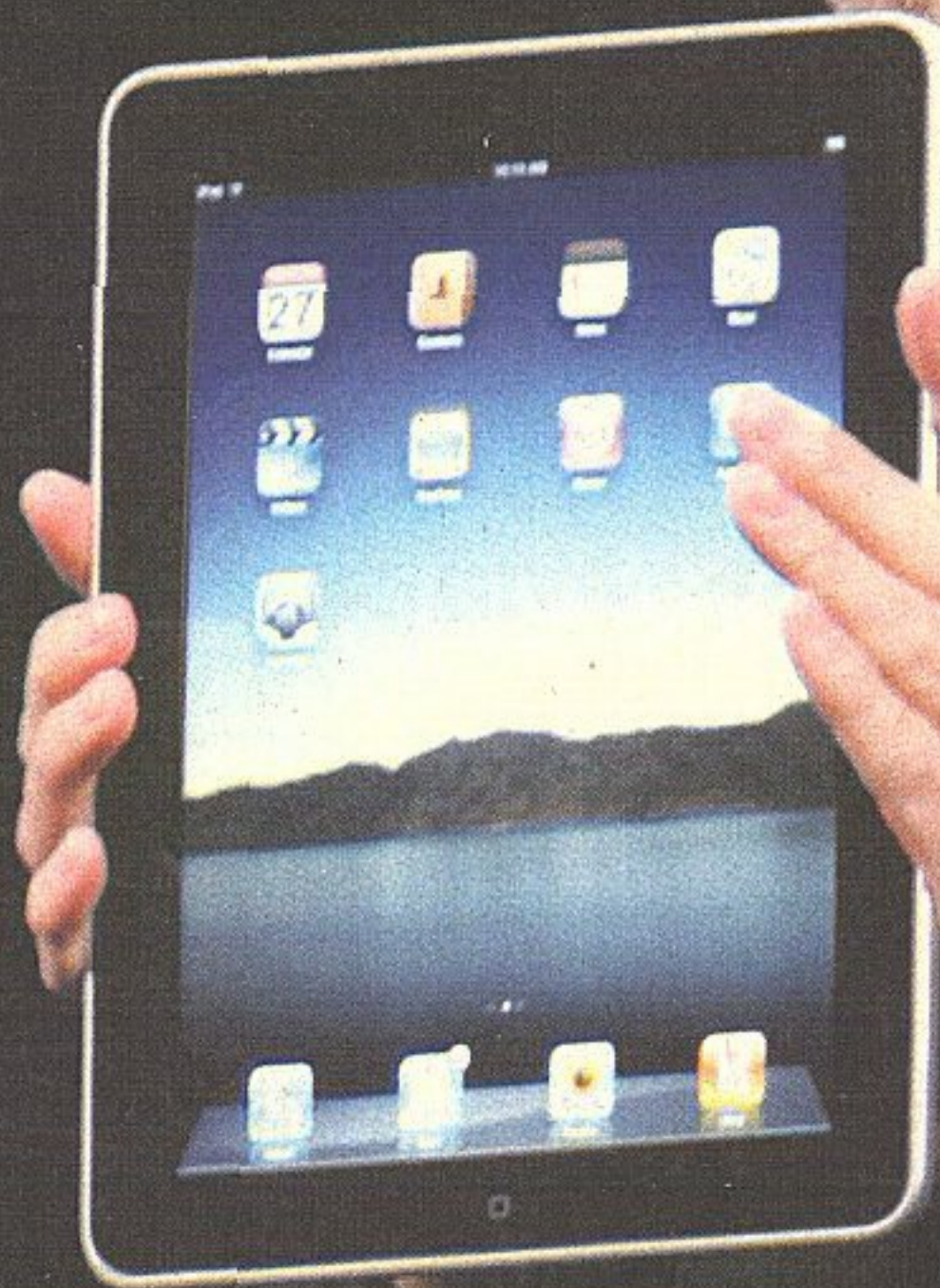
Jobs is cited as the inventor or co-inventor on 313 U.S. patents. By contrast, Edison's name is on 1,093.

Though he may not be Edison's equal in terms of patents, Jobs is clearly one of the world's great innovators. Other people invented the computer mouse and the MP3 player; Jobs found ways to make such devices sleeker, more versatile, and easier to use.

Jobs founded Apple Computer in 1976 with a high school friend. "We worked hard," he told students at Stanford University in 2005, "and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company with over 4,000 employees."

In 1984, Apple introduced the Macintosh. Macs were the first "user-friendly" computers. They let people do what we now take for granted: interact with computers with on-screen images and a mouse rather than by typing in long, tedious commands. Other popular Apple innovations include the iPhone, the first touch-screen cell phone; the iPad, the leading touch-screen tablet; and iTunes, a cheap—and legal—way to buy music online. "A lot of times," Jobs once said, "people don't know what they want until you show it to them."

Steve Jobs unveils the iPad in 2010.



Thomas Edison—best known for his invention of the light bulb—in 1911

