

# Apple Co-Founder Warns You Are Owned by Big Tech

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Apple cofounder Steve Wozniak has a message for users of Big Tech's growing subscription business model: "You are owned."

Speaking with Fox Business host Liz Claman earlier this week, "Woz" said, "For the first two decades of personal computers, you bought a product, you owned it, you set it up your way, and it always ran that way, and it solved your problems... It was yours."

But since then, "you have to subscribe to services and pay something per month... They'll take things away, features that you were using... They'll even take your data away sometimes."

Digital movies? You don't own those for real; they're effectively just long-term rentals. Anything you store in the cloud, same story, but worse — you've probably read multiple reports of Google arbitrarily cutting off users' cloud storage or Gmail accounts.

"I don't like the business models of today where you don't own it," he continued. "You are owned. Whoever the suppliers are, you have to go through them on the cloud, up to the internet, and they own it."

Woz concluded, "I'm not a super fan of when I don't feel like I own something."

Software companies insist that the subscription model benefits users because the never-ending revenue stream from your credit card to their bank accounts encourages constant improvements and new features. But subscriptions also mean — unlike the days when you'd plunk down your money for an application and *own* it until *you* decided to upgrade — that even existing features you rely on are effectively held hostage.

In other words, I'm not a super fan, either.

At least as bad is the data users often unwittingly "sell" to Big Tech in exchange for discounted products.

I covered this next item earlier today at Instapundit, so I'll keep this brief. But now that Walmart owns TV-maker Vizio, you'll need to sign into your Walmart account on new Vizio TVs if you want to use the "smart" features like the built-in Netflix, YouTube, Plex apps, or the like. Vizio uses Automatic Content Recognition (ACR) to "fingerprint" everything you watch. Now that data will be tied into your Walmart account, so Walmart will be better able to show you more tailored ads — on "your" TV! — and sell you more stuff while maximizing profits via dynamic pricing.

Vizio is hardly alone in this. Smart features allow TV makers to effectively own their consumers, instead of the other way around. The same is true of set-top boxes from Roku, Amazon, and anything Android-based.

"You are owned," indeed.

TVs have never been bigger, brighter, or cheaper. 30 years ago, I paid \$750 (roughly \$1,500 in today's dollars) for a 27" lo-def Sony Trinitron that seemed to weigh about as much as a small car. If you had told me then that in the future, that same money would get me a 70" 4K HDR screen so thin and light that I could hang it on the wall, I'd have said, "Bring it on!"

But if you'd also told me that today's TVs would report to the manufacturer every show and movie I watch, and they'd sell that information to any and every advertiser out there... Well, I'd have been a lot less enthusiastic.

There are a couple of workarounds, neither entirely satisfactory.

The first is to run everything you watch through an Apple TV box. They're overpriced, and the remote control is made of weapons-grade suck, but at least Apple doesn't (yet?) use ACR or plaster your screensaver with ads. The other is to deny your smart TV any WiFi access, refuse to use the built-in apps and limiting your viewing to cable, over-the-air broadcasts, and physical media.

Neither solution is perfect, but I'd rather settle for something unsatisfactory than be owned, as Woz put it, by a multibillion-dollar company.