Your Computer

If it's not immediately obvious to you, I'm a Mac guy. I prefer the user experience and if there's something I need a PC for, I use a PC for that specific task (or run parallels, or run a cloud based windows system). I've also been using Macs for over 30 years (I started early), so there are some inverted golden handcuffs at play (I pay them).

It used to be that Macs and creative production went hand in hand. All videos were edited in Avid or Final Cut Pro 7 (RIP, or earlier versions). No one used PCs for these tasks. In the late 2000s, Apple dropped Final Cut Pro 7 development and most post-production generalists reluctantly shifted over to Premiere. At that point, most folks got locked into the Adobe ecosystem and are still there. While Final Cut X has it's niche, you can walk into any production company and if you know Premiere, you'll fit in just fine. More and more folks are also using DaVinci as their color suite and NLE, but if you're used to using ADLs and After Effects is integral to your post production tool box, adding in an editor that doesn't support ADL is an efficiency slow-down.

Ok, now that you know that perspective, let's talk about performance.

I want something light, can fit in my backpack, can be used to drive media to several 4k surfaces in a pinch, and renders reasonably quickly. A high-end MacBook Pro with Apple Silicone, for the first time, can out-perform rendering in some use-cases on a high-end Windows machine that is tuned for post-production. Not a lot to offer in terms of AAA gaming, but for work, it's truly a miracle of engineering. The needs for my personal "main whip" are different from the needs of a media server.

If you're going to be doing a lot of renders – for what "kind" of computer to buy, I recommend reading through the info about rendering, as it breaks out performance of analogous specs and what they're good for.

The Windows analog of a high-end Apple silicone laptop is probably a Razor Blade. A step up from there is a custom build from Falcon Northwest. I can recommend both thanks to Kurt Lorey and Jason Batcheller.

Internal Hard Drives

Most folks will do just fine with a 2TB internal M2 or NVME. If you're managing several large-footprint media projects simultaneously and you don't want to delete your itunes media from 2008, you might want an even bigger drive. You can always pinch-hit with external drives and RAIDs, but being nimble and using less things can be a massive time saver. My rule is basically this: buy the biggest you can afford. Read more about hard drives of all kinds and their use cases.

Processors

You want 8-Core or more for most things except for Web Books, POS, Digital Menus, or Kiosk NUCs. I've worked with 10-Cores that absolutely scream and 16-Cores that are miserable so it's a bit subjective and is very dependent on the RAM and GPU configuration.

- Apple Silicone - good for most things except for software that is based in x64 architecture (pro-tip: probably won't work).
- Intel - good for most things.
- AMD (specifically Threadripper) - great for rendering, especially when paired with high-end NVIDIA cards and lots of RAM.

RAM

Here's a nice breakdown:

- 8GB - Streaming, google docs, spotify - think a step up from a Chrome Book. Good for most people who don't work with computers for their job (or their passion, afterall, I am doing it for the exposure).
- 16GB - Everything 8GB does plus you can run more applications simultaneously and you can run creative software at a very introductory level. Gaming on a Windows machine starts here. Also fine for basic coding things.
- 32GB - The lowest I recommend for anyone working in media production of any kind.
- 64GB - The sweet spot as of 2024 in price vs. performance.
- 96GB - Gimme dat.
- 128GB - Have done this a few times and it's pretty great.
- 192GB+ - Altruistic god-mode.

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