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When Gen-Xers were very young, they roamed unbelted across the backseats of their parent's cars -- child safety seats were optional. No one called 911 when they spotted kids alone in a vehicle. Unsupervised 10- and 11-year-old kids babysat their younger brethren. While their parents toiled at the office, latchkey Gen-Xers of the 1970s ranged freely, a herd of nomadic cyclists with sprinkler-damp hair, Popsicle fingers and playing cards threaded through the spokes of their bikes. When Xers were teenagers, their parents bought the first home computers and marveled as kids learned to program in BASIC. Carbon paper was out; joysticks were in. Gen-Xers were the first gamers, the first kids to be weaned on cable TV, the first members of the MTV generation. Born of unprecedented freedom into an era of infinite technological promise, Generation-X seemed, at first, to have been born into a golden age. Xers soon encountered some unease, however. As they became sexually active, AIDS appeared on the scene. As they graduated college, the 1987 stock market crash swallowed the job market. Then, the dotcom bubble burst in the mid-90s, and the jobs Gen-Xers had tried to create for themselves evaporated like smoke. Some Xers traveled the world -- "Generation X" author Douglas Coupland dubbed this group the "poverty jet set." Some, like Kurt Cobain, started bands and created the soundtrack of a generation. Others lived in their starter apartments well into their thirties, playing video games and holding down menial jobs. Films like "Singles," "Reality Bites" and "Clerks" painted a picture of Generation Xers as overeducated underachievers, slackers and losers. But is the image of lazy, grunge-y, plaid-wearing twentysomethings an accurate picture of Generation X? Behind the mass-media stereotypes, Gen-Xers were (and still are) quietly changing the world. Apple does what Apple does. And on Tuesday at the new Steve Jobs Theater at the new Apple Park in the same old Silicon Valley, Apple unveiled the Apple Watch Series 3, Apple TV 4K, iPhone 8 and iPhone X. And in doing so, it reminded us (or at least should have) of this simple fact: Apple doesn't give a damn what you think. It's gonna do what it's gonna do. And it's gonna do it better than just about anybody, because it's not trying to be anybody else. It's not trying to be Samsung. It's not trying to be Google. It's not trying to be Facebook or Snapchat. (Mostly.) Labor Day sales highlights - Phones, laptops, speakers, and more That's a good thing. And it means some interesting things for Android. Or not. Let's break down what happened Tuesday. Tim Cook, Steve Jobs and the storms OK, nothing really Android-related here. But I do enjoy Apple CEO Tim Cook at events like this. No, he's not the world's most dynamic speaker. But damned if he's not authentic. His voice breaking when talking about Steve Jobs. His remarks on Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Maybe I'm biased because he grew up about 45 miles from where I'm sitting as I type this, and so the accent is familiar. But that sort of Southernness at product events is something you don't get very often -- if ever -- in the Android world. It's not typical Silicon Valley. It's not Asian. It's not European. ... It's just an interesting change of pace if you end up sitting through as many of these things as we do here. Apple Stores -- erm, Town Squares ... This really is peak Apple. Never mind the hardware. It's this sort of ridiculous aspiration that the company will always be known for. It's not enough to have an end-to-end retail experience? Purchase, post-purchase, service, and repair. Is there any company that does this better for this sort of product? (Or any sort of product, for that matter?) But this talk of Apple turning stores into some sort of town square is, of course, ridiculous. You go to an Apple Store for two reasons: You go to an Apple Store to get something. To get a new phone or computer. To get something fixed. To leech off that sweet free Wifi for a little while. Or you go there just to play with the cool shit. You don't go there for a sense of community. Or to stage protests. Or to set up an outdoor street fair. (OK, Apple's sort of losing the line with that last one, but I'd argue anything in that realm is in support of point one.) No. The only way to look at an Apple Store now and forever is as a means to sell things. Period. Apple Watch Hey, look. The Apple Watch is the best-selling watch of any major watch manufacturer, anywhere. I'd say the bar is still pretty low when it comes to traditional, full-fledged smartwatches. Yeah, offerings from Samsung and Android Wear have gotten better over the years, but c'mon. More interesting is the comparison to traditional watch makers. TechCrunch's John Biggs does a good job of breaking down why beating them on the balance sheet wasn't all that hard for Apple to do. The new heart-rate stuff Apple's rolling out looks great. And ditto for tapping your watch to compatible gym equipment to really keep track of your workout. That's something I'd love. But for those of us who have gone from the early days of smartwatches back to mechanical watches, I'm just not seeing anything that would lure me back. And that goes for the cellular option, too. I have to imagine that it's certainly better than Samsung's first attempt at a watch/phone combo (I can remember calling my wife from 30 stories above Manhattan), and it's a great thing to have if you need it. I don't need it. And don't yet see anything that makes me need it. Apple TV 4K -- inventing old things all over again So Apple TV 4K is getting -- wait for it -- 4K resolution. And HDR quality. And Dolby Vision. And for the most part that's table stakes for a high-end streaming platform, and it certainly took Apple long enough to get it. Will you notice the difference? Probably. Can you live without it? Sure. Is it the obvious and necessary improvement you'd expect at this point? Yep. Apple didn't do anything here that you wouldn't expect. None of this is new technology. It's just new if you didn't already own it in an NVIDIA Shield TV, or a Roku Ultra. It's a good update for Apple TV. Except that the remote control still sucks. iPhone 8, iPhone X, and my head just hit the keyboard One thing I've always liked about iPhones is that they look like iPhones. You see one on the street, and you immediately know what it is. That's mostly thanks to the home button, of course, but also just the overall look of the thing. The iPhone 8 keeps that aesthetic. It's a better iPhone is all. Faster, more powerful, better cameras. Same shit, different year, right? The iPhone X is the bigger deal. And it's not because of the price -- starting at \$999. And I'd argue it's not even because of this phone. It's because this phone is the start of the next generation of iPhone. It's not so much a bridge between old and new -- more of a leap from one road to the next. Of course, we all knew what the iPhone X was going to look like before it was announced. But I couldn't help but look down at the phone I'm currently using -- the LG V30 -- and think just how similar the two look. Same goes for the Galaxy S8. Or the HTC U11. Or the Essential Phone. iPhones look different. And there will be millions of old ones for the next five or six years that still do. But we're entering an age in which iPhones -- starting with the iPhone X -- are going to look like every other damn Android phone out there. Beautiful, large OLED screen. Not new, no matter what Apple tells you. (And the pixels per inch are still less than what you can get on other current phones.) No physical (or pseudo-physical) home button on the front. Wireless charging? Been there, done that. Since 2011. ID and poopmoji cameras Smartphone cameras have changed the world more than just about anything. They've completely upended journalism. They've given voice to the voiceless. You wouldn't have the Arab Spring or Black Lives Matters or horrible YouTube haul videos without smartphone cameras. Now? We get animated Poopmoji. For \$999. Poopmoji isn't the advancement we need, but it's probably the advancement we deserve. This is tied into Face ID, of course, wherein Apple has shunned the fingerprint sensor for lasers and cameras and camera lasers to map your face. And what better way to learn and get better at this sort of thing than with Poopmoji. (For \$999. I don't really have anything to say about Face ID that Jerry didn't already say here. That especially goes for the part where he says we don't yet know what we don't know. Certainly, Apple wouldn't (cough) ship a half-baked unlocking tool. But this is the sort of thing you can't figure out in a demo area. You've got it get it in your hands and actually use it in real life. In your home. Outside. In the sun. Face ID certainly won't work for everyone. There will be edge cases. If Apple manages to pull this off in the same way it led the way for fingerprint sensors on all phones, it's a big deal. But I'm also not convinced that Face ID is the end game. We know everyone's working on fingerprint sensing under glass, and that it's just not yet ready for prime time. We might well see that next year or the year after. In the meantime, it could be an excellent alternative. Or it could be a reason to not buy this \$999 phone. One thing to think about, though: Face ID on MacBooks. That could be fun. So what the hell does this mean for Android? This smartphone thing isn't a zero-sum game. Nobody wins here. You want an iPhone? Buy an iPhone. You want Android? Buy Android. Both are excellent for different reasons. Both ultimately do the same thing. David Ruddock at Android Police opines that "The iPhone X will overshadow the new Pixels." Of course it will. Every iPhone has always overshadowed Google's own phone. So has every Galaxy phone. And we're not even getting into Oppo and Huawei and the more regional phones that sell a shit-ton outside the United States. No. Google's going to be Google. (OK, it might soon be HTC-Google.) Google knows what it has to do if it wants to "win" with the Pixel. But it's not going to creep in on its other partners to that extent. Samsung's going to be Samsung and make really good phones and market the hell out of them and sell a lot of hardware. The LG V30 is excellent. OnePlus is still nipping at a lot of heels. And Apple's going to continue to be Apple. It'll continue to innovate at its own pace, because it's still running a different race than everybody else. The only way Apple "loses" is if it somehow ends up on the same track as everybody else. Big OLED screens and wireless charging and Dick Tracy watches are a big deal only because Apple had never done them before. It doesn't matter that we had bad implementations of them six years ago on Android phones that didn't sell a fraction of what the iPhone has sold. (To say nothing of the longevity of those phones in the first place.) What matters is what Apple's going to do next. And what Android's going to do next. For the former, that's the iPhone X. For the latter, we need to look at Project Treble and the framework improvements that are paving the way for the next generation. (Some of this year's phones will get that, but mostly I'm looking toward the new Pixel, and 2018.) Oh, and, yeah. Someone better start working on Poopmoji.

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