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 TIMELINE
**2009**

Jobs takes first health-related leave of absence. Has liver transplant

**2010**

The iPad launches. Sells three million units in 80 days

**2011**

5 October: Jobs dies. Tim Cook takes over as CEO

**2013**

Shares plummet to \$56

**2014**

9 September: the long-awaited iPhone 6 launches, featuring Apple Pay, and is joined by the \$349 Apple Watch



The modern-day shrine that is Apple's Manhattan store

This is a reason we should all want Apple to do well. Because even if you aren't a fan or an Apple h8er, you can't deny that the company is the kind of high-end, high-innovation, high-margin business that we need more of in the west. It is one of the very few companies in its sector that understands it is not about the technology, it's about the impact. Its products have created whole new markets and changed the way we live and work. Even if you do not use any of its products you are affected by them. As Virginia Postrel explains in her book *The Substance of Style*, Apple is one of the key reasons why making things look good is a 21st-century growth industry.

Apple is, according to Interbrand's 2013 survey, the world's most valuable brand, worth just under \$100bn, which is about the same as Microsoft (number two) and Coke (number three) combined. But there are signs its halo might be slipping – the rival BrandZ survey of the world's 100 most-valuable brands puts Apple second (down 20% to \$148bn) behind Google at \$159bn, in its latest 2014 figures.

There's no denying that the brand is unique, but unlike the products, which are real and tangible, the brand can be anything you want it to be. In fact, after a while, immersed in the world of Apple, hearing the thoughts of fanboys and h8ers, consumer psychologists and marketing gurus, you could start to wonder if this might literally be true. Perhaps the real genius of Apple's brand is that it's like something out of a Greek myth. The brand is a sort of mirror onto which we project our own hopes and fears – and this is why you can find almost any opinion you want on Apple.

However, while the company's product pipeline and financials appear in good shape, the Apple brand may actually be in trouble. One of Jobs' greatest achievements was

keeping that brand artificially young. With his company, he did what every toned, wheatgrass-juice-chugging Californian dreams of: he more or less arrested the ageing process. But with Jobs gone, the fountain of eternal youth has run dry and Apple is having to grow up fast.

It may well have had to do so anyway. The company has always traded on being an upstart and did so long into its comeback. But when you're bigger than Walmart it's just not credible to pretend you're not part of the establishment.

Chris West, of the brand strategy consultants Verbal Identity, says: 'Apple has deep roots in being a challenger brand, but now it looks like it's trying to be a challenger brand. It seems hollow.' He adds that perhaps the worst

**'Apple has deep roots in being a challenger brand, but now it looks like it's trying to be a challenger brand'**

recent example of this was the company's 2012 'Designed in California' tagline. Virtually everyone who saw it mentally appended the coda '... and made in China.'

Mark Borkowski, the public relations expert, adds that the games Apple used to play with its public and the media no longer work as well as they once did: 'You'd see Apple products win awards at huge events and the company would send no one to collect them,' he explains. 'It

was famously a brand of no engagement.' In some ways, it still is. *MT's* requests for an interview for this piece went unanswered; Apple engages on its own terms or not at all. But while you might reasonably expect this kind of behaviour from an upstart run by a genius that makes products for an elite few, coming from the largest company in the Fortune 500, it just seems a bit peculiar, especially in the age of social media. There's a fine line between hauteur and plain rudeness.

Apple's chronological woes don't stop there. The company is now middle aged and its appeal may well be too. West says that the kind of emotional equity that today's fortysome-