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iPhone’s names suck

Last year, when the iPhone X came out, I did what I do every year when the new iPhone comes out. I texted my favorite iPhan (who of course loathes my unchangeable green bubbles) and asked him about the new features.

“Samuel! Talk to me about the iPhone X! What happened to 9? Facial recognition, like Samsung’s had for a while, but better? Wireless charging, like all of Android has had for years, but better, somehow? No fingerprint scanner? Gesture controls, going all the way back to Sailfish OS for that one? And still thick enough for that nonexistent headphone jack? For a grand, Samuel?”

Instead of actually answering any of these, he blasted me for referencing the number 9.

“It’s not X like the letter; it’s a Roman numeral ten because it’s the tenth anniversary of iPhone.”

Yes, Samuel, I know how to read Roman numerals. I am a Catholic born in the year of our Lord MCMXCVII who is one of the last remaining *Star Wars* fans unironically looking forward to Episode IX and who is still angry at the NFL for not calling Super Bowl 50 “Super Bowl L” and owning the marketing by rigging it for the Browns to ~~win~~ ~~lose~~ tie. But I digress. iPhone X. You want me to call it iPhone the Tenth? No? Well, you know, as a matter of fact, Roman freaking numerals after names are usually pronounced as “the third,” not “3” or “eye, eye, eye.”

Before the X, iPhones’ names generally made sense. Well starting with the 4. The, uh, iPhone the First, was just the mononymous “iPhone.” Like Prince or Beyoncé or let’s see, the iPod or Mac. iPhone II never existed, because the second iPhone was “iPhone 3G,” which, to be fair, the name didn’t refer to it being the 3rd one, but to its 3G capabilities. Then the iPhone 4 came along I guess because 4 comes after 3 and they figured it would make sense.

As I have already said, from 4 to X there was a logical nomenclature. The new iPhone was “iPhone x,” little x here as it’s a variable in this case where x is equal to last year’s iPhone plus 1. Whenever the new iPhone came, there was also an S model. The iPhone 6S. Nobody ever explained what the S stood for, but an S iPhone is one which had the same physical dimensions as the previous, but has updated internals and software. We’ll go with it. Even with iPhone the Tenth, there was also an iPhone 8. So, 8 succeeded 7, following the pattern, and the Tenth was a new flagship model, a premium device above the numbered iPhone. So, after my favorite iPhan insinuated that I didn’t know how to read “iPhone X” (say it with me: eye-fone-the-tenth), I could follow the logic.

Then Apple blew it all up this year. This year’s iPhones are the iPhone XS, XS Max, and XR. There is no 9. Numbers are dead, along with the headphone jack and the home button. Long live the notch. XS sort of follows the old scheme; it’s the S model of the X. Same body, better specs. But how do you pronounce it? iPhone Excess? I mean, it’s a thousand-dollar phone, so maybe a bit excessive. No wait, that’s not an X, silly me, it’s a Roman numeral. So, it’s iPhone the Tenth S? No, I’m sorry, I forgot. It’s a Roman numeral, but you don’t want me to pronounce it as the “Nth.” So, my final answer, it’s the iPhone 10 S, which, to be fair, sounds like it belongs with the 6S, 7S, etc. that came before it. But you’re not going to call it that. I know it, you know, and Apple knows it. It’s going to be pronounced as “iPhone Excess.”

The other two iPhones are even worse. The Max is the big one, the phablet that totally was not inspired by the Galaxy Note. That’s all good and well, Apple has followed the trends and had a regular phone and a phone the size of a tablet for a while now. Except that before this year, it was the Plus, not the Max. Why are we changing it to Max now? An upcoming tie-in with TJ? Will there be a Mini? Finally, there’s the XR. It’s the “cheap” iPhone that costs as much as the regular ole iPhone used to cost and double what the previous cheap one costs. That old cheap one was the SE by the way, which bore no relation to the S. Before the SE, there was also an iPhone 5C, the original cheap iPhone whose suffix actually stood for something. Apple would like you to think it stood for color, but really, it was cheap. What does R stand for? How is it related to SE? How was SE related to C? These are questions we cannot answer.

Apple should just adopt the naming scheme it uses everywhere else. There’s a MacBook Air, a MacBook, and a MacBook Pro. There used to be an iPad Air, though now there’s just the iPad and iPad Pro. Why not call the XR the iPhone Air, the XS the iPhone, and the XS Max the Pro? If you need to distinguish them from prior models, use the year. So, it’s iPhone (2018). Or a 2018 iPhone, if you like.

Apple, of course, is far from the only company that does this. Know the difference between a Lincoln Emkayzee and a Lincoln Emkayess? Neither did Lincoln, which is why they went back to using names instead of letters. Microsoft abandoned the number suffix on its Surface Pros; the new one is just “the Surface Pro.” Really, almost everyone has a hot mess of numbers, letters, glyphs, numerals, symbols, hashtags, and emoji in their product names these days. It’s all #marketing or #branding or something and frankly it’s driving me #nuts. #firstworldproblems. Apple, everyone’s favorite trillion-dollar company, is just fun to pick on. Really, people, let’s try to be a more imaginative lot when it comes to naming things.