

ODD JOBS' LOT

Digital visionary i-head of time, but can it last?

By HILARY KRAMER

Steve Jobs is on a roll, again.

With iTunes music Web site, the hot new iPod mini-digital device from Apple and Pixar's wildly successful animation movie "Finding Nemo," you'd almost think that Jobs is becoming something of a media darling.

His companies' new products are winning him press. And Pixar's tough negotiating stance with distribution partner Disney, coupled with nephew Roy's shareholder battle with Disney's Board, has even prompted rumors that Jobs might even become the next head of the Mouse House.

But before anyone anoints Jobs top cheese, let's consider what kind of management guy he really is.

There's no question that he's proven himself to be something of an iconoclastic visionary. Nevertheless, it's that very vision that often clashes with his ability to be corporate management material.

Said Harry J. DeMott III, a partner at Gothic Capital Management and media industry specialist, "Steve Jobs' miscues were a function of his believing he was right and not willing to change when the consumer demanded something else. He has a knack for figuring out what people want, but sometimes he was 10 years ahead of himself."

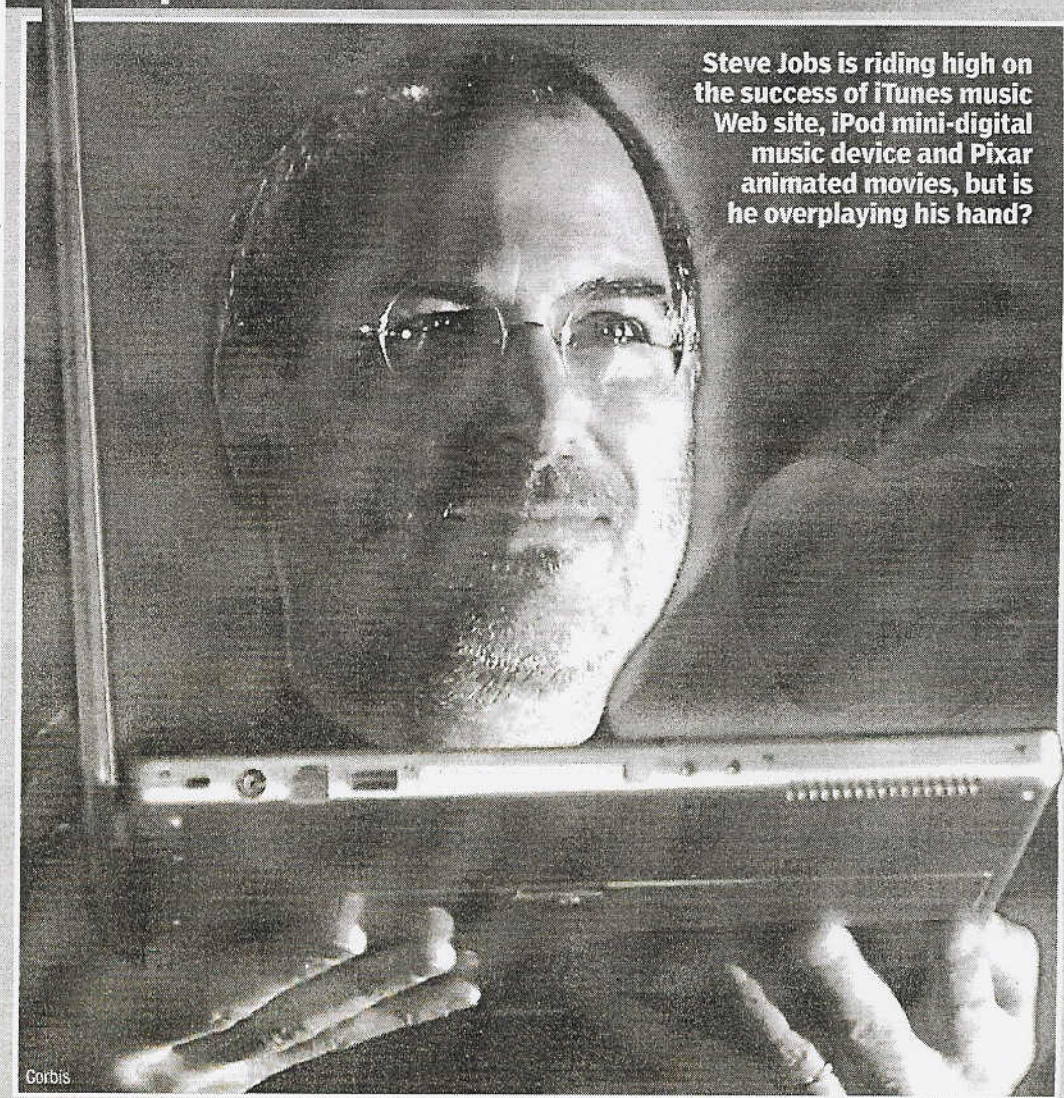
Many agree Jobs is innovative. It's why he's successful. Yet some of his initiatives never amounted to much.

Sure, everyone remembers the first Apple and the Macintosh, but does anyone remember what a flop Apple Lisa was? Or how about his other startup, NeXT Computers, and its commercially challenged "mainframes on a desk" for \$4,000 a pop?

To be sure, both products were actually considered to be technologically advanced, but as Jobs should have learned during his Apple vs. Microsoft battles, having the best technology first doesn't always win market share.

And speaking of his old nemesis, don't look now, but Bill Gates might just be back for round two with Jobs.

An open book



Steve Jobs is riding high on the success of iTunes music Web site, iPod mini-digital music device and Pixar animated movies, but is he overplaying his hand?

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Less than 10 days after Pixar ended talks with Disney about renewing their film distribution deal, Microsoft partnered with Disney in a multi-year deal for digital media initiatives, including licensing Microsoft's Digital Rights Management technology for home and portable media devices.

Noted Raul Arrazcaeta, managing director of Lazard Freres, "Pixar could have been the platform to launch an assault on old-fashioned movies and film. Jobs did it on the music side

and he could have done it on the video side, too, but he told Disney to get lost, which opened the door for Microsoft."

So don't think it's just coincidence that Disney's Chief Strategic Officer Peter Murphy mentioned one of Jobs' products when he commented on Disney's new Microsoft deal.

"Just as the iPod has changed the way people record, store and play back digital music, personal media players will create new opportunities for people to record, store and play back

their video," Murphy said.

Jobs may have made a mistake walking away from Disney, only to let the "prize" slip to nemesis Microsoft.

He can take consolation in the fact that he's not the only guy to lose a prize to an arch rival due to wanting a better deal, nor is this prize the biggest loss in recent history.

But enough about Red Sox General Manager Theo Epstein losing A-Rod to the Yankees — Jobs is a decade older and should know better.