

Left to our own Dvices

by Todd Maupin

Would we ever learn? As soon as the new ad dropped for the latest model of the DVICE, everyone forced themselves into some clothing, wedged into some shoes, grabbed some method of payment, and rushed out the door and down to the emporium to get their clutches on the all new DVICE model to call their own.

At least, this is what we used to do. No one leaves their homes anymore, maybe they never even separate from their chairs, couches, beds, or I don't want to know where or what they are lodged or crammed into when behind closed doors and not live streaming about how great their lives are. Now everyone, when they see the ad, hear it, or experience it in some other nouveau sensual way, clicks or taps out of whatever app they were using to click or tap into some other app that can help them buy the latest DVICE.

But no one seems to sell DVICES anymore, or they just sell them so quickly that we can never buy them. Or maybe someone sells them on the Dark Web, Darknet, or at some Eyes Wide Shut kinky type of Tupperware party where they sell DVICES to cover the costs of the avant garde and kinky stuff going on at those parties. However you can buy your very own DVICE, no one really knew. But darn it all if we all did not try really hard to procure one each time the newest model was released.

There were probably some researchers somewhere, chortling, snorting, hooting, and high-fiving each other because we, the subjects, always go into a chaotic frenzy whenever those new ads appear. These sadistic but objective researchers probably feel no remorse when we slink back in failure to resume whatever we were doing before we had been lured yet again into a futile quest for a new DVICE. Maybe these researchers secretly want a new DVICE of

their own so they can more easily compile their cruel research notes and observations, which they have collected at our expense.

The truth of the matter was that no one had seen a new DVice in years. Sure, we all knew someone who had been able to get one. In my case, I knew a girl three blocks away whose cousin in Salt Lake had scored a new DVice a couple of models ago. My friend, Steve-O, has a brother in college whose roommate's uncle had experienced similar success. We call him Steve-O because his last name is Osprey, and we go to school with another Steve whose last name is Kowalski or something. There is actually a Steve Oh, a Korean exchange student, at another school. We don't know him but we heard his sister back in Seoul has a newer model DVice.

It is frustrating because the newer DVices have some of the coolest features anyone could ever imagine. My DVice, which is maybe 5 or 6 years old by now, does everything I could ever want it to do, or want to do on it, but the newer DVices could run circles around mine. According to the ads, they really can, by sprouting legs or something, and without breaking a sweat or getting dizzy. Maybe you are thinking that we should all just be satisfied with what we have. If so, you are either naive, some sort of hermit monk, or clearly you have not seen the DVice ads that would make anyone salivate.

No one knew why DVices were so hard to find. No one knows for sure anyway. There are theories. The so-called experts claim that there have been supply chain problems, chip shortages, production delays, or just that supply can never meet demand. Maybe the unions at the DVice factories are striking or the factories only employ Oompa-Loompas or whatever the PC term is for them now. Hard orange workers or something silly, I bet.

Every so often, someone asks some executive at DLabs why the newest DVices are never in stock, in warehouses, on shelves, or

even available for a demo. The executive will usually just shrug and queue up the video of the latest DVICE ad. Occasionally, the executive will go the extra mile and use a laser pointer to telestrate the ad. The interviewer and all of us in the audience are so mesmerized that the executive can just slip out of the room while we have all forgotten what our pressing question even was.

It is a little embarrassing to admit this but here goes. My DVICE is actually a PVICE. It is essentially the same. The PVICE designers even made the P in their logo look almost like a D so consumers like me could scrape at it and easily make it look like the DVICE logo. More recently, PShopPe, the PVICE designer has been including stickers to make the P look like a D without requiring any scraping. Strangely, DLabs never filed a lawsuit or any kind of motion for copyright or trademark infringement. Maybe it is a patent thing, I don't know. Anyhow, DLabs just looked the other way, and continued to churn out ads for newer DVICES that no one can ever find.

I'm pretty sure that Steve-O also has a PVICE that he modified just like I did. In fact, I think most people have done this. PVICES are really easy to find and do everything that a DVICE does. Anyone who wants a PVICE could easily have one. But no one seems to have a PVICE. We all have DVICES, or at least we say that we do, and we all want newer DVICES. It is so incredibly taboo to ask someone if their DVICE is authentic. You just do not ask. Ask someone how old they are, if they are tired, how much they weigh, how much they earn, how much they paid for their house or car, if they are cheating on their spouse, but never - NEVER - ask them if they have an authentic DVICE.

I am no better than the rest of us. When the latest DVICE ad hit last month, I was at a watch party, with some friends and friends of friends. We each watched in awe, on our own old DVICES (ahem), each of us with a personal front row seat to the magic that the technological marvel that was the new DVICE would bring to anyone

fortunate enough to find one. No one savored the experience because the bittersweet taste of envy had already taken over. Seconds before the ad had finished, everyone was scouring the apps in hopes of finding this newest DVice for sale.

I cannot speak for anyone else, but I have my system. In the immediate aftermath of the new DVice reveal, I open a conglomeration of bookmarks that includes the 47 shopping sites I think might have the new DVice in stock. Programmed into my bookmarks is a little script that I wrote which updates them to the newest DVice model each time I run it. I have never been successful in finding the new DVice, of course, but I am failing efficiently for what that is worth.

You have to be careful because there are a lot of fake DVices floating around out there. It is especially tricky because the newest DVices actually do float in the ads. Even if we all knowingly have PVices masquerading as DVices, no one wants to actually buy a counterfeit DVice. I mean, can you imagine? I'm sure it has happened more often than you hear about, but this is something else that no one would dare mention.

Steve-O once suggested something to me and the girl who lives three blocks away who has the cousin in Utah. Her name is Petunia or something. She is home schooled so no one sees her that much. She was there that day though, for some reason. Anyway. Steve-O point blank said that we should just go on eBay, DealDa\$h, or some marketplace and buy new PVices. I don't know what was in his head that day and why he said such a ludicrous thing.

Petunia - it is actually Petula, now that I think about it - I seem to recall her saying that her parents liked some song, which I looked for on Tricktok, but could never find - anyhow she just looked at Steve-O like she was shocked and speechless. And she probably was. In fact, she normally is, but it struck me that day, for some reason. I

looked at Steve-O in what I hoped was disgust. Without a mirror to verify the efficacy of my expression, I could only hope he got the message. Then I told him, “why would I buy a PVICE when I have a DVICE?” Then I walked away muttering words I am not proud to have let slip.

Steve-O is lucky that I still talk to him. He knew I was lying, because we all are, and I would have felt guilty but he crossed a line and he knew it. He probably felt guilty - and he should have - because he sent me a message later telling me he liked the new case and screen cover I had on my DVICE that day. I had been sporting the same case and screen cover for years and he knew this as well as I did but I appreciated Steve-O's implied apology just the same.

Petula never mentioned it to either of us. She never really says much so I don't know if she was as appalled as I was or not. Her home school lessons may not have covered the PVICE taboo yet for all I knew. I did not see her for a while after that. Maybe she actually took Steve-O's inane idea to heart and went looking for a PVICE downtown. The light's so much brighter there. You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares.

So where does this leave us now? There has been chatter on the trade forums, Redditch, and especially on the social media apps where even the most fooliest fool has a voice. Everyone is saying that another new DVICE will be released next week. This time, they are talking about a live-streamed event where someone from DLabs will show the newest ad on a big screen in front of an audience. Or anyone anywhere can watch the ad on smaller screens, of course held inches from their captivated faces. Probably even those lucky enough to be in the DLabs event audience will still be watching on their own “DVICE” screens. Why watch the field when there is a JumboTron?

I don't know how you get tickets to those DLabs events. It does not matter anyway. The event would be hundreds of miles away and I don't even like taking the bus across town. It's not like my parents would even let me go. "You have a perfectly good device already!" (I am never sure if they are saying device or DVice.) Something must happen in the delivery room that makes a mom and dad stop understanding certain things as soon as their kid plops out. Like a man in black wiped their memory with a slap to the face. So to you, all the kids all across the land. Take it from me. Parents just don't understand.

So I will be watching the new DVice reveal ad from home like almost everyone else. I will be hydrated, caffeinated, and my existing "DVice" will be fully charged. There will be the usual mad scramble to get a hold of the new model. And I will be reapy. Ready.

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