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Clark White Publishing Ltd
8-10 Godson Street
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Tel: 020 3122 0870
Email: editorial@whatmobile.net
Website: www.whatmobile.net
Twitter: @whatmobile
Facebook: What Mobile Magazine

EDITORIAL

Email: editorial@whatmobile.net
Telephone: 020 7324 3502

Staff writers: Thomas Wellburn
Email: thomas.wellburn@whatmobile.net
Telephone: 020 3122 0868

Manny Pham
Email: MannyPham23@gmail.com
Telephone: 020 3122 0870

Editorial Director: Ian White

ART/PRODUCTION

Art Editor: Michael Hutchings

ADVERTISING

Advertising Sales Manager
Kimberley Glover
kimberleyg@mobilenewscwp.co.uk
020 3122 0871

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Post What Mobile Subscriptions,
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Spy Story



If you've been following the news about CIA whistleblower Edward Snowden you'll know Government spy agencies can access any mobile phone they like, even turning yours on when it is turned off in your pocket. What you may not know is that your mobile can also be hacked and tracked by people you would rather not share its contents with. Our exclusive interview with a professional "White Hat hacker" (ie one of the good guys) makes for sobering reading. Did you know that the contents of any phone or computer you access through a public Wi-Fi network can be easily read by prying eyes? Or that modifying your phone outside of the approved operating system and apps can expose you to all manner of criminal mischief and mayhem? Yet it's not all bad news. There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself – all revealed inside.

Congratulations to our competition winners



Well done to the winners of our What Mobile Awards win-a-smartphone competition. Top-tier flagship smartphones are on the way to: Jeanette Wroe of Shenfield (iPhone 6), Bryan Jones of Ellesmere Port (Samsung Galaxy S6), Ikbal Hussain of Cookham (HTC M9), and Rysiek of Edinburgh (Sony Xperia Z3). Well done to everyone and thanks to **mobilephonesdirect** for donating the super prizes.

The What Mobile team

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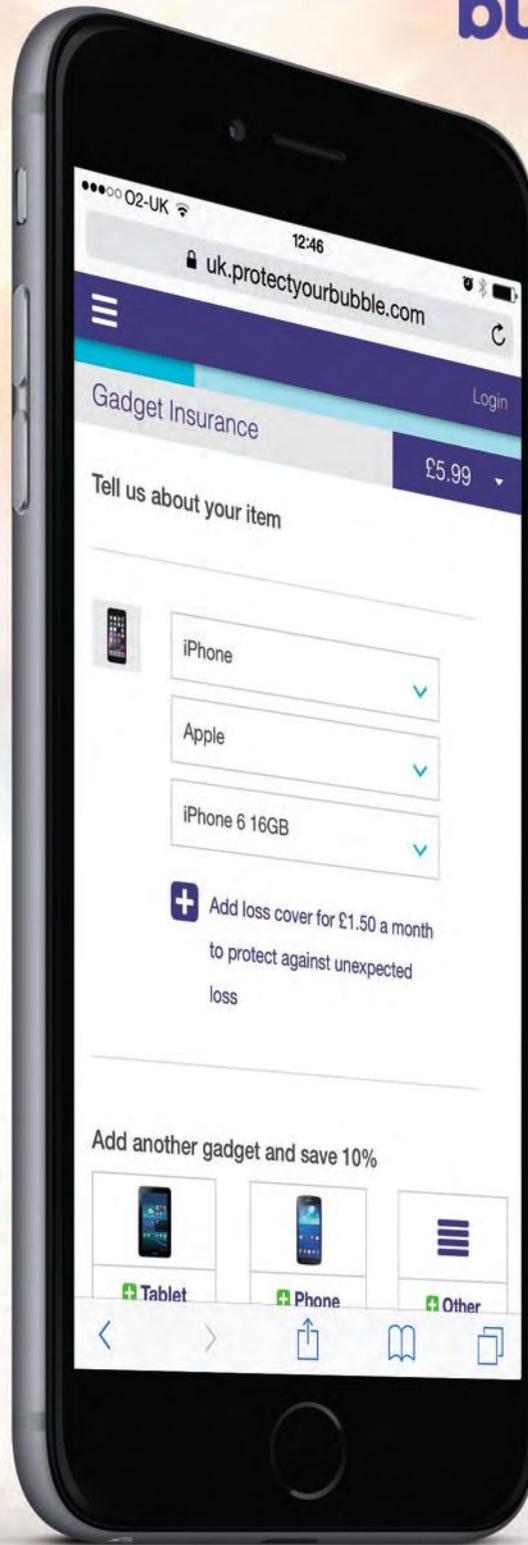
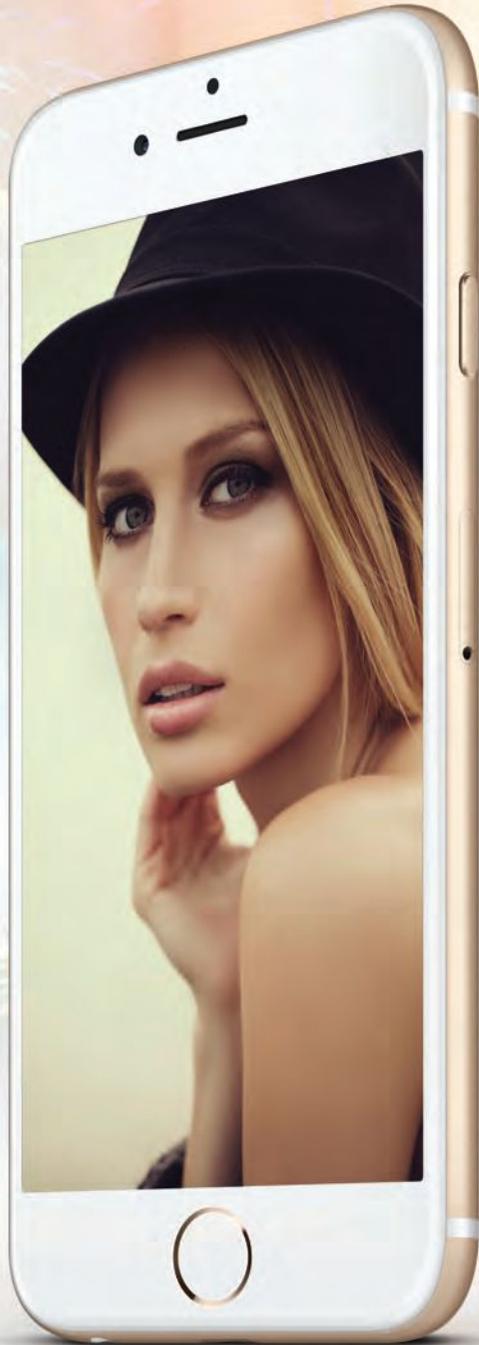
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LAST CHANCE TO WIN

A SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB S2 WORTH £400!!



We're into the final month of our competition to win a Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 worth £400, so act quick if you still want to be in with a chance!

We've got a huge prize this month courtesy of the guys over at Currys. They've been kind enough to give us a brand new Samsung Galaxy Tab S2, which scored an excellent four and a half stars in this issue of What Mobile. This is one of the best competition prizes we've had in a long time, with a retail price of £400!

Email your full name, address and contact number to the address below:

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Alternatively, head to:
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and fill in the online form.

The winner will be contacted via email at [the end of this month](#).

Sweating the small stuff: 1. The promoter of this competition is Clark White Publishing Ltd. 2. The competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 years or over, excluding employees of What Mobile, all participating companies, its agents or families and any company associated with this competition. 3. By entering, all entrants will be deemed to have accepted these rules. 4. All entry instructions form a part of the terms and conditions. 5. Closing date: 5 October 2015. 6. Only one entry per email/IP address will be accepted. 7. The correct winning entry will be selected randomly by the administrator of the What Mobile Facebook page. The winner, who must be a UK resident, will be sent a PNY PowerPack. 8. No cash alternative or other device will be offered. 9. No correspondence will be entered into except that the name of the winner will be available upon written request. 10. You accept that the competition prize may be an open box item that was previously reviewed in the magazine by one of our reporters.

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FINALIST ★ FINALIST

Microsoft Surface Book

Microsoft dropped a huge bombshell with the surprise announcement of a brand new addition to the Surface line-up, the Surface Book

Described by the company as the “ultimate laptop”, the device combines the portability of a tablet computer with the performance of a laptop, thanks to a detachable screen that can be removed on the fly. The design is almost industrial in appearance, with an all-metal brushed aluminium finish and minimal branding aside from the chrome Windows logo on the rear. It is also incredibly light, at only 1579 grams, matching the 13-inch Macbook Pro. Featuring an innovative fulcrum hinge that compresses and flexes in an almost snake-like fashion, it is possibly the most over-engineered thing we have ever seen. With so many devices looking like cheap Apple imitations these days, it is refreshing to see something different.

At only 7.7mm thick, the screen portion of the device carries 25% of the main battery and CPU, which will be one of the new fifth-generation Intel Skylake processors (up to i7). The keyboard portion acts as a docking station and holds the remainder of the battery plus a discrete Nvidia GPU, though the exact model remains unknown. All we currently know is that it uses the Maxwell architecture and will include 1GB of GDDR5 memory. It is thought that it could be a semi-custom chip designed in partnership by both companies and similar in power to the current GTX 960m.

The 13.5-inch screen has the highest resolution of any notebook currently available – an eye-watering 3000 x 2000 pixels. It uses a 3:2 aspect ratio which is modelled on a piece of A4 paper and has a higher pixel density than the Macbook Pro at 267 pixels-per-inch. The Surface Book also comes with dual 5 megapixel front-facing cameras for face authentication and

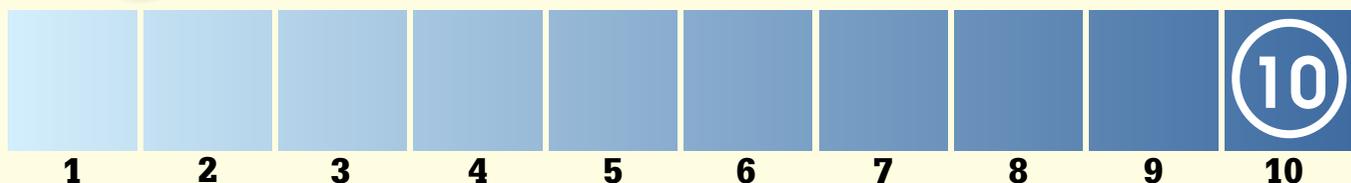
an 8 megapixel rear camera capable of 1080p video recording. Connectivity is the same as the new Surface Pro 4, which means no USB-C but plenty of standard USB 3.0 connectivity. Battery life is quoted as 12 hours, though it is fair to assume that this will fluctuate considerably depending on whether the device is in tablet mode or docked.

The trackpad has been updated to a much larger format and now has a glass finish, similar to the one on the Surface Pro 4. Microsoft says it is much nicer to use, though we'll need to test it ourselves before we can make any assumptions. The keyboard features a backlit chiclet arrangement with only 1.6mm travel.

The Surface Book is available now to buy in the US and ships with Windows 10 Pro right out of the box. Deliveries don't actually begin until 22 January 2016. Now for the depressing part; it is way out of reach for mere mortals. The base model starts at \$1,499 alone, with the highest configuration setting you back a soul-destroying \$3,199. For this you will be getting a top-end Intel Core i7, 16GB RAM, 1TB SSD storage and the elusive Nvidia graphics card. UK pricing is yet to be confirmed but it is likely to be even more expensive than our American friends.



WHAT MOBILE
Excitement Meter



Painfully expensive but incredibly well engineered, the Surface Book may well be Microsoft's answer to the MacBook Pro. Count us very impressed.

Microsoft Lumia 950 & 950XL

Microsoft has finally revealed its innovative new Windows Phones that have got us out of our seat and clapping like a seal

Microsoft has not really had the best of times in the smartphone market, with only a small share of it and an even smaller app store. But can it turn it all around with its new Lumia iterations? It's exactly what Microsoft is trying to do, by creating an extremely desirable phone, a phone that will make you turn your head and look while you hold your other phone's hand.

COOLING INNOVATION

The new Lumia phones will have liquid cooling – that's right, liquid cooling! It has never been done before on a smartphone. Liquid cooling is known to be included in customised computers, to cool down the graphics card and processor, to ensure smooth running while over-clocking the system. We are not sure if you would want to be over-clocking your Lumia but it will come close to a PC with its new features. Liquid cooling is nice but Continuum is the main feature of the phone, enabling you to turn your phone into PC, by connecting it to a monitor, keyboard and mouse using Microsoft Display Dock.

What Microsoft is trying to do is appeal to students and professionals on the go who need to get things done in the limited time that they have. Nowhere near a PC? Got a presentation to spruce up? No problem. Just pull out your phone.

In terms of power, the Lumia 950 will sport a Snapdragon 808 hexa-core and the XL will have the more powerful Snapdragon 810 octa-core. With liquid cooling, the persistent heat problem Snapdragon 810 has will hopefully be a thing of the past. Displays are 5.2 and 5.7 inches respectively, made with OLED technology, putting them up there with rivaling flagship phones such

as the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+. As for storage, they will have 32Gb on internal memory, which can be upgraded with a microSD up to 200GB. Which again beats rivaling smartphones such as the ever-popular iPhone 6s, which has a non-expandable 128GB. The Lumias do match up against the Sony Xperia Z5, which also offers memory expansion up to 200GB.

IMPRESSIVE BATTERY

Microsoft isn't done impressing, as the battery packed into the Lumias is superior to the average handsets on the market at the moment – 3000 mAh and 3340mAh respectively with Fast Charging, supported by USB Type-C. Thirty minutes of charging will apparently give you more than 50% charge. Camera is 20 megapixels on both devices with fifth-generation optical image stabilisation, natural triple RGB

LED flash and a dedicated camera button.

Video recording will be in WQHD, 4K is unsurprisingly omitted, considering the direction Microsoft wants to go with the Lumia 950 and 950 XL. The Lumias will also support Microsoft Hello, which enables users to unlock their phones with their face and voice.

The Lumia 950 will retail at £449.99 and the 950 XL at £529.99. Release dates are still to be confirmed by Microsoft. Rumours are circulating of an end of November or early December release.



WHAT MOBILE Excitement Meter



Finally, we have two Windows Phone flagships that are worthy competitors to the current Android heavyweights.

Microsoft Surface Pro 4

Microsoft has updated the Surface Pro to version 4, offering numerous improvements and 'desktop-class' performance

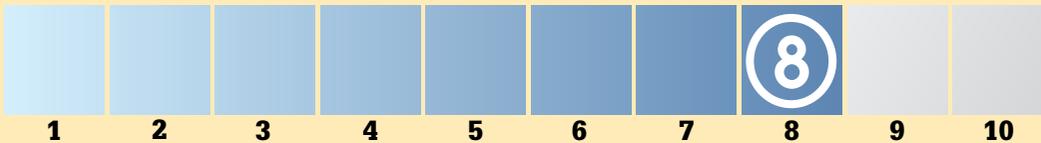
The new Surface Pro 4 includes a slightly larger 12.3-inch screen with an improved resolution of 2736 x 1824, though the overall size footprint is the same. Coated with 400 micron Gorilla Glass 4, Microsoft say it is the "thinnest glass ever". It has also added a new technology dubbed "PixelSense", which measures light on the panel to determine if the input method is a stylus or finger. On the topic of input methods, the new Surface also ships with a new pen that includes an eraser on the opposite end. It offers up to 1024 levels of pressure, four times the previous generation.

Internal hardware has gotten a huge jump over the Surface Pro 3, with new fifth-generation Intel Skylake processors all the way up to i7 and an optional 16GB RAM. A 1TB SSD is also available, while the rear camera has been bumped up to 8 megapixels. Connectivity remains the same as the Surface Pro 3, meaning no USB-C and 4G/LTE.

Peripherals have gotten a big improvement, with a new Type

Cover featuring wider key spacing and a larger glass trackpad. Two versions will be available with and without a fingerprint sensor. Costs are \$159 for the former and \$129 for the latter. Those who pick up the fingerprint version will be able to enjoy "instant" user logins via Windows Hello.

UK pricing for the Surface Pro 4 starts at £749 for the base configuration and racks up quickly once you start adding additional components. A top-end Surface Pro 4 will set you back an expensive £1,799.



WHAT MOBILE
Excitement Meter

A notable upgrade compared with the Surface Pro 3 and some truly cool innovations make this more than just a generic cash cow.

Microsoft Band

Microsoft is taking its wearables more seriously, offering an improved and comfortable new band

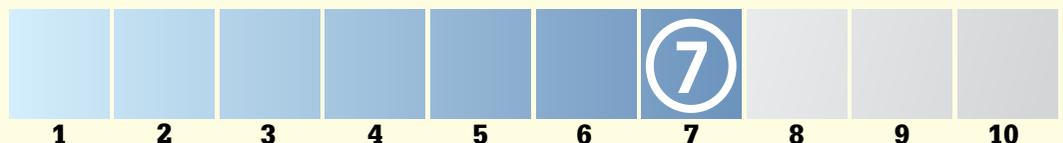
Microsoft has learnt from its mistakes with the second iteration of Microsoft Band. It has been given a new curved design to fit more naturally on the wrist, with a new curved Gorilla Glass 3 screen to maximise comfort and wearability.

Among the standout features for Microsoft fans is Cortana as the voice of Microsoft Band. I say Microsoft fans as you need a Windows Phone to activate it. This, however, does not stop you from the full experience of the Microsoft Band. Activate Cortana by holding the action button, then speak into the built-in mic. Simple answers are displayed on the band, whereas more comprehensive answers will be displayed on your Windows Phone. Cortana will also be your workout buddy, giving small soft encouragement, which is better than having a jacked up ex-marine scream in your face. A barometer is added to measure ascension like hiking up

hills, so the wearable will note the extra effort. Like last year's band, it offers GPS, heart rate, calorie and sleep tracking, guided workouts and smart notifications. The new wearable is compatible with iOS, Android and Microsoft Windows Phone devices. Retailing at £199, it can be pre-ordered today, shipping on November 19.



WHAT MOBILE
Excitement Meter



More than a mere upgrade from last year, this is a complete overhaul that attempts to fix all the issues which plagued the original.

AT LAST – A SMARTPHONE FOR BEGINNERS

The amazing new

Doro Liberto® 82 Mini is a compact smartphone for beginners. With all of the functionality of other smartphones, it also comes with step-by-step guides on screen for all major applications.



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Libratone Zipp

Libratone Zipp (2015 Edition)

Cost: £219.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

Libratone is back once again with a new and upgraded edition to its previous Zipp line of Bluetooth speakers. We'll get the Sonos comparisons out of the way early and state that the Libratone actually has a few unique features that put it ahead of the competition. Firstly, it does not require a power outlet to function and is perfectly usable as a portable speaker thanks to the built-in battery. Secondly, it is also significantly cheaper than the comparable Sonos Play 3 and offers arguably more for the money, although the £219 price tag is still a tall order for some.

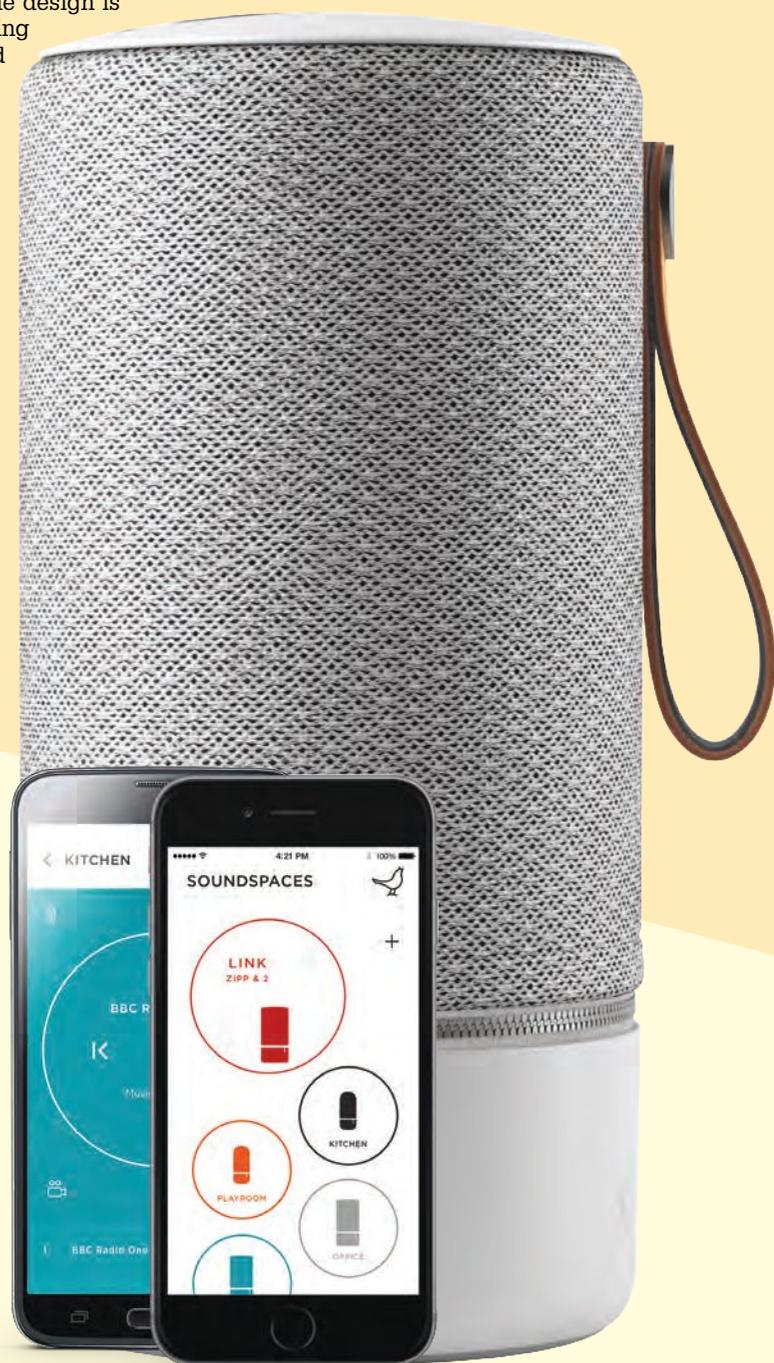
Whereas Sonos aims to seamlessly integrate its speakers into the backdrop of your lounge, the Libratone pitches itself as a centrepiece of the experience. 360 degree sound means that it won't seem out of place in a party, while the ability to take it anywhere really separates it from the rest of the bunch. Visually, it is a bit of an odd looking thing, though the design is definitely premium in feel. The interchangeable zip covers take a bit of getting used to and it wasn't quite as easy to change them as the PR team showed us in our product demo. Still, it's nice to have the ability to mix things up according to personal taste, even if it's a little difficult. There's currently seven colours available at launch, with the potential for more later down the line.

Sound quality is nothing to be frowned at and you definitely get what you pay for, with a stated frequency response of 40Hz to 20KHz. With the inclusion of full 96KHz/24bit streaming support, you can also rest assured that the speaker will be able to handle the very best file types. In testing, we found this to be very much true with excellent dynamics throughout the spectrum. Bass is full and well defined thanks to a large four-inch neodymium woofer, with electronic tracks bursting with energy. Even the sub-bass manages to translate reasonably well, with just enough oomph to give suitable presence to the track. This is a far cry from the typical wireless speaker, where the bottom end typically falls flat on its face when confronted with a bass-heavy track. Higher frequencies are equally well defined, with a perfect blend of sizzle and punch. Drums in particular show excellent attack and the thud of a kick drum is enough to hit you hard at loud volumes. On the topic of volume, this thing really does go loud. With several of these hooked up in a multi-room setup, we're pretty confident that the combination would easily overshadow the average background noise at a party.

Of course, sound quality is only half of the package as the Libratone Zipp can be paired with up to 15 other devices for a truly insane multi-room setup. The included application is currently unavailable on Android, though the iOS version works very well. It is slick and intuitive to use, providing plenty of advanced options such as equalisation, grouping and individual speaker control. Speakers can be grouped into 'Soundspaces' or paired for true stereo sound. We also love the hush gesture interface, allowing you to hold your hand over the top of the device and silence the speaker for incoming calls (or when you need to tell people that the night is over!). Connectivity is a notable strength of the Libratone Zipp, with USB, mini-jack and various wireless options to name a few. The inclusion of AirPlay is an excellent bonus for Apple users, allowing lossless streaming to the device, which is perfect for FLAC files. Battery is rated at a whopping 8-10 hours, which should be fine for the average party.

Verdict: A truly excellent premium Bluetooth speaker with brilliant sound quality and plenty of punch. Combine this with the benefits of a multi-room setup and you have perhaps the best device in its category.

- + Excellent bass for a Bluetooth speaker
- + Rechargeable battery
- + Plenty of connectivity
- Difficult to remove the cover
- Large footprint
- Undercuts Sonos but still expensive



Swann One Smart Home Control Kit

Swann One

Cost: £499.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham

Swann has released a product that is aiming to bring safety and security into the palm of your hands. The Swann One Smart Home Control Kit uses an app-controlled interface for iOS, Android and PC. With the interface you'll be able to control cameras, locks, power switches and detect motion. More features can be added as the kit uses a convenient modular system, so adding another camera or even a smart thermostat is an option.

The kit itself comes with a smart hub, two key fobs, motion sensor, window/door sensors, camera and a smart plug. The smart hub is at the centre of it all and will connect all of the aforementioned peripherals to the Internet for you to control.

Setting everything up was a bit of a pain considering that it is supposed to be easy for consumers to use. There are a lot of steps and hoops to jump through in order to get everything set-up. You'll first have to create an account with Swann, which will then lead you to the set-up instructions. Setting up the camera is challenging but achievable if you know what you're doing; thankfully there are YouTube video instructions to help.

That said, even with the well-presented YouTube videos it was still a struggle to set up. We questioned our own intelligence as we went through each step slowly to make sure we were doing it right. The smart hub simply refused to pair with a few peripherals. Thankfully the camera was straightforward and worked perfectly fine with 720p HD recording. It doesn't work as smooth as you'd expect; delays happen pretty much every minute, where seconds of footage will be skipped. That was when we viewed on our iMac with an excellent internet connection; viewing the camera remotely on the smartphone app with 3G data was worse. But the Swann One app is well made, responsive and offers all the controls you need for your peripherals.

Missing from the camera is the ability to store footage, unless you pay a monthly charge of £18.99 for Cloud Video Storage. Upon purchasing Cloud Video Storage you'll be able to store backups online. To have to pay for a feature that should already be included is a bit sneaky. To also have to pay a monthly charge just to have unlimited push notifications is quite laughable. It's quite a shame as the kit does have great quality products with unique features that will save you money (the smart plug can turn off sockets remotely) and more importantly, give peace of mind. The camera microphone has unique abilities such as detecting specific glass breakage noises and differentiating it from a baby's cry. The camera can also recognise the family pet and will not sound the alarm.

At the time of writing the kit is being sold with an RRP of £399.99 at Currys, freeing up some funds to invest on the monthly subscriptions on offer. Using the subscription service is the best way to fully enjoy the benefits of the One Smart Home Control Kit.

Verdict: SwannOne has developed some great ideas to ensure safety in your home, but to fully unlock the potential you will have to pay extra with subscriptions. Without the subscriptions you are still getting good products, though the experience is considerably stripped back.



- + Amazing features
- + Will not ruin your feng shui
- + Great app interface

- Subscription is needed for full potential
- Setting up can be a chore
- Video feed skips



Sony Xperia Z5

The mid-phone in Sony's flagship Xperia Z line looks a little bit similar on paper. Can it do enough to differentiate itself from its predecessor?

Price: £549.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.1.1 Lollipop (upgradable to 6.0)

Processor: Snapdragon 810 (1.5GHz Quad-core + 2GHz Quad-core)

Screen 5.2 inches

Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels (428 ppi)

Memory 3GB RAM

Storage 32GB

MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 200GB

Rear camera 23MP

Front camera 5.1MP

Video 4K

Connectivity 3G, 4G LTE

Dimensions 146 x 72 x 7.3 mm

Weight 154g

Battery 2,900mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



3⁷/₅

Camera

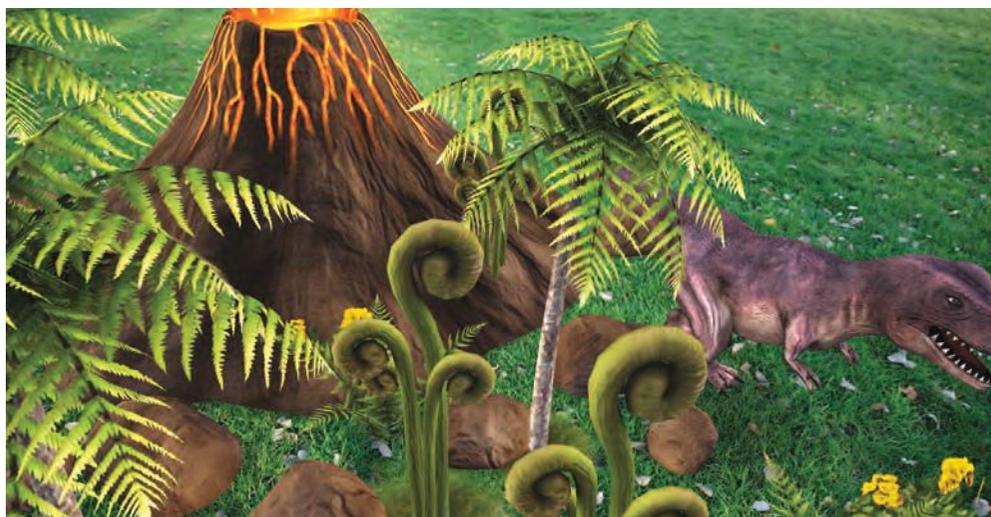


4⁷/₅

Battery



4⁷/₅



AR Effect allows you to create your very own version of Jurassic Park

When Sony announced its three new smartphone devices at IFA this year, the response was a little muted. Not only did they look the same, they also didn't seem all that different inside either. Aside from some gimmicky features such as the Z5 Premium's ludicrous 4K screen, there was little to really make them stand out against the competition. Will that change now we have it in our hands?

DESIGN

Whether it looks similar to the Z3+ or not, you can hardly argue that the device was already an attractive smartphone to begin with. It now features a slightly squarer design, with edges that are a little sharper. The glass rear remains, which was always a major stress point for cracks and smashes. Moving to the side, the buttons have been notably shrunk down so they no longer protrude and the power button itself now has a completely new design which integrates a fingerprint sensor. The dedicated two-phase camera shutter has been carried over, allowing snappers to get some physical feedback when they take their pics.

Measuring 142 x 72mm, it manages to be exactly the same size as the Xperia Z3+. The only difference in physical dimensions is the thickness, with the new Z5 being slightly chunkier at 7.3 vs 6.9mm. In terms of connectivity, on the rear we have a handy slot for attaching a carry strap and a micro USB port – sadly this device doesn't ship with the newer USB-C. On the left side is a plastic flap which conceals the sim card and MicroSD trays, while the top

houses a lonely headphone jack aligned to the left.

CAMERA

The Sony Xperia Z5 uses their newest 23 megapixel Exmor RS IMX300 sensor, packing in some serious upgrades when compared with the previous generation IMX220. At 4:3, it supports the full 23 megapixels of the sensor, while at 16:9 you'll have to settle for just 20 megapixels (oh the horror).

Straight off the bat, picture quality is definitely something special. The new phase focus is seriously fast, nearing DSLR speed at times. Colours are incredibly dynamic and dripping with vibrancy and saturation, yet still manage to come across as natural. Auto settings generally do very well overall, with exposure and contrast well adjusted for the scene. For low-light results, Sony has employed area-specific noise reduction, thereby leaving the detail on lighter areas



The Z5 features a 23MP Exmor RS IMX300 sensor and packs in some serious upgrades

intact. This works reasonably well in practice.

For a phone with such a great camera, we were somewhat disappointed to find the manual mode a little clunky. Certain features like ISO are totally buried away in the settings. The lack of optical image stabilisation is also surprising for such an impressive sensor, though the digital variant is better than nothing. Still, it does come with plenty of fun modes that at least add to the experience. Our personal favourite is the AR Effect, where the GPU renders an awesome 3D landscape composed of various objects. The Jurassic one in particular was very cool and even included a full 3D T-Rex stomping around!

The 5MP front camera won't win any awards for picture quality, though it's perfectly usable for selfies. Noise and grain are always apparent, with edges veering on the soft side. That said, colour is vivid and well defined, helping to enhance your (hopefully) flawless skin tone.

SCREEN

The Sony Xperia Z5 has a 5.2-inch 1080p panel with a pixel density of 428ppi. One thing we noticed immediately was how white the display was, with no noticeable hue at all. The Triluminos display technology employed in the panel aims to enhance the colour gamut and extend colour reproduction, though we found it made images unnaturally vivid at times. Still, it definitely helped to make the image pop and gave an almost 'larger than life' feel to some video content. After calibration, there was very little difference aside from the expected subtle blue hue. Viewing angles are also brilliant, with the high screen brightness



Picture quality is something special

meaning that it is possible to read things on the panel at near 180-degrees.

This continues with outdoor readability, where the Sony Xperia Z5 is possibly the brightest panel we've ever tested. It was perfectly viewable under direct sunlight and even easier to read indoors, meaning users should have no trouble with this device in the warm summer sun.

PERFORMANCE

Using a top-end Snapdragon 810, the Xperia Z5's benchmark scores were generally very high, if a little mixed. After numerous attempts due to confusing results, we drew an average of 3961 for multi-core and 1223 for single-core. Quite why this happened we're not completely sure, though it's likely something to do with the heat bottlenecking.

VERDICT

A great camera can't save every smartphone and the Xperia Z5 is a perfect example. While this is still a great smartphone, it could have been an excellent one had a little bit more care been taken with the software/hardware implementation. As it is, it falls just short of being a serious contender.

Sony still hasn't fixed the heating issues that plagued the original Z3 and Z3+, with the device getting pretty toasty after extended gaming sessions. Opening a few apps in the background, it was a little stunning to see applications showing the spinning ellipsis and taking around a half second to load. After a flawless 30 minutes playing Asphalt 8: Airborne, the phone quite literally felt hot to the touch. If we'd used the device for any longer, we'd hate to think what effect it could've had on the internal components.

SOFTWARE

The Sony Xperia Z5 uses the newest iteration of the Xperia UI, which is based on Android 5.1.1. The result is an interface which is far more stripped back and dare we say it, closer to the stock Android experience. Customisation options lean on the side of subtle, with the ability to do things such as altering the quick buttons in the notification panel and having access to a quick launch bar when viewing background applications.

Bloatware is a mix, with some useful apps and some useless ones. Sony has included a few apps for people to use but none of them feel cheap or throwaway. The included Movie Creator is a decent video editor for splicing together clips but things like PS Video just feel like a cheeky attempt at trying to draw you into their ecosystem.

BATTERY

The 2,900mAh battery included in the Z5 is slightly less than the Z3+, though the difference is so marginal that we'll let it pass. The Geekbench 3 battery test was a little off this time round so we put it through its paces in an intense gaming session of Asphalt 8: Airborne. After 30 minutes of constant gaming, the device lost around 15% charge, which is an average result if a little underwhelming. As we said earlier, it's also worth noting that this thing gets pretty



The Z5 features a stripped-back UI

damn hot, so expect this to impact on your overall battery lifespan pretty substantially in the long term.

The included quick-charge 2.0 function allows you to charge the device from 0-100% in less than two hours, which almost makes up for the non-removable battery.

CONCLUSION

We really wanted to love the Sony Xperia Z5 simply because of the brilliant camera quality but it's incredibly difficult to do so when the performance is so mixed. There's also still a serious heating issue that makes us seriously question the long-term reliability of the device and will no doubt make performance even worse in the long term. You were so close Sony, so very close...

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★

+ Excellent camera

+ Brilliant screen

+ Attractive design

- Gets very hot

- Mixed performance

- No USB-C or Marshmallow

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Samsung Galaxy Tab S2

Samsung has once again graced us with another flagship tablet but how does it compare with this year's competition and, more importantly, its predecessor?

Price: £399.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham



SPEC SHEET

OS: Lollipop v5.0.2
Processor: Quad-core 1.56 GHz and 1.82, Snapdragon 810
Screen: 9.7 inches
Resolution: 1536 x 2048 pixels (264ppi pixel density)
Memory: 3GB RAM
Storage: 32/64GB

MicroSD compatible: Yes up to 128GB
Rear camera: 8 megapixels
Front camera: 2.1 megapixels
Video: 1440p@30fps
Connectivity: 3G and 4G
Dimensions: 237.3 x 169 5.6mm
Weight: 158g
Battery: Non-removable 5870 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4⁷/₅

Camera



3⁷/₅

Battery



4⁷/₅



The Tab S2's rear camera is OK but needs good lighting conditions to perform well

Samsung is at it again with another sleek tablet that will surely fly off the shelves and please fans. The company was the first to release an Android tablet to directly go in competition with the iPad and so far the Korean tech giant has been extremely successful with its foray into the tablet world, setting precedence for other tablets to follow. The Galaxy Tab S2 is an improvement on the Galaxy Tab S1, but not by a lot. It may be lighter and the battery size is smaller but it isn't a big jump compared with last year's iteration. There really isn't much to differentiate the Galaxy Tab 2 and iPad Air 2 aside from the operating system and internal storage differences – iPads start at 16GB while the Galaxy Tabs start at 32GB; they're two of the same. Is it enough to best Apple?

DESIGN

Samsung has continued using the same shape and design across its mobile devices. Apple does the same and it is getting a bit monotonous but it also contributes to both companies' signature design image. In a market where differentiating yourself is getting harder, you can't really argue that it has done well in its aim to be unique-ish, by essentially duplicating year-on-year.

Waltzing down the street with your Tab S2 in hand will get you some approving nods as the shiny metal edges emphasise Samsung's simple design. The back is plastic with a metal finish, giving it a high-class look. Front face of the Tab S2 is fairly empty, with the task manager icon, fingerprint scanner and back icon lining up

symmetrically at the bottom of the screen. Sound familiar? It looks it too. The S1 and S2 look exactly the same.

This year Samsung has taken a diminutive approach with the Tab S2, shrinking it down to 9.7 inches from 10.5 inches. Some unwanted poundage was also shed in the downsizing and the new Tab S2 weighs in at only 389 grams for the 9.7 inch model. For comparison, it is even lighter than the iPad, which weighs 437 grams. This light weight encourages extended usage, especially if you're pulling all-nighters on the train.

Running along the right edge of the tablet is the power button, volume key and a noise-cancelling microphone. At times during Skype calls we accidentally covered up the microphone, and it would probably have been better suited at the top of the device.

CAMERA

Snapping pictures with a tablet is a no no. You'll look stupid at gigs and extremely pretentious while queuing up for a coffee. But it could perhaps be forgiven if there was actually a decent camera on board, which the Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 sadly does not possess. Staying true to the way of the tablet, the Tab S2's camera is OK but nothing special. If the S6's camera was included here, the Tab S2 would have been probably the best tablet in its category.

The main camera is 8 megapixels while the front-facing camera is 2.1 megapixels, exactly like Samsung's past tablets. The Tab S2 does not perform well unless you play by its rules – it needs well lit rooms and the great outdoors for the rear camera



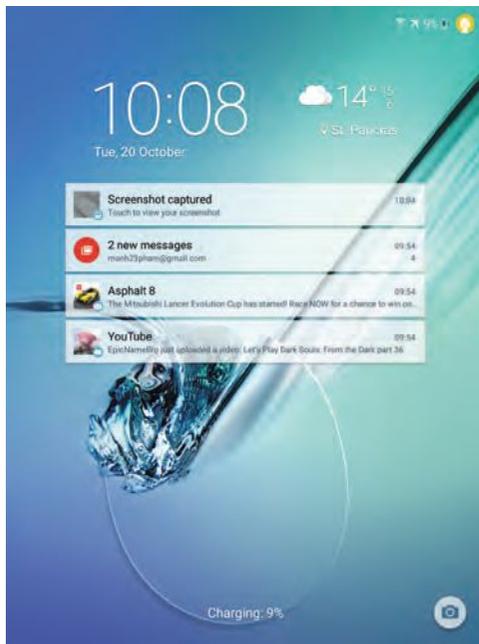
Images are full of noise and grain

to perform to an excellent standard. Snapping pictures in low light is another story as images are full of noise and grain. Same story with the front-facing snapper, though it is still decent enough to be used for Skype calls.

Video recording on the rear camera has been improved from the Tab S1 and the new Tab S2 is now capable of shooting 1440p at 30 frames per second. While doing a tracking shot the camera's poor shutter speed becomes apparent and it fails to keep up to even the smallest of



The 4:3 aspect ratio makes browsing easier



3GB of ram helps with multitasking

movements. You can switch on image stabilisation when dropping down to 1080p, but this improves things marginally.

SCREEN

Samsung has scaled back the resolution this year with the Tab S2 measuring 2048 x 1536. This equates to roughly 264 pixels per inch. The Galaxy Tab S1, on the other hand, is 2560 x 1600 and 288 pixels per inch. The difference in resolution quality is in part due to the widening of the screen, giving the Tab S2 a 4:3 aspect ratio, the same as on the iPad. It is a subtle decrease that is noticeable on close inspection, though despite the downgrade it still matches the iPad Air 2 and iPad mini 4 in resolution.

With the aspect ratio now 4:3, web browsing is a lot easier. Scrolling through apps is a much more pleasant experience as you check social media and read articles. Samsung has always been a leader in screen technology and the Tab S2 is no exception, with vibrant colours and a huge perceptive contrast ratio. The display also

does well against reflective light, being perfectly readable on the go even under harsh conditions. Viewing angles are equally excellent, making the tablet quite handy for watching a movie with company.

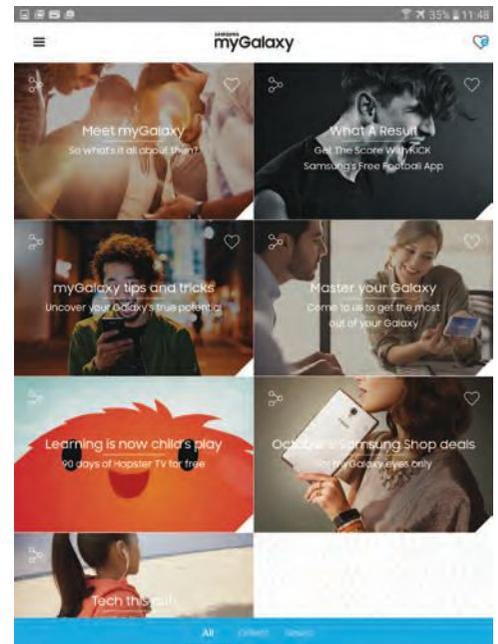
PERFORMANCE

The Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 may be lighter and more svelte but unfortunately it seems power has been sacrificed in the process. The Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 uses an octa-core Exynos 5433 chipset, comprised of two quad-core CPU's, each 1.9GHz and 1.3GHz. The Exynos 5433 chip is also in the Galaxy Note 4, which is disappointing as you would expect Samsung's new top-end tablet to feature something fresh. It is essentially a repeat of what happened with the camera earlier, where we have been spoilt by Samsung's class-leading expertise.

That said, the Exynos 5433 chipset is still a blistering chipset that performs very well. Flicking through the UI, things are buttery smooth. The 3GB of ram also helps in keeping up with multitasking duties. In an extreme attempt to overload the tablet, I opened ALL of the apps and no slowdown was experienced.

Putting the Tab S2 through its paces in Geekbench, the tablet surprises with great results. It smoked the Galaxy Tab S1 by a considerable margin in the single-core category, hitting a high 1271, whereas the Tab S1 managed 867. This explains why the Galaxy Tab S2 performed so well in our "app attack". The iPad Air 2 did score better at 1809, although it has a faster chip. The majority of apps run on a single core, so the Tab S2's multi-cores won't kick in unless you try to overwhelm it like I did.

Internal memory is available in both 32GB and 64GB versions, although the 64GB is unavailable in the UK. Luckily, the Tab S2 supports MicroSD cards up to 128GB. The battery is a non-removable li-lon with a capacity of 5870 mAh; this is a massive downgrade from the Tab S1's 7900 mAh. The Tab S2 scored 4218



The Tab S2 gives the full Android experience

on Geekbench and lasted just over seven hours from a full charge, which is enough for a day's use.

Straight out of the box, the Tab S2 runs Lollipop 5.0.2, which does a great job in giving you that full Android experience. When launching an app, there's subtle animations so that you can see where you originally touched. Marshmallow 6.0 is likely to land on the Tab S2 by next year.

CONCLUSION

Samsung is still going strong and is deservedly at the top of the Android market. The Galaxy Tab S2 isn't a huge jump but it's a device that will no doubt satisfy those who desire a quality tablet without having to remortgage the house. It's still an incredible device that will satisfy all your expectations from a tablet, even if it offers nothing truly innovative, with specs and design that are similar to its predecessor. That said, the new aspect ratio and improved weight are welcome additions that make this much more usable and easily one of the best tablets on the market.

VERDICT

Still playing keep up with Apple, but Samsung has pretty much caught up with a tablet that will do everything you need and more. With the Galaxy Tab S2's light weight and contrast ratio, it will heads turn and offers consumers a cheaper alternative that is imbedded with quality.

- + Great light weight
- + Smooth performance
- + Decent battery life
- Poor camera
- Mic placement

OVERALL ★★★★★

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | USABILITY ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN ★★★★★ | FEATURES ★★★★★ |
| INNOVATION ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |

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HTC One A9

After numerous leaks, HTC has finally unveiled the mysterious HTC One A9. Will it be enough to turn HTC's fortunes around?

Price: £469.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham



features. The A9 will be the first third-party smartphone to come with Marshmallow 6.0 but no one will be noticing that as it looks exactly like an iPhone 6 (and 6s). Not exactly a bad thing as you are getting an iPhone with an Android OS, though £469.99 is still quite steep for a mid-range phone.

DESIGN

We'll begin with the obvious, the HTC One A9 is the spitting image of the iPhone 6 and 6s. It has a smooth aluminium unibody, which just like the iPhone 6s feels like a higher echelon of quality, the metal finish really does feel great in your hand and the rounded corners provide

comfort and stability when grasping it.

Let's talk about what's different about the A9 and the 6s. First of all the A9 is much thicker, measuring up to 145.8 x 70.8 x 7.3 mm, compared with the 6s 138.3 x 67.1 x 7.1 mm. Couple this with a screen size of 5 inches and it makes the A9 a much more comfortable device to handle and view, a definite improvement on the diminutive

iPhone 6s. Despite the bigger size it weighs exactly the same as the iPhone 6s, weighing in at 143g. Carrying on with the differences the A9 has a textured power button below the volume keys, which is a nice addition as HTC is thinking about access and ease of use.

The face of the A9 brings us back to similarities – the A9 really does look like the 6s and that can't be helped due to the shape of the unibody. HTC has now newly introduced a home button and fingerprint scanner. You can simply tap the button (or screen) to wake up the phone and immediately unlock it with the fingerprint sensor. It works extremely fast from waking up, to verifying your fingerprint, to bored random Googling. Going to the bottom side we can see a speaker right next to a micro USB slot. Sadly BoomSound has now been omitted. Upon hearing that the A9 was more music focused we were expecting BoomSound, but sadly it has gone to make room for the fingerprint scanner.

CAMERA

The camera of the A9 is where HTC is also very proud, with a 13 megapixel rear camera and a 4 megapixel front-facing one. What HTC wanted to really show off is its own hyperlapse feature. This proves to be more than just an app you can download and works in-sync with the stellar camera. While walking through a rare sunny day filming a hyperlapse sequence, we found the feature to work really well, with smooth motion and clear video. For taking pictures, the Pro Mode stands out as it offers full manual controls. The auto-adjuster does a fine job with the

It is no secret that HTC has been having troubles recently. It seems the Taiwanese company has lost focus. It is back now with a new phone that confusingly has mid-range specs and a premium price-tag.

With the HTC One A9 there has been a shift in focus and the company is now looking more into lifestyle and core

SPEC SHEET

OS Marshmallow 6.0
Processor Quad-core 1.5 GHz & quad-core 1.2 GHz, Snapdragon 617
Screen 5.0 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 200GB

Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 4MP
Video 1080p (30fps)
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 145.8 x 70.8 x 7.3 mm
Weight 143g
Battery Non-removable 2150 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4/5

Camera



4/5

Battery



4/5



The 13MP camera offers full manual controls through the Pro Mode



The HTC One A9 looks exactly like an iPhone 6s

right settings for you. But if you know what you're doing you can get a better picture. During our own personal test we took a picture on auto and a second picture where we manually set everything. The result was our manually set picture was better by a slight margin and some objects were slightly discoloured in the auto-set picture. You can then save the pictures in raw form to edit to your artistic desire.

SCREEN

You can't really tell the difference between the Samsung Galaxy S6 Super AMOLED and the A9 AMOLED. The Super AMOLED screen is meant to display better colour contrast, but really you won't notice the difference. That said, the A9 has a brilliant display that really gives that look of quality every time you look at it. With a resolution of 1080 x 1920 pixels, which equates to 441 pixels per inch, the A9 offers a top-notch display that is well above the average smartphone.

An AMOLED display uses less power and shows black more deeply, as pixels shut themselves off when there is any black on the screen. So put up a screen saver of deep space and save yourself a bit of battery.

PERFORMANCE

The A9 is the only current smartphone with a Snapdragon 617 and it performs so well you

won't notice the difference between it and a Snapdragon 810. We tested it by playing Asphalt 8 extensively and we were racing through roads like a hot knife through butter, with no slowdown experienced and no overheating.

There are two versions of the A9 differing in RAM and internal storage – 16GB (2GB RAM) and 32GB (3GB RAM). We were sent the lesser 16GB version and proceeded to put it through its paces on Geekbench. In the single-core test the A9 scored 746, a score that beats the Samsung Galaxy S4. Which isn't really surprising considering the Snapdragon 617 is a more modern chipset.

The A9 supports 24-bit audio and includes a digital-to-analogue converter (DAC), having a DAC is truly unique as not many phones include one as it's mainly seen in actual speakers and headphones. With the DAC in tow FLAC files can be used, which is a higher quality file type, giving you a new experience with music.

Battery capacity isn't great at 2150 mAh. In our Geekbench test it only lasted just under five hours, at 4 hours 53 minutes, scoring 2716. Which is about right considering the small battery capacity. However, HTC has countered this by including Fast Charge 3.0, which will give you more than 50% of charge in 30 minutes.

SOFTWARE

Straight out of the box the A9 includes Marshmallow 6.0, which is the latest Android operating system. The standout feature on the new OS is Google Now On Tap, which gives you a faster browsing experience, by interpreting relevant information from the page you're currently viewing. For example, when watching the trailer for *Spectre* on YouTube, we were given an IMDB rating, news and information about the cast. It's still in the infancy phase but will only get better as Google develops it.

Other features you can enjoy include DOZE, a battery management app, and Android Pay for quick mobile payments. Marshmallow also fully integrates the fingerprint sensor, making it much easier for developers to use the feature.

CONCLUSION

The HTC One A9 is truly a quality phone offering you the latest Google has to offer. With Marshmallow making an appearance on the A9 first, it's a huge plus as other devices face an unknown amount of time. The build of the phone is brilliant, giving you a sense of quality, but doesn't have a unique look as it really does look like an iPhone 6s. The price is also iPhone-ish, which might put you off and we wouldn't blame you.

VERDICT

With the A9, HTC has gone in a different direction with a quality device aimed at the mid-market. The A9 will join Google's Nexus series in pioneering Marshmallow 6.0 and it will do so in style. But with such a steep price when there are cheaper alternatives out there, it remains to be seen whether HTC can bring the magic back to consumers.

- + Made from quality material
- + Marshmallow out of the box
- + Excellent camera and music features
- Unoriginal design
- Steep pricing
- Did we mention it's pricey?

OVERALL ★★★★★

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | USABILITY ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN ★★★★★ | FEATURES ★★★★★ |
| INNOVATION ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |

ZTE Axon Elite

ZTE has got its sights set on the western market with the powerful, yet inexpensive, Axon Elite

Price: £299.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

ZTE is still a fairly unknown company within the UK, having mainly focused on cheap and/or mid-range handsets until now. It is surprising then to see it ushering in an entirely new smartphone line dubbed 'Axon', which will aim to compete with the best devices from premium competitors such as Samsung, LG and Apple. Is this the definitive budget smartphone killer that everyone has been waiting for?

DESIGN

With its striking Ion Gold paint scheme and unique styling, the ZTE Axon Elite is a device you'll either love or hate, though we're sure few would call it outright ugly. Overall build quality is decent, with a metal finish and machine cut geometric grilles flanking either side of the screen. The faux leather trim on the top and bottom succeeds in giving a unique look, though the plastic feel of it does little to impress. ZTE never provided the official weight, though our own scales say that it is roughly 169 grams. In the hand, you won't even notice the extra weight and it actually feels pretty comfortable, with good weight distribution.

In terms of size, the Axon is a pretty well-proportioned device, if a little long. At 154 x 75mm, it is noticeably taller than comparative devices such as the LG G4 and OnePlus 2. The two grilles above and



below the screen take up a lot of extra room and there's quite a bit of dead space in the blackened bezel. This is odd since the overall screen-to-body ratio is 72%, which is actually quite high. The thickness is more impressive, undercutting similar devices at only 9.3mm.

CAMERA

ZTE has put a lot of effort into its camera, with the same 13 megapixel Sony IMX214 sensor that is featured in the OnePlus One. The dual-camera shooter is one of the standout points of this handset, producing some excellent bokeh effects thanks to its ability to dual-focus. Overall image quality is very good and low-light is acceptable, with plenty of detail and a wide contrast. Colour reproduction was natural, though picture processing was perhaps a touch aggressive on close inspection.

It also comes with an excellent camera application bursting with manual features and various filter modes, which allow for striking effects, though most of them are pretty gimmicky and a bit useless. It is capable of shooting video up to 4K in resolution and results were once again hard to fault overall. The lack of optical image stabilisation is disappointing, though not a deal-breaker. Audio quality is also impressive thanks to the DAC, which we'll get to later.

The 8 megapixel front camera is a surprise addition and beats most of its nearest competitors on sheer pixel density. While there is a bit of noise under most conditions, fine detail is pretty well retained in all but the worst lighting. Full 1080p recording also makes this great for Skype and video chat.

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.1.1
Processor Octa-core Snapdragon 810 (1.5 GHz quad-core and 2 GHz quad-core)
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Rear camera 13MP + 2MP
Front camera 8MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 154 x 75 x 9.3 mm
Weight 169g
Battery 3,000 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4/5

Camera



4/5

Battery



4/5

SCREEN

The screen on the ZTE Axon Elite is a 5.5-inch 1920 x 1080 IPS panel with good viewing angles and plenty of vibrancy. At 400 DPI, pixilation is absent and images drip with detail. Colour reproduction is also impressive, with only a slight blue hue that will go unnoticed by most users. ZTE is the first company to include a Cornering microbial coating on their screen, which uses a silver ion composition to stop the growth of mould and bacteria. There's little way to test this feature aside from doing something truly disgusting. In this instance, we'll just have to take your word for it ZTE.

PERFORMANCE

Performance on the Axon Elite is very good, with smooth UI navigation thanks to the Snapdragon 810 and 3GB of RAM. The Axon blazed the Geekbench test, with a multi-core score of 4538. This puts it ahead of the Samsung Galaxy S6 and just behind the OnePlus 2, both of which are pretty much the pinnacle of performance right now.

Gaming reflects this, with a near-perfect showing while running Asphalt 8: Airborne. Frame-rate was buttery smooth with zero

slowdown on even the highest settings. The device includes 32GB internal storage, which is very generous, while the included MicroSD slot allows you to expand for a further 128GB of removable memory. Heavy users will no doubt appreciate this. ZTE has also thrown in a ludicrous DAC in the new Axon Elite capable of playing back audio files up to 32-bit 192 kHz.

SOFTWARE

The software on the Axon is a heavily modified version of Android 5.0.2, which features a MiFavor overlay. ZTE has decided to go without an app tray, so you should be prepared for the home screen to get quite cluttered if you're a heavy user. ZTE has bundled a small bit of bloatware on the Axon Elite, though the apps are minor and don't really hinder performance or distract from the experience. The custom launcher itself is pretty ugly on first impression, carrying over that same 'bling' design theme found in the device aesthetics. This is a shame, as it actually carries quite a few intuitive features that I enjoyed using. The resizable keyboard and emoticon work really, as does the quick-menu for snappy theme alterations.



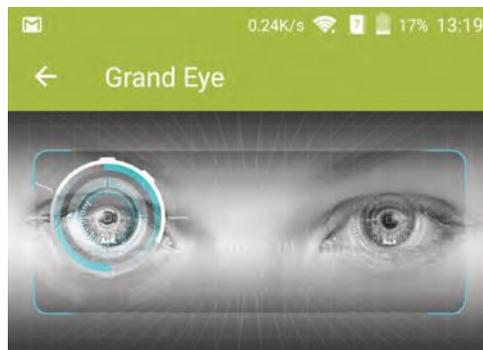
The dual camera is a standout feature

BATTERY

The non-removable battery on the new ZTE Axon Elite is a high 3000mAh, which should be more than enough for most users. Our benchmark test returned some spurious results, so we did an extended gaming session to compensate. Over the course of an hour, the battery lost just 19% of its overall charge, which is an excellent result. This should easily last a day of moderate usage and beyond. ZTE has also included Quick Charge 2.0 technology which allows the handset to reach 60% battery capacity in just 30 minutes.

CONCLUSION

The ZTE Axon Elite isn't without its quirks but it's still a quality device with plenty of top hardware inside. The Chinese manufacturer has done a good job with the price-point and it has more than enough juice to compete with similar smartphones such as OnePlus. While it never really excels in any particular area and some of the UI design is a little questionable, this is still a device brimming with features that anyone will be able to enjoy.



Press Start after reading the instructions below:

- Make sure that your eyes appear in the

The Axon Elite features iris recognition



The UI carries on the 'bling' design theme

VERDICT

Plenty of quality hardware components make this device a very enticing flagship killer, while the cheap asking price only helps to cement its position. It faces tough competition from the likes of OnePlus, which is more established, though this device arguably has the more rounded experience. It is just a shame that the design is one of those love/hate things.

- + Fully-featured
- + Good camera
- + Quick-charge 2.0
- Love or hate design
- MiFavor feels incomplete at times
- No optical image stabilisation

OVERALL ★★★★★

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | USABILITY ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN ★★★★★ | FEATURES ★★★★★ |
| INNOVATION ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |

Asus ZenPad S 8.0

Asus is back with a budget tablet that packs a mighty punch, but does it have enough to compete in such a crowded market?

Price: £169.99 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

Asus is no stranger to cheap tablet design and you may remember it as the original manufacturer of the first generation Nexus 7 tablet. If you cast your eyes back to that device, it was incredibly well received by critics and offered some excellent bang for your buck. Offering some seriously lucrative hardware for the money, can the new ZenPad S be a match for the standard previously set by the Nexus?

DESIGN

We've come a long way from cheap tablets that resemble ugly plastic bricks and the Asus ZenPad S is perhaps the perfect example of this. With a brushed gunmetal finish and fancy chrome trim along the rear and sides, it carries a unique yet understated appearance. The faux-leather bottom adds a little bit of executive class while also giving a handy textured grip for when holding it in your hand. At just 203 x 135mm, it feels like one of the smallest 8-inch tablets we've ever held. It's also one of the lightest tablet devices we've tested, weighing a mere 298 grams. This is even true for the slim factor, with the Asus ZenPad being just 6.6mm in thickness, only .5mm more than the iPad Mini. There seems to be a design flaw with the power button where it doesn't click from certain angles, making it feel as though the button is sticking when it actually isn't. This detracts from the overall build quality somewhat. At the bottom we have the surprise inclusion of a USB-C connector, a nice addition to have on such a budget device.

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor: 1.83GHz Quad-core Intel Z3560
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 2048 x 1536 pixels (320 DPI)
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-Fi
Dimensions 203 x 135 x 7 mm
Weight 298g
Battery 3,000 mAh

CAMERA

The 8 megapixel rear sensor does a good job in outdoor conditions, with a surprising level of detail. Colours are a little bit washed out and the exposure borders on overkill at times but the general picture quality isn't half bad. In a perfect lighting setting, the Asus ZenPad S is capable of taking some very impressive shots. In particular, we were surprised how close the sensor could get and still maintain focus, something which definitely can't be said about many other tablets. Low-light is a different story, with lots of noise and aggressive post-processing.

One thing we thoroughly enjoyed about the Asus ZenPad was the plethora of features built into its camera application, even if most of them were just a bit of fun. While there's no true 'manual' mode as such, there's still plenty of picture profiles which adjust the overall output of the image. Some of our favourites included GIF Animation, (which is fairly self-explanatory) and Time Rewind, which functions similar to the Live Photo's found on the iPhone 6s. The 5 megapixel front camera is good enough for your average selfie and video-chat, though the images are a little soft.

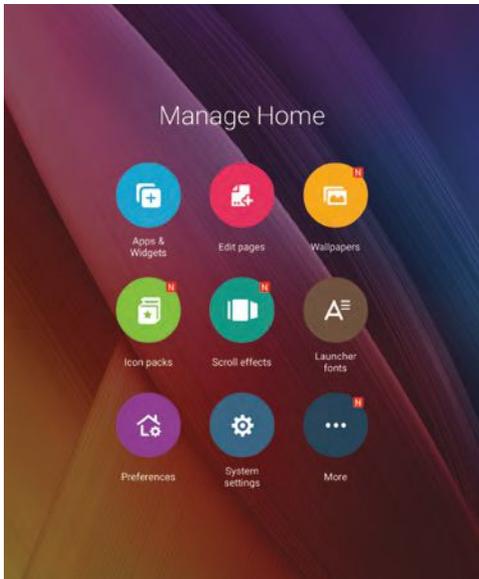
SCREEN

The 8.0-inch IPS screen on the Asus ZenPad S is a particular highlight, with a huge 1536 x 2048 resolution. This puts the overall density at 320 pixels-per-inch, which is a huge amount and exactly the same as the much more expensive Apple iPad Mini 4.



AT A GLANCE

| Speed | Camera | Battery |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| 4/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |



The UI is a re-skinned version of Android v5.0

The 4:3 aspect ratio also makes it perfect for reading in landscape mode and using for more productive purposes, though the black bars will be evident when watching films.

For such a high resolution panel at this price-point, it is understandable that some corners have been cut to compensate. Colour reproduction is generally excellent but contrast is average and fine colour information can sometimes be lost as a result. Calibration unveiled a blue hue and noticeably dark image that struggled at shadow detail.

In terms of outdoor readability, the Asus is a bit hit-and-miss. The maximum brightness of the panel is slightly below average, meaning it suffers substantially under direct sunlight. Indoor readability is definitely better, though people could still struggle under harsh overhead lighting.

PERFORMANCE

The Asus ZenPad S performs just about right for a budget tablet, with the Geekbench 3 results putting it on par with mid-range devices. Using a quad-core Intel Z356, it scored an average of 746 for single-core and 2,216 for multi-core across our three benchmarking tests. For comparison, the HTC Desire 820

scored 638 and 2,371 respectively, though it is worth noting that the device also had a much lower resolution 720p screen. Asphalt 8: Airborne played beautifully on the ZenPad with no lag or frame-drops whatsoever, which is impressive considering the high output resolution.

One area where the ZenPad really excels is audio and the Asus team has done a great job of positioning and tuning the two stereo speakers. On top of this, it is also the first tablet to support full DTS-HD surround sound, meaning if you have correct video on your tablet, you can plug it into a compatible amplifier and enjoy a lossless surround sound experience.

SOFTWARE

Bloatware, everywhere! That was my first thought when we cast our eyes on the new Zen UI launcher. There's a host of rather useless, included apps on this device that we really never felt like using during the course of this review. It comes with the newest version of Asus Home, which is a worthwhile edition definitely worth of praise. This nifty feature allows custom themes to be applied to the entire UI, including colour coding and font changes for included applications. The basic Zen UI is pretty much a re-skinned version of Android v5.0 with Asus' own design language replacing the built-in icons and navigation. Compared to the stock material design. We

wouldn't say that it feels any better or worse. Additional icon packs can be downloaded courtesy of the Home feature, though most of the better ones cost money and still aren't necessarily better than the basic Material UI.

BATTERY

Asus provides a 4,000mAh battery in the ZenPad S, which is a little on small side considering the almost identically sized iPad Mini 4 has a capacity of 5124mAh. Our Geekbench test showed a lower-than-average score of 6 hours 43 minutes from a full charge, which means you'll just be able to get a day of solid use from it. In our real-world test while playing Asphalt 8: Airborne for 30 minutes, the ZenPad lost roughly 10% of its charge, which is an acceptable result.

There's no included quick-charge function and the battery is non-removable, so you'll have to lug around a powerbar if you want to take it on long trips.

CONCLUSION

It's obvious that the 2K screen is a major selling point of this device, even if corners have been cut on the panel itself to achieve such a high resolution. Still, the Asus ZenPad S offers plenty of other features to keep you happy plus a couple of firsts. It looks great, performs acceptably and, more importantly, is very cheap. For the average user, this wouldn't be a bad choice.



The Asus ZenPad S offers a plethora of features built into its camera application

VERDICT

Cheap and cheerful but impressively well equipped, the Asus ZenPad S is excellent value for money and is one of the cheapest ways to get a 2K panel. It may not be the fastest performer around or have the biggest battery, but the amount of features it has crammed in at this price point definitely makes it worth consideration.

- + Appealing design
- + 2K screen for a low price
- + USB-C and DTS-HD
- Lower than average battery
- Bloatware
- Technically inferior panel

OVERALL ★★★★★

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | USABILITY ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN ★★★★★ | FEATURES ★★★★★ |
| INNOVATION ★★★★★ | VALUE ★★★★★ |

UNDER ATTACK

So you think your mobile devices are secure? You might just want to think again...



Smartphones marked an inaugural moment in our lives, a moment where we plugged in and have not hit the off switch since. They have become our most trusted companion, a new right-hand man and a new limb if you will. But what happens when something you put so much trust in can be used to damage you? With a new age of convenience and information comes new ways for us to be vulnerable. Take the good with the bad, as they say.

Edward Snowden recently revealed to the BBC's *Panorama* that UK intelligence agency GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) has the ability to access phones without the knowledge of the owner. According to Snowden, the GCHQ can access phones with tools known collectively as Smurf Suite and then survey or extract information from your device discreetly. "Dreamy Smurf" can switch your phone on and off, "Nosey Smurf" works in conjunction with "Dreamy Smurf", after the latter switches on your device and gets to work by switching on your mic enabling the user to listen to you. Finally we have "Tracker Smurf", which triangulates your exact location with more precision than the triangulation of mobile phone towers.

Scary stuff, and to be honest if the government wants to get in your phone there's not a lot that you can do. But for the more nefarious hackers there are measures that can be taken. What better way to protect yourself than to ask a hacker?

Steve Lord is a White Hat hacker, which thankfully means he works for good, and also means he would choose to destroy the Sith, not join them. Steve has a decade of experience in information security and runs his own company, Mandalorian Security Services Ltd. We asked him a series of questions on the subject of data security and got some pretty eye-opening responses. Big brother is watching...

HACKER Q&A

We had to tie White Hat hacker Steve Lord down to a splintery chair and water board him for these answers (probably)

▶ WHAT IS YOUR JOB?

I'm a penetration tester, I've been doing it for more than 15 years. I get paid by companies to break into their computer systems to identify security flaws so they can fix them. Most people build things. I take them apart. Because computers are everywhere these days, I end up breaking into all kinds of strange things – from banks to missile systems.

I'll be given a target by a customer, it could be a website, a mobile phone or in one case last week a meeting room. You might think meeting rooms are strange things to attack. But within an hour or so we had full control of the TV screens, climate control and were able to stream audio from every meeting room in the building to us. And this is a system that the US Department of Defense uses at the Pentagon. I write reports on how to fix problems. Often the most serious vulnerabilities are those that affect the underlying business, and they're usually the ones that need the most support.

HAVE YOU BEEN FORCED TO DO SOMETHING QUESTIONABLE?

No, but we often get asked to do things that are unethical and sometimes downright illegal. A company asked us to uncover the source of the biggest corruption scandal. We politely declined. People who expose corruption scandals in Turkey have a habit of disappearing. We won't do anything that could endanger lives.

GCHQ USES SOFTWARE TOOLS CALLED 'SMURF' TO EXTRACT DATA FROM PHONES. ARE THERE ANY OTHER TOOLS GCHQ IS USING OR CAN USE?

GCHQ and the other five eyes agencies have a large array of tools, as disclosed through the Snowden and other leaks. They also have internally developed tools, with funny names like SWAMP DONKEY and ANGRY PIRATE. We don't know exactly what GCHQ can and can't do. But every time there's a leak, the details are often both impressive and scary from a hacker's perspective.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION CAN GCHQ (OR THE HACKER) EXTRACT FROM MOBILE DEVICES?

I don't know for sure. With enough time they can probably get anything they want off anything they want to get it from.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE BLACK PHONE 2/TURING PHONE AND PURPOSE-BUILT SMARTPHONES FOR SECURITY?

The original Black Phone was a good effort. But even that had quite a few vulnerabilities that could let hackers in. Just because a phone is built with security in mind doesn't mean it's secure.

ARE MODIFIED OS LIKE CYANOGEN MORE SECURE THAN STOCK VERSIONS?

The problem with Android phones lies with the way updates are managed. Updates are rolled out by carriers and vendors. So you're not guaranteed to get security fixes. So some phones lag behind. Others are up to date. CyanogenMod is often more secure on these. If you run stock Android your best bet is to use a Google-branded phone like a Nexus.

WHICH OS IS MOST AT RISK? WINDOWS, ANDROID OR IOS?

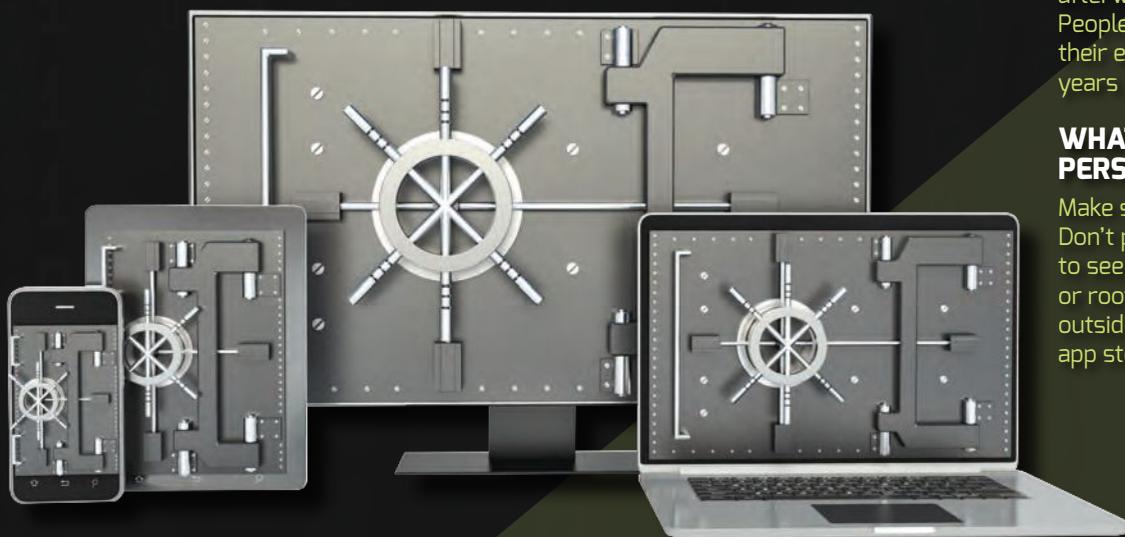
All have benefits and drawbacks. Currently Windows Phone seems to be the hardest nut to crack. BlackBerry has a long history of being very security-focused. If I have physical access to the device, I find Android's usually the easiest target. Then comes iPhone, then older versions of BlackBerry. If it's over a network or I have to attack via email or message, Android's usually the softest target.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON SMARTPHONE ASSISTANTS?

All of the assistants (Google Now, Cortana, Siri) are becoming more context-aware. The problem is they have to scan the content and break it into chunks the phone can understand. When this is done on the phone it's not so bad. But when this data is sent somewhere online and stored, what happens afterwards? The truth is we don't know. People talk about GCHQ and the NSA reading their emails. Google has been doing this for years publicly and no-one seems to care.

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO KEEP PERSONAL DATA MORE SECURE?

Make sure your phone has the latest updates. Don't put anything on it you wouldn't want to see all over the internet. Don't jailbreak or root your phone. Never install apps from outside of your phone's app store.



ARE THERE OLDER SMARTPHONES THAT CONSUMERS CAN USE TO BE MORE SECURE?

Older smartphones tend to be considered less secure as they're usually affected by known weaknesses. If you're using an older phone you're better off with a classic dumb phone. If you have to have an older smartphone, use an older BB10-based Blackberry, or a Windows Phone running Windows Phone 8 or newer.

CAN NON-REGISTERED PAY-AS-YOU-GO PHONES STILL BE ACCESSED?

Absolutely, it makes no difference how the phone is bought or used.

ARE THERE ANY APPS THAT ARE GUILTY OF MAKING YOUR PHONE INSECURE?

There are lots of apps that do bad things with permissions. The worst offenders are things like Facebook and Facebook Messenger. Most apps need to access

certain things like your photos to allow you to share pictures. But some apps just seem to want to hoover up data and send it back to the mothership.

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW IF YOU'VE BEEN HACKED?

Unless the hacker is dumb enough to make something pop up on your screen you probably won't know for sure. You'd typically find out when some strange charges start appearing on your bank account, or your Gmail says it's been accessed from somewhere you've never been. As long as you make sure the security settings are properly managed and that your handset is up to date – protected with a decent password and auto-locks – you'll be safer than most.

“Providers don't just want to own your data, they want to control how you access it.”

IS THERE MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHITE HAT AND BLACK HAT HACKERS? AND DO BLACK HAT HACKERS GET RECRUITED INTO THE SECURITY INDUSTRY?

A White Hat hacker (like me) works to improve security in an ethical manner. A Black Hat hacker breaks into things without permission for nefarious purposes, like the NSA or the 15-year-old kid in Northern Ireland who allegedly broke into TalkTalk. There are black hats in our industry. But there's often a stigma attached to a black hat turning white hat.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF DATA AND DEVICE SECURITY? WILL WE BE LIVING IN A UTILITARIAN SOCIETY?

There's a war between the major mobile operators and manufacturers. Look at how long it took for Microsoft Office to appear on the iPad. Or Facebook's acquisition of WhatsApp Messenger. You're going to see less personal control of your devices. Providers don't just want to own your data, they want to control how you access it.

HOW TO STAY SECURE

1. NEVER JAILBREAK OR ROOT A PHONE

Both the iPhone and iPad require three different technologies to stop malware on your device. Sandboxing ensures an app can only access data through permitted channels. Code signing ensures only code approved by Apple can be run only through the App Store or via Apple Software Updates. Finally there's the Secure Boot Chain. This ensures code isn't tampered with on boot. Jailbreaking removes all of these protections, leaving your phone open to attack. Androids have a different set of mechanisms but rooting your Android phone bypasses these too. Jailbreaking and rooting makes a phone more flexible. But unless you know exactly what you're doing and can verify your phone is safe, leave it as the manufacturer intended.

2. ONLY INSTALL APPS FROM THE OFFICIAL APP STORE

An approved app has undergone certain checks. Sometimes that means you have to pay for the app. When you install a pirated app, it is not uncommon to find some extra value inside. Furthermore, to install the app you often need to remove protection mechanisms designed to stop malicious software. When this happens, it is not uncommon to find that, long after you uninstall the app, the malware's still left behind. The only alternative app store worth considering is the f-droid store, which only hosts open source software.

3. DON'T PERMIT ACCESS TO THINGS YOU DON'T WANT SHARED

When you allow an app access to your photos to share them, be aware that the app can now freely upload all of your photos if the author wishes. So make sure that you check your app permissions after a major software update or when you get a new device. Facebook, for example, uploads your contacts list in its entirety if given the chance. See tinyurl.com/o5jvbc3 for details on how to turn it off. Google, Apple and Microsoft all want access to your data, so check your phone's own privacy settings.

4. DON'T USE BIOMETRIC AUTHENTICATION

Touch ID sounds great but is easily hacked. The problem with using your fingerprint is that you routinely use the same fingers, leaving fingerprints all over your phone. Fingerprints are easy to recreate. Use a password or a PIN instead.

5. MAKE SURE YOUR PHONE'S UP TO DATE

Make sure your phone's running the latest security updates. Most phones will tell you when an update is available. If you're running Android, then you might find that your phone may say it's up to date but the latest updates aren't there. On Android, updates are first built by Google. Then they need to be tweaked by the vendor and by the carrier. This slows things down. If you're more than one version of Android behind Google's current release, ask your carrier to ask why.

APPS TO KEEP YOU SAFE

There are plenty of apps with security in mind. Steve Lord has kindly divulged his personal favourites to help you combat against hackers. You can never be too careful, as they say.



1. SIGNAL (IOS)

SIGNAL IS AN ENCRYPTED MESSENGER AND VOICE CALLING APP FOR APPLE DEVICES. IT IS PROBABLY THE MOST SECURE MESSENGER YOU CAN GET FOR AN IPHONE. IT'S EASY TO USE AND EVERYTHING'S ENCRYPTED. FOR ANDROID USERS, THERE'S REDPHONE AND TEXTSECURE.



2. THREEMA (IOS, ANDROID, WINDOWS)

THREEMA IS AN ENCRYPTED MESSENGER AND IS MASSIVELY POPULAR IN GERMANY. IF YOU'RE A WINDOWS PHONE USER, OR YOU HAVE FRIENDS WITH WINDOWS PHONE, THIS IS THE MESSENGER APP TO GET. FOR EVERYONE ELSE THERE'S SIGNAL, REDPHONE AND TEXTSECURE.



3. ONIONBROWSER (IOS) ORBOT AND ORWEB (ANDROID)

THE ONION ROUTER (ALSO KNOWN AS TOR) PROVIDES ANONYMOUS ACCESS TO A NETWORK SIMILAR TO, BUT NOT QUITE LIKE, THE INTERNET. KNOWN AS THE 'DARK WEB' IT'S AN INTERESTING, IF OCCASIONALLY SCARY, PLACE. TOR CAN ALSO BE USED TO ACCESS THE INTERNET ANONYMOUSLY WHEN PROPERLY CONFIGURED.



4. FREEDOME (IOS, ANDROID, KINDLE FIRE)

FREEDOME IS A VPN SERVICE FROM F-SECURE. A VPN ENCRYPTS ALL OF YOUR TRAFFIC FROM YOUR DEVICE TO A SERVER ON THE INTERNET. SO, IF YOU'RE USING A WI-FI HOTSPOT, HACKERS CAN'T SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING. FREEDOME ALSO HAS THE ADDED BONUS OF LETTING YOU CHOOSE WHERE YOU WANT TO APPEAR TO BE IN THE WORLD, MAKING IT GREAT FOR BYPASSING GEOGRAPHICAL RESTRICTIONS ON STREAMING WEBSITES. AND IF YOU THINK USING A PUBLIC WI-FI POINT IS A GOOD IDEA, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS: TINYURL.COM/QD4YJUC



5. 1PASSWORD (IOS, ANDROID)

1PASSWORD IS A PASSWORD MANAGER THAT IT CAN GENERATE AND SECURELY STORE YOUR PASSWORDS ON THE PHONE. YOU CAN ALSO SYNC YOUR PASSWORDS BETWEEN YOUR PHONE AND A COMPUTER RUNNING 1PASSWORD FOR WINDOWS OR OSX OVER WI-FI. WHEN IT'S TIME TO ENTER A PASSWORD JUST UNLOCK THE APP, FIND THE ACCOUNT YOU NEED THE PASSWORD FOR AND COPY THE PASSWORD, THEN PASTE IT INTO THE APP. THAT WAY YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO REMEMBER YOUR PASSWORD.



The perfect picture

Winter is here, which means there's every opportunity we might get some picturesque snow and potentially a white Christmas. While photography is usually reserved for the summer, there's equally beautiful picture opportunities to be had during those cold December evenings. Since the Sony Xperia Z5 has such a great camera, it only seemed fair to give you all a run-down on the typical camera controls found on a smartphone and how to take the best image. By the end of this, you'll be a complete pro and ready to sell Christmas cards at the market!

📷 EV Compensation

Exposure Value Compensation, or EV for short, is one of the simplest controls that is available on almost every smartphone. Some manufacturers call it brightness adjustment to avoid confusion but in essence, they all do the same thing. When filming an incredibly bright object such as the sun or a lamp, the sheer amount of light can create severe glare and completely ruin the image. If you've ever wondered why the scene goes extremely dark when a bright object is in the image, it's because the smartphone instinctively exposes the image with the lightest part of the shot in mind. To compensate for this, we use the EV Compensation to turn down the overall brightness of the image, therefore limiting overall glare from the object and keeping things evenly exposed.



📷 ISO

International Standards Organisation, or ISO for short, is a measurement of light sensitivity for emulsion-based film. Previously, photographers would need to physically change the film in order to use different ISO settings. Now, it is as simple as hopping into the camera setting and adjusting the value. Shooting at a higher ISO will increase the sensor's sensitivity to light, meaning brighter and more detailed images in low-light scenarios. Shooting at a lower ISO will act in the opposite manner and is more applicable to daytime situations where the extra boost isn't really necessary. Higher values will introduce more noise; on smartphones this is typically around 800 and above. For a night-time setting, it is important to balance ISO and shutter speed in order to achieve the best balance of noise, light and sharpness.

📷 Shutter Speed

This refers to the physical movement of the camera shutter and how long it remains open. It stems from traditional film cameras, which used a physical shutter in order to block out light from the film inside. On smartphones, it simply controls how the sensor remains exposed to light. Slower shutter speeds will increase the amount of light absorbed by the sensor, meaning better illumination in dark scenarios. By contrast, a faster shutter speed limits the amount of light getting inside and is more suitable for brighter conditions. Shutter speed also has another use in photography, which is directly related to motion and the perceived effect within the image. A fast shutter speed will capture moving objects much clearer and, when combined with a burst shooting function, is ideal for sports coverage. A slower shutter speed tends to blur images unless the camera operator can hold the device very still, though this can also create some cool visual effects such as light trails.





📷 White Balance

Ever taken a photograph with your smartphone and wondered why it had a slight colour tint that made it look unnatural? It's likely that the white balance was not properly calibrated for the scene. While talented post-production can usually fix situations like these, it is sometimes more efficient to tune it at the time of action. Smartphones tend to deal with this setting in numerous ways, with some offering a series of pre-sets and others a full kelvin meter for more accurate adjustment. If you're an owner of the former, simply select the correct setting for the scene you are trying to shoot. For example, if you're shooting in a bar under fluorescent bulbs, pick the setting applicable to that lighting scenario. If your phone uses the latter, you'll need to move the kelvin dial until it roughly matches up with the scene. This can be tricky if you don't know which levels represent what lighting condition, though on a basic level higher is cooler and lower is warmer. A typical halogen bulb is around 3,200 kelvin.

📷 Aperture

If you are lucky enough to own a fully-fledged smartphone shooter like the Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1, you'll probably have access to aperture controls. This setting is typically reserved for more professional shooting equipment, since the average smartphone doesn't have enough room in the lens barrel for variable aperture. Companies like ZTE have managed to work around this by offering dual-focus cameras like the one found in the Axon Elite, which allows each lens to focus on a different part of the image. In layman terms, aperture controls how much light enters the sensor by adjusting how wide the lens opening is. This differs from shutter speed where it's an actual measurement of how long the shutter remains open. Aperture is variable and measured in 'f-stops', which is just an easy way to denote the different stages at which the lens is open. Higher f-stops mean that the lens opening is much smaller, so less light can enter and vice-versa. To achieve images with a deep depth of field (where the background is blurred but the foreground is in focus), use a higher aperture combined with a short focal distance.



Tips for shooting at Christmas

- 1** Indoor photos need extra care: Chances are that you'll be taking a lot of photographs indoors during the Christmas period, meaning you'll need to be extra vigilant of using the correct manual settings. Auto mode is most effective outside, where the colour balance tends to be a bit less harsh. Keep an eye on your balance, use a medium-high ISO (400-800) and try to compensate with a reasonably long shutter speed. If your smartphone has image stabilisation, it should help to counteract some of the shaky side-effects.
- 2** Family portraits need multiple takes: Consider using a burst function for the obligatory family photo, so that you can get the best shot possible. Also make sure to keep the shutter reasonably fast to avoid blurry hand gestures from the anxious children.
- 3** Use the basic rules for composition: If you want to get the best framing for your subject, consider reading up on the 'Rule of Thirds'. It's a simple concept applied by using a 3x3 grid. Some smartphones can display the Rule of Thirds grid via the settings, so it is worth having a dig through to help with your composition. The general idea is to align your subjects and horizon lines with the intersection lines, so that the main parts of the image naturally flow from one box to the next.
- 4** Time-lapse is a great effect: Unwrapping presents is often a missed opportunity, as it happens far too quickly for most to effectively capture. Setting up your camera in advance and using a slow time-lapse effect allows you to progressively document the entire day; likely to great effect.
- 5** Macro is lovely but don't overuse: Don't be afraid to throw in some close-up shots and mix things up a little. Macro is a great tool for capturing fine detail, essential when you need to get into the nitty gritty parts of the festivities. However, it is important to make sure that there is an even balance of all shot types.

iPhone 6 (S)

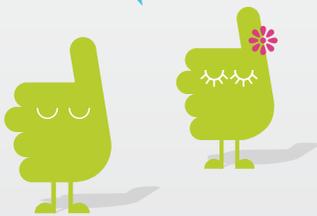
The only thing that's changed is everything.



iPhone 6s
4.7-inch display

iPhone 6s Plus
5.5-inch display

FREE
From £39.00
per month¹



FREE
From £49.00
per month¹



¹ Subject to status, availability and connection to selected 24 month agreement.
Pricing correct at time of printing.

We're no.1
for service



based on 5,300 reviews

TRUSTPILOT

**WHAT MOBILE
AWARDS 2014**
WINNER - BEST ONLINE RETAILER



Nominated Best
Online Retailer



A big handy to this year's winners

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AWARDS 2015



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WHAT MOBILE AWARDS 2015

It's that time of year again! Tens of thousands voted online for the What Mobile Awards 2015, sorting through the tough competition in order to crown a well-deserved winner for each of our 21 categories. Here's a run through of the results:



> Best Smartphone iPhone 6

Hardly surprising that this year's winner was the iPhone 6, considering that it continues to be one of the most popular handsets ever made. It narrowly beat the Samsung Galaxy S6 – a device that is arguably better on raw specs – by just over 1 per cent.

> 2nd



Samsung Galaxy S6

> 3rd



Sony Xperia Z3

> Best Tablet iPad Air 2

Another unsurprising win for Apple with the excellent iPad Air 2. Special mention to both the Samsung Galaxy Tab S and Microsoft Surface Pro 3; the top three are all truly five-star products.

> 2nd



Samsung Galaxy Tab S

> 3rd



Microsoft Surface Pro 3



> Best Camera-Phone Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge

A well-deserved win for the Samsung Galaxy S6, which remained the best camera on benchmarking site DxOMark until just recently, when it was overtaken by the Sony Xperia Z5. The iPhone 6 was a close second, losing out by only 1 per cent of the vote.

> 2nd



iPhone 6

> 3rd



Sony Xperia Z3





> Best Value Phone Microsoft Lumia 735

This could be seen by some as a surprise result, though all of the top three are perfectly suitable winners. Cheaper than the Moto G and with similar specs, we can see why some people would opt for this over the competition.

>2nd



Motorola Moto G 4G (2015)

>3rd



OnePlus 2

> Specialist Device Doro Liberto 820

As the largest provider of phones for the elderly and disabled, Doro has carved a niche of its own that makes it difficult to catch in the specialist category. The heavy-duty Kazam came a close second, with the Sonim not far behind.

>2nd



Kazam T700 Tablet 7 Ruggedised IP-68

>3rd



Sonim XP7



> Best Manufacturer Samsung

It could only really be between two manufacturers, though respect to Sony for completing the top three. Samsung has produced some excellent devices this year, with the S6 edge deserving a notable mention for its mind-blowing aesthetics.

>2nd



Apple

>3rd



> Best Value Tablet Samsung Galaxy Tab A

Perhaps a bit of an odd result considering the Tab A costs roughly £180 in most retail outlets. It's nonetheless one of the cheapest yet highest performing Samsung tablets that money can buy. The Hudl 2 gets a well-deserved runner-up, as does the absurdly cheap Amazon Fire HD 6.

>2nd



Tesco Hudl 2

>3rd



Amazon Fire HD 6





> Best Network EE

EE has successfully defended this award for three years after picking up the prize in the 2013 What Mobile Awards. With a planned 98% coverage by the end of 2015 and the fastest 4G speeds of any network, it is hard to argue with its continued success.



> Best MVNO Virgin Media

Virgin Media has now held the Best MVNO title for four years, though Giff Gaff only narrowly missed out this time around. Using EE as its virtual network, it is no wonder it has remained top for so long.



> Best Online Retailer Mobile Phones Direct

Now into its third year as the Best Online Retailer, Mobile Phones Direct continues to thrive as an online-only service which provides deals much cheaper than high-street equivalents. With a huge catalogue of phones and easy-to-navigate website, it is no wonder it has retained its position.



> High-Street Retailer Carphone Warehouse

With a whopping 10 years under its belt as Top High-Street Retailer, will anyone ever catch Carphone Warehouse? The recent demise of Phones4U leaves it pretty much unopposed, so expect it to hold this title for years to come.





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> Accessory Retailer Mobile Fun

Four years is a long time to hold a What Mobile awards category, though that's exactly what Mobile Fun has achieved. It wasn't even a close-fought contest, with the website winning by more than 10 per cent.



MobileFun.co.uk

Everything Mobile



> 2nd CASE HUT

> 3rd digitalsave

> Recycling Service Envirofone

envirofone

It was a close-fought battle between Envirofone and Mazuma, which was only separated by 2 per cent of the votes, though the former managed to defend its title with consistently good service and reputation.

> 2nd mazuma mobile.com

> 3rd MONEY4MACHINES

> Best Insurance Protect Your Bubble

Successfully stealing the crown from Insurance2go, Protect Your Bubble has successfully taken the award this year, no doubt thanks to its high customer satisfaction and reliable service.

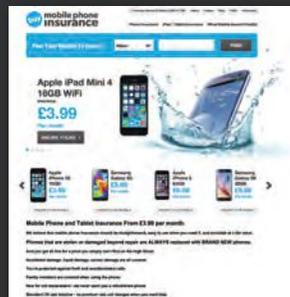
Protect your bubble.com

> 2nd

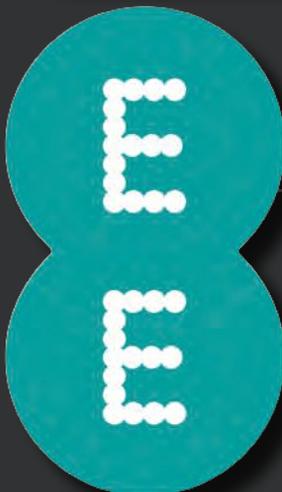


Insurance2go

> 3rd



Buymobilephoneinsurance.com



> Customer Support EE

EE must be pretty happy with itself this year, taking Best Network and Best Customer Support. It successfully took the award from previous winner O2, which is now a distant second, closely followed by Vodafone.

> 2nd O₂

> 3rd vodafone



> Service & Repair Geek Squad

Geek Squad has retained the Service & Repair award for the past three years and it doesn't look like it is going to be usurped any time soon. Winning by a large number of votes, its competitive pricing and deep resources make it hard to beat.

>2nd



QUICK
MobileFix

>3rd



fone doctors
love your mobile

> Best Wearable FitBit Charge

After Garmin took last year's award in what could be described as a shocker, Fitbit has clawed its way to the top as rightful king of the wearables. With a cheap asking price and excellent app connectivity, it is hard to argue.



>2nd



Sony
Smartband
Talk

>3rd



Microsoft
Band



> Best Accessories Griffin

Stealing the award from previous winner Tech21, Griffin is back on top as the Best Accessories manufacturer. With a long, illustrious history dating back as far as 1992, the company continues to pump out premium accessories.



>2nd



Tech21

>3rd



Otterbox

> Best Smarthome Hive Active Heating

Hive Active Heating takes the newest award for Best Smarthome, narrowly beating the Nest Learning Thermostat and MyFox Home Alarm system. As a subsidiary of British Gas, Hive is a smart thermostatic control system for gas and water that can be operated via an app.

>2nd



Nest

>3rd



MyFox





>Editor's Choice

Moto G 3rd Gen

We've always had a bit of a soft spot for effective budget handsets and Motorola continues to dominate the low-end with its brilliant G range of smartphones. It may be a little more expensive than previous versions but this is the best Android device in its category and by some distance. Now reaching its third iteration, the Moto G 3rd Gen improves on almost every area versus its predecessor. The camera is excellent, performance is great and the water resistance is a nice bonus. Stock Android makes it a joy to use and it is also fully customisable via the Moto Maker service, allowing owners to completely personalise their device and tailor it to their own taste.

>Readers' Choice Apple Watch

It is a little surprising to see a smartwatch taking the Readers' Choice award considering the mass of fantastic budget handsets currently available on the market, though it is difficult to argue with the popularity of the Apple juggernaut. Selling more devices in a single day than Android Wear could accomplish in a year, the Apple Watch was a huge success despite recent sales figures suggesting otherwise. It paved the way for other competitors to produce similarly great wearables, with the recent IFA conference in Berlin having the most smartwatches of any event thus far.





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Keep on running

This month sees a shameless copycat that will have you missing your stop

Reviewer: **Manny Pham** – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Smashy Road: Wanted

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android/£0.79 Windows Phone

This is a shameless Grand Theft Auto clone, and that's not a negative. Just like GTA the aim of the game is to outrun the police for as long as you can. Going with the GTA formula Remco Kortenoever has made a game that is ridiculously addictive. Download it now.



Albert: A Day In The Life Of

£2.29 iOS only

Everyday life can be pretty boring, so why not indulge yourself in the exciting life of Albert, by helping him through a series of min-games revolved around everyday life? Fingerlab has done a fine job in crafting 14 mini-games that are non-identical, but sadly Albert is a little bit on the short side.



Lumino City

£3.99 iOS only

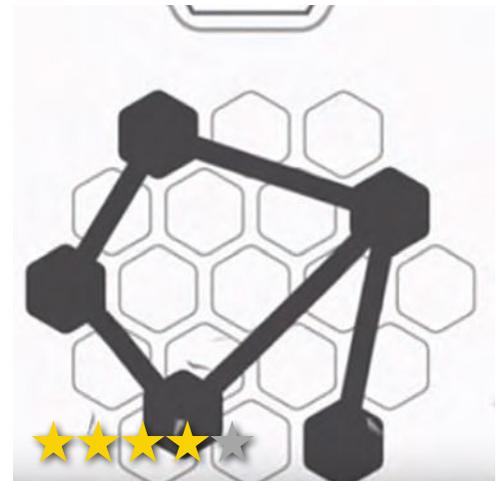
Ever played a game designed by an architect? No? Well now you can with Lumino City. In this charming paper-crafted game, you control Lumi as you solve mysteries and puzzles throughout the city. Thankfully Lumino City is much longer than predecessor Lume, enough to keep you entertained for a while.



Rop

Free iOS and Android

Rop is cheap meditation in gaming form, which we're all for. The sound effects as you go through each puzzle relax you, while the game itself challenges your mind to emulate the required shapes. Rop is simple and soothing, but the puzzles do start feeling repetitive eventually.



Dead Effect 2

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android

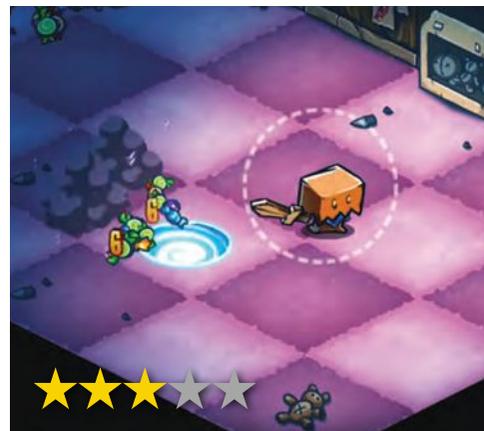
Be it fruit, zombies and even pigs. We all love something to aim at and Dead Effect 2 will give you just that with oh so original idea of zombies in space. Dead Effect 2 is gorgeous with smooth graphics that do not slow down even through heavy gameplay.



Slashy Hero

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android

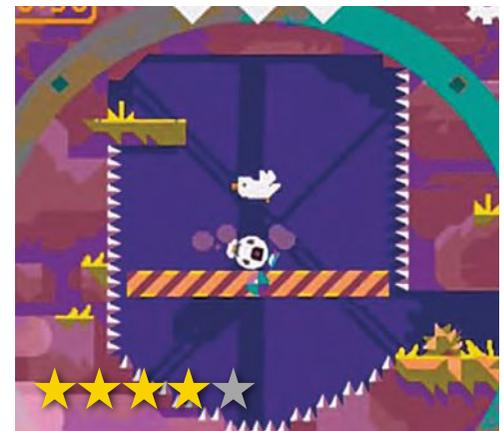
Halloween is over for this year but now it's time to rescue next Halloween! A great evil has stolen all the candy and it's up to Slashy Hero to save the night. This click and drag adventure game will have you slicing through terrors of the night like Freddy Krueger.



Beneath The Lighthouse

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android

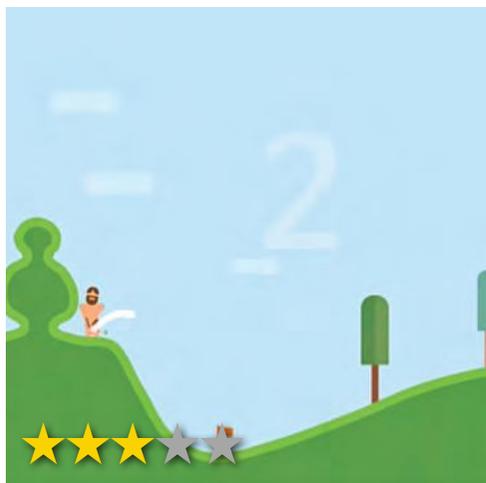
We have another charming puzzle game getting you to scratch your noggin' hard, as you guide a young boy in his search for his grandfather. There are some clever tricks with the touchscreen, which will leave you frustrated but overall satisfied in the end.



Lonely One

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android

You wouldn't say that Lonely One is a golf game looking at the app icon, but that's what it is. We've had golf games before and this is no different. With nice simple graphics and a chilled soundtrack, you can't go wrong with Lonely One. Enjoyable but not original.



Score Hero

Free (in-app purchases) iOS and Android

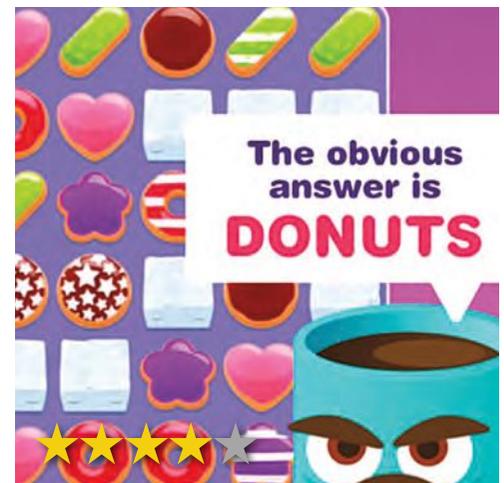
We've all yelled at our screens when the footy is on, followed by our own tipsy analysis and hindsight. With Score Hero you can bring up your own footballing legend through the ranks, deciding every move he makes from through passes to screamers into the top right.



Donuts Go Crazy

Free (in-app purchases) iOS only 2 Stars

Loading up this game we thought wait... did we re-install Candy Crush? Thankfully not but we did download a clone with a different skin. This shameless copycat isn't endearing at all, with an experience the majority of the population are quite tired of now. Please leave Candy Crush alone. We're still recovering from cavities over here.



Home service

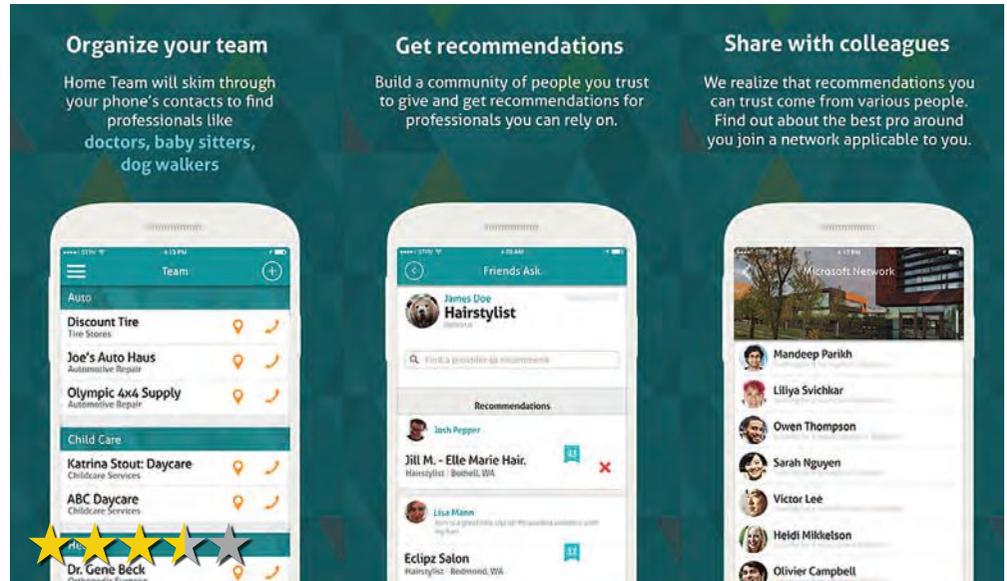
The word on the latest iOS and Android apps to help you get more out of your devices

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Home Team

(Windows Phone only) free

Home Team focuses on finding local services through word-of-mouth rather than professional reviews. After integrating with your Facebook account and phone book, it pulls in information of relevant services nearby and builds a network of contacts within the application. At the moment it's still in need of users to make it functional.



UberPartner

(Android only) free

Uber's updated partner application provides four detailed new sections. The home tab provides a personalised feed that shows city activity and potential clients, the earnings tab shows financial info and the account tab allows profile management on the fly. Reviews have also been expanded.

Vizable

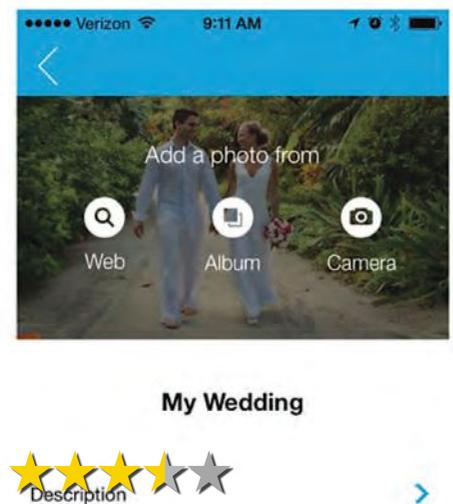
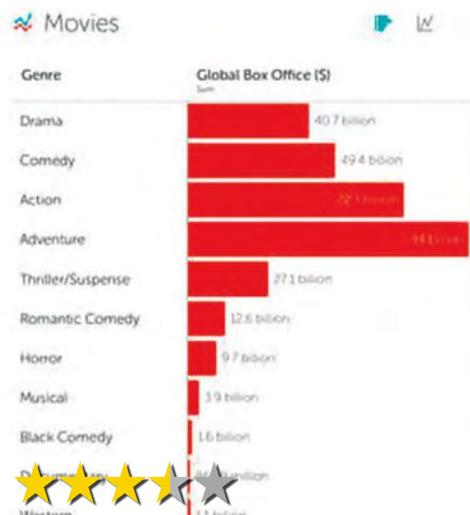
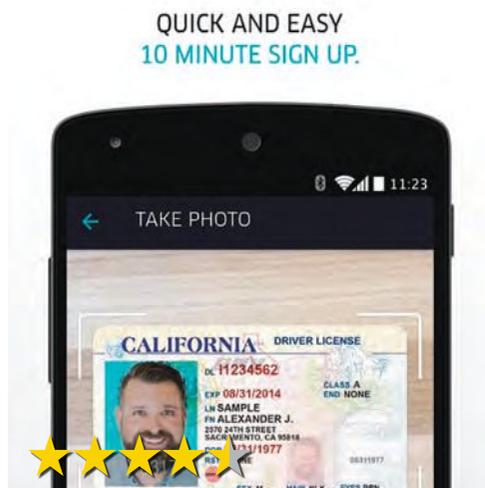
(iOS only) free

Vizable is an entirely new mobile application designed to help people see and understand data on a mobile device. It allows real-time creation and editing of graphs/charts with the benefit of tactile feedback. It also offers full compatibility with a range of files, including CSV and Excel extensions.

Tilt

(Android and iOS) free

Tilt has arrived in the UK, bringing its unique crowdfunding experience to our shores after a successful run in the US. The application carries a social twist, which priorities smartphones users first, allowing it to be used for far more than big-budget ideas. Anything can be funded, from gifts to charity runs.



DSCO

(iOS only) free

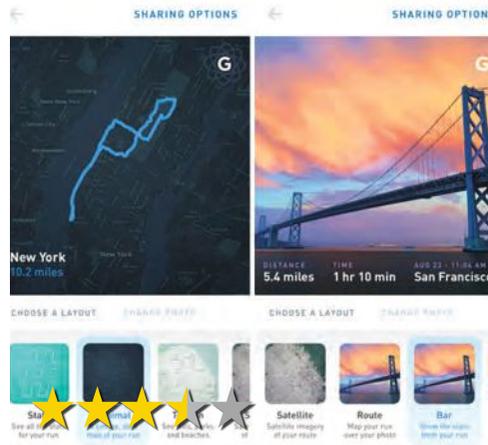
From the creators of popular video-editing app VSCO comes DSCO, a GIF creation tool that allows you quickly create and publish GIFs for the world to see. The interface is very slick and similar to a traditional video editing application; simply shoot a clip, add a filter and share it with all your friends on social media.



Running by Gyroscope

(iOS only) free

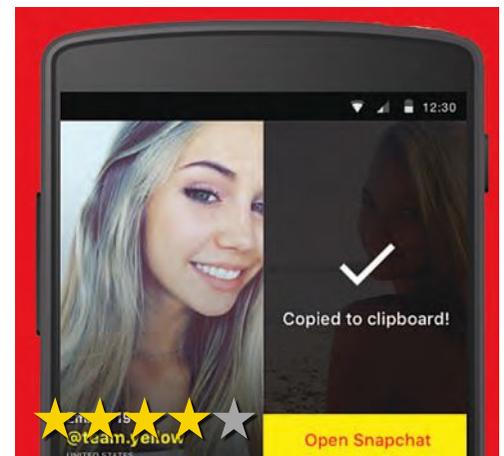
An excellent companion application for those who enjoy running. It integrates with existing fitness apps such as Runkeeper and creates a pretty visual image to commemorate your daily exercise experience. Simply connect it with your app of choice and pick from several images to document the run, then share on social media with friends.



Yellow

(Android and iOS) free

If Tinder and Snapchat had a baby it would definitely be Yellow. The application bills itself as a new way to make friends on Snapchat and the interface is scarily similar to Tinder. After connecting your account and uploading a selfie, it will recommend fresh Snapchat to follow, with a right swipe indicating your interest. Bit of a rip off but fun nonetheless.



SatFinder Pro HD

(iOS only) £2.99

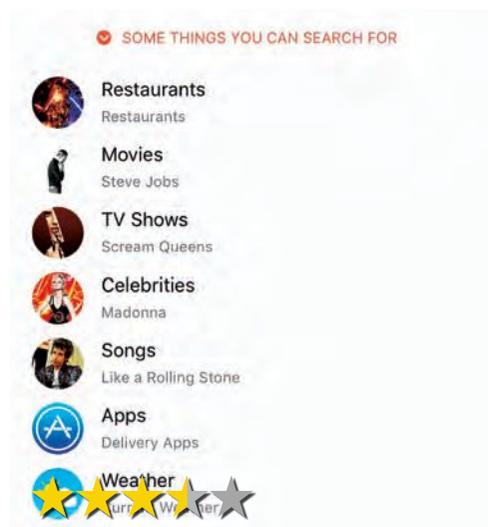
If you've ever been one of the unlucky people who can't seem to get a satellite signal on their cable box, SatFinder Pro HD could be the answer. The app allows the user to scan the sky for available satellites so they can easily find the best signal for their box, all in an attractive user interface.



Relcy

(iOS only) free

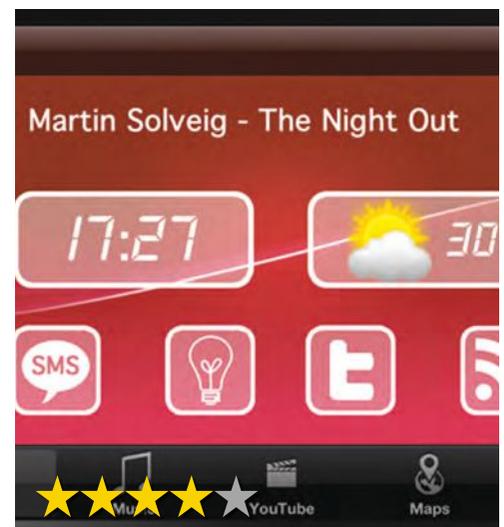
Relcy is a universal search app that can provide suggestions for just about anything. Rather than a voice assistant that tries to do everything, Relcy has only goal – to be the best search tool possible. With the app you can get results for restaurants, people, movies, songs... Pretty much anything.



iCarConnect

(iOS only) free

While the iOS interface still doesn't have a native 'driving mode' on board, there's still plenty of third-party apps out there that can fill the void. iCar Connect is a good contender that is full of features such as music control and a personalised home screen for when behind the wheel.



Nintendo 3DS

Nintnedo's new Zelda title offers fresh gameplay features and a rather ridiculous storyline

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

The Legend of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes



Developer: Nintendo **Publisher:** Nintendo

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99

Taking a team-based approach to the Zelda formula, Tri Force Heroes has more than a hint of Four Swords Adventures in its gameplay. The title focuses on multiplayer and group dynamics so much that to play it in single player completely ruins the experience. First things first, purple Link is gone. We've no idea where he is but this title is officially three player only. If you had a fourth mate who enjoyed playing through Four Swords, prepare to break some sad news.

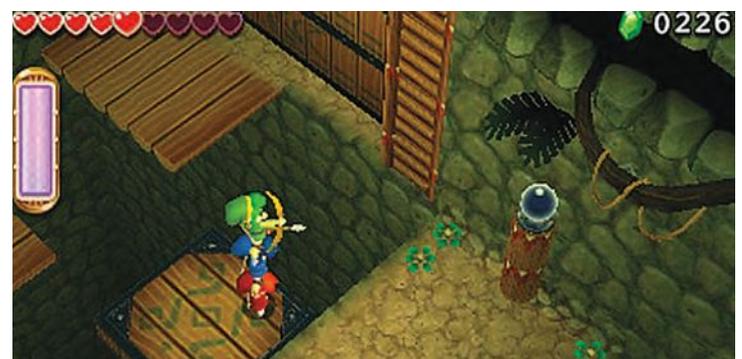
Using the same engine from A Link Between Worlds, initial impressions are very good. Graphics are outstanding, with a perfect blend of top-down nostalgia mixed and fully three-dimensional gameplay. The story is set in a nearby kingdom called Hytopia and the plot is actually quite hilarious; Zelda is having a wardrobe malfunction. After an evil witch cursed her into wearing a black leotard for all eternity, you'll need to step in and save her from donning the surprisingly flattering black garment forever. It's a bit of a naff plot but the game makes no attempt to hide it. There's regular jokes poking fun at it, to the point where

everything actually starts to become quite endearing.

Online play has been introduced for the first time, allowing players to buddy up either locally with friends or over the internet. It's a welcome addition, though the forced aspect in which you're required to play as part of a squad may deter some players from picking this up. Thankfully, Nintendo offers a fully robust matchmaking service to help you find players, though there's still the risk that you'll get some kid who has no idea what to do.

Gameplay is strictly focused on a team effort, with no option to play with bots or control multiple characters. It's not really open-world either, with a central town hub, and that's about it. Think of it as more of a dungeon crawler with 32 carefully crafted levels and you're on the right path. As long as you play the game with friends, you'll still be able to appreciate the classic Zelda gameplay. New skills have been introduced to accommodate the multiplayer aspects, such as stacking Links on top of each other to access higher switches and items. Boss fights are also designed with team elements in mind, usually needing one Link to create a distraction while others target a covered weak point.

Your reward for completing dungeons is new raw materials held in chests, which can then be combined to create new garments and thus unlock new skills and abilities. This definitely encourages replayability and fits the handheld format of short, quick bursts, although it can't really be said that we're the biggest fans of grinding, personally.



Dragon Ball Z: Extreme Butoden

Developer: Arc System Works **Publisher:** Bandai Namco

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99 ★★★★★

2D sprite-based brawlers are becoming pretty rare these days as the majority of popular fighting games slowly make the transition into full 3D. It's a welcome addition, then, to see an old-school fighter based on the Dragon Ball series making its way to Western shores. The game is split into two modes, with one following the events of the cartoon and the other offering an original adventure specifically written for the title. The former follows the events of Dragon Ball Z exactly as they were told in the cartoon, with each key battle played out in the game. Completing the game unlocks alternate storylines, which offers a nice bit of lore for some of those 'what if' moments. Without giving any spoilers, fans of the series will definitely enjoy the parallel scenarios that branch off from the main story arc.

Adventure mode is arguably better, with an original story that borders on shallow but is nonetheless entertaining. You take control of Goku and basically fight the many antagonists that scatter the Dragon Ball universe in a kind of ultimate showdown. There's a world map where you navigate from pace-to-pace on pre-determined routes and plenty of dialogue to fill in gaps within the lore.

On the topic of actual fighting, it's all a bit dull and simplistic. It's basically a button basher with around three moves that are applicable to all fighters. None of them feel particularly unique and once you've mastered ki attacks, it's pretty much over. The roster is also incredibly weak, with many characters being blatant rip-offs of one-another. A sad end to an otherwise prospective game.



3D Sonic the Hedgehog 2

Developer: M2 **Publisher:** SEGA **Where to buy:** eShop

Price: £4.49 ★★★★★

It's classic Sonic on your Nintendo 3DS... in full 3D! Need I say more? If you've been living under a rock for the past two decades (or just a young gamer), you'd be forgiven for missing this memorable piece of gaming history. Sonic the Hedgehog 2 carries on after the events of the first game, with Dr Robotnik once again trying to enslave the animals of Mobius. The game was the first in the series to introduce Tails as a new sidekick for Sonic, as well as the first to debut the new 'spin dash' move. The latter helped to speed up gameplay and fix a few issues felt in its predecessor such as having to build up your speed after a bump.

At their core, the original Sonic games have always been solid 2D platformers based around the element of speed and this doesn't change the formula one bit. It's a faithful port from beginning to end, cramming in everything that the original game had before finishing it off with the addition of a 3D experience. Some bits haven't necessarily aged the best but who cares; this is classic Sonic at its absolute best. M2 has also been kind enough to provide a stage select mode, allowing gamers to replay their favourite levels from the get-go.

If you want to legitimately finish the game from beginning to end, you'll need to nab all 7 Chaos Emeralds before the final boss, or enjoy a couple of repeat playthroughs until you get the chance to collect everything again.

PlayStation Vita

Persona fans will be dancing all night long with the latest incarnation in the series

Reviewer: Manny Pham – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Persona 4: Dancing All Night

Developer: NIS America Publisher: Atlus

Where to Buy: Online Price: £29.99



It's time for more Persona but not how we're used to it. The Persona series has always had a great soundtrack accompanying it, so why not make a rhythm game? Rhythm games are still a bit of a niche here in the West, despite the popularity of Guitar Hero (and the fall of Guitar Hero). This is due mainly because the Japanese arcade scene is thriving with a variety of rhythm titles for your pleasure, while in the West it died in the late 80s. In the land of the rising sun rhythm games are the norm, the likes of Taiko no Tatsujin and Project Diva are regulars at arcades, and Japanese consoles with spin-offs and sequels.

The Persona series has made a name for itself, finding a place in the hearts of many JRPG fans with deep plots and creative gameplay that modern RPGs need to stand out nowadays. Persona 4 Golden was the last time we saw a Persona game on the Vita, Dancing All Night is set roughly a month after Persona 4 Golden. Rise Kujikawa is going back to her idol ways in a big comeback at the Love Meets Bonds Festival. The rest of the investigation squad are involved as Rise wants them to be back-up dancers to calm her nerves. A bit of a tall order from your mates who haven't trained for years in a difficult craft, but it's a Japanese game and

friendship always prevails in the end. Conveniently things start to go wrong as Rise's fellow idols start disappearing. The squad investigate further to discover the existence of the Midnight Stage, where fighting is not allowed and combat is done through dance. Through dance you connect with the shadow audience and defeat them after a successful dance.

The dancing you will conduct through your Vita's controller, combinations of buttons and d-pad directions will come flying at you from the centre of the screen. This can be quite annoying as there is a lot going on. It's all gorgeous with some amazing colours and animation, but the screen can get busy quite quickly. We found it easier to focus on the music and trust us, that isn't hard at all. If you're a fan of the Persona series you'll be very familiar with the songs in tow. There are also remixes to add more variety and prevent gameplay getting repetitive – which can happen easily with a rhythm game, if the soundtrack isn't on-point.

It'll also be the reason why you'll be coming back to Dancing All Night. Once you unlock every outfit and achievement you can there isn't anything else to really have you come back. We found ourselves switching the Vita on just to go through the music player and nod/sing-along to our favourite tracks. Dancing All Night is one for the fans. If you're a newcomer to the Persona/Shin Megami Tensei series, go play Persona 4 Golden first. But if you're an avid rhythm gamer, well then Dancing All Night is a solid choice.



Danganronpa Another Episode: Ultra Despair Girls ★★★★★

Developer: NIS America **Publisher:** Spike Chunsoft
Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £39.99

You cannot move for JRPG titles on the PS Vita, which makes it a bit easier to choke down the fact Sony will not be focusing much on first party titles for it. Danganronpa isn't a JRPG, sorry for the misdirection. It tells a story intensely just like a JRPG, with endearing characters complemented by English voice acting that wasn't just thrown together at the last minute (I'm looking at you Star Ocean). Another Episode is a spin-off to the main Danganronpa titles, taking place between the events of Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc and Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair. The plot follows Komaru Naegi, sister of protagonist Makoto Naegi, from Trigger Happy Havoc. Komaru was imprisoned for a year until she is attacked by the homicidal Monokumas, kickstarting her adventure to escape the riots of Towa City.

In this third-person action adventure game you will be shooting bears in the face with Komaru's Truth Gun, which can be upgraded to shoot more powerful and creative Truth Bullets. With creative bullets and environment design the gameplay is quite engaging, when there is actual gameplay that is. Going back to the JRPG comparison, there is a lot of narrative in Another Episode. Stopping and starting isn't for everyone. But if you can persevere and genuinely enjoy a good story, pick up that Vita because it's not dead yet.



Corpse Party: Blood Drive

Developer: 5pb **Publisher:** GrindHouse
Where to Buy: Online **Price:** £29.99



Survival horrors! Don't we just love them? From Resident Evil to Silent Hill, we've had a rich history of it. Not recently though. Survival horrors have been quite, well, horrible. The recent iteration of Resident Evil was dire, The Evil Within was average at best and P.T showed so much promise only to be cancelled by a bunch of money-hungry morons who need a pachinko machine to the face.

Thankfully survival horror games live on through Corpse Party: Blood Drive, a survival horror adventure game with third-person and top-down perspectives. Gameplay-wise Corpse Party is very survival horror. The game has you running away from the ghosts, avoiding lines of sight and the classic hide in a closet and don't breathe. If you haven't played the previous titles then you won't enjoy Blood Drive as much. There are a lot of references and backstory to previous characters and events. But if you have you are in for a ride. The game is very gory and disturbing with a constant tense atmosphere. Blood Drive takes place after Corpse Party: Book of Shadows. You're placed in the shoes of Ayumi, who is tasked with retrieving the Book of Shadows, armed with nothing but a torch wandering around and avoiding ghosts. It's the sense of not knowing that really got to us. You're trying to stay away from these ghosts yet you're also trying to trigger the next story event to progress. If you're a fan of the series Blood Drive is a must, but it isn't much of an upgrade from Book of Shadows.

WHAT MOBILE

BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying a new device can be a difficult decision. Our comprehensive buyer's guide is here to help you.



55 Phone reviews

85 Tablet reviews

94 Wearables reviews



Acer Liquid Jade

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £199

www.acer.co.uk

A decent handset from a smaller brand, the Liquid Jade has all the components in place to be a much better handset than it actually is. What holds it back is Acer's lack of polish when compared with bigger brands such as Motorola. The end result is a handset that you could settle for, but probably shouldn't.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.5 x 69 x 7.5mm
Weight 110g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A decent low-end handset, but there are too many better alternatives.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Acer Z220

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £50

www.acer.co.uk

The Acer Z220 performs solidly as a communications device but anything extra-curricular is asking too much. Should you decide to purchase one, there are too many add-ons you have to buy externally, which defeats the purpose of a budget phone. If you're looking for a basic device that can connect to the internet, make calls and text, this could be for you.

OS Android Lollipop v5.0
Processor 1.2 GHz Qualcomm MSM8210 Dual-core
Screen 4.0-inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM (8GB), 2GB RAM (16GB)
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes,

up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 125.3 x 64 x 9.6 mm
Weight 120g
Battery 1300mAh

VERDICT: A solid budget phone for calls and texts, but that's all it's really good for.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Alcatel One Touch Pop S3

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80

www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

The Alcatel One Touch POP S3 has its merits, especially taking into account the sub-£100 price of the device. The problem here is that by making room for 4G capability Alcatel has been forced to make cutbacks in crucial areas. However, if you are simply after the option to access faster web browsing and app speeds on the go, then the POP S3 offers you that at the cheapest price possible.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123 x 64.4 x 9.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, sure, but its poor quality renders its 4G capability near pointless.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Alcatel One Touch Idol Alpha

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

While it's good to see manufacturers branching out from the traditional black slab design, the Idol Alpha is a reminder of why the slab works. There are just too many compromises here, and the hardware does not make amends for them. Aside from the fact that Android itself is a powerful operating system that you can tailor to your heart's content, there's very little to redeem this phone.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 138 x 66.6 x 7.5mm
Weight 117.4 g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent camera is the only redeeming feature on this overpriced handset.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Alcatel One Touch Idol X+

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £TBC
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

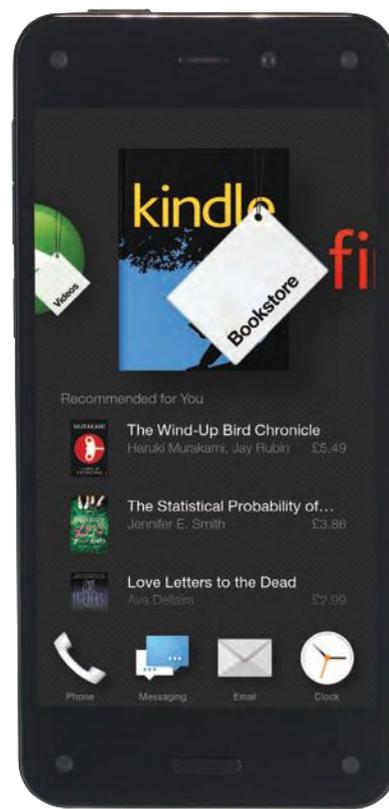
We usually greet lesser-known brands with open arms, but never has one disappointed as much as Alcatel with its One Touch Idol X+. Despite decent specs, it's the handset's flaws that hog the limelight. It's outperformed by other handsets in its price bracket in just about every respect. It's hard to envisage anyone patient enough to waste their time with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Octa-core 2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.4 x 69.1 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: With such great competition the One Touch Idol X+ simply looks irrelevant.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Amazon Fire Phone

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £400

When we first learned of the 3D capabilities of the Amazon Fire Phone we thought it might be a gimmick. Instead, it turned out to be the feature we love the most. Its other interface aspects are riddled with hiccups which can add to some severe usability issues. Its design has some questionable choices, too. It has a lot of potential though, and we're eagerly looking forward to a sequel.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 13MP front-facing,

2.1MP rear-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.2 x 66.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A promising yet flawed debut effort, recommendable only to the curious.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPhone 5c

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £469 (16GB) £549 (32GB)

If you need a splash of colour in your life and you're already a massive fan of the iOS operating system, then the iPhone 5c is much the same as the previous iPhone 5. There's a slightly upgraded front-facing camera and 4G will work on any UK network, but other than that you're getting the exact same thing. The iPhone 5c is simply around for those of you who love great design without breaking the bank.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 640 x 1136 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing

Video 1080
Connectivity 4G
Size 12.4 x 59.2 x 9mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,510 mAh

VERDICT: It's the most colourful iPhone to date, but it's identical to the iPhone 5.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPhone 5s

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £549 (16GB) £629 (32GB) £709 (64GB)

With fingerprint identity, a 64-bit A7 chip and delivering up to twice the performance of the iPhone 4 and 5c, many people will opt to pay the extra £80 or so over the 5c. They'll also get an improved camera with 15 per cent larger sensor and improved low-light capabilities. The True Tone flash incorporates two flashes each matched to different light temperatures so flesh tones are more natural with flash pictures.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz ARM V8
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1136 x 640 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing,

1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123.8 x 58.6 x 7.6mm
Weight 112g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: The gold standard in user-friendly smartphones, with a ton of power to boot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPhone 6

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £539
www.apple.com/uk/iphone

Calling it 'the best iPhone ever' almost seems a little redundant. Of course it's better – it's more powerful, has a better camera, and NFC could soon become a huge deal. We're not quite as keen on the aesthetics of it versus older iPhone designs, but it's still got a wonderful premium build and a beautifully sharp display. The option for greatly expanded storage sizes shouldn't be undervalued, either.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1334 x 750 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/64/128GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138.1 x 67 x 6.9mm
Weight 129g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: Bigger and better than ever, just as you'd expect. The definitive iPhone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPhone 6 Plus

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £619
www.apple.com/uk/iphone

It's the iPhone 6, but bigger. That's the only difference, and it comes with all of the ups and downs that you would expect from a phablet. You'll either love or hate the larger screen which, while still beautiful, is slightly less sharp than its little brother's. Similarly it might be tough for smaller hands to hold. But then you do get to see more things on screen at once. It's still a remarkable phone though, make no mistake.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 158.1 x 77.8 x 7.1mm
Weight 172g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: A bigger iPhone 6 – it's really that simple. Prefer it or not, it's great regardless.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPhone 6s

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £539
www.apple.com/uk/iphone

The iPhone 6s may not offer that much to warrant an immediate upgrade but it still has enough new features to welcome new adopters to the platform. Force Touch genuinely works well and has plenty of future potential, while the hardware and low-light camera improvements make this more than just a simple cash cow.

OS iOS 9
Processor 1.84 GHz Dual Core Apple A9
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1334 x 750 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/64/128GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 12MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing

Video 4K at 30FPS
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138 x 67 x 7.1 mm
Weight 143g
Battery 1,712 mAh

VERDICT: Plenty of new features make this another sure-fire hit for Apple.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Archos 50 Helium

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £199
archos.com

If the Moto G and Moto E are the gold standard of entry-level and low-cost smartphones, then the 50 Helium is certainly worthy of silver. It's got a nice big screen as well as invaluable 4G capability. It won't set the world alight, but it's a standout in a market awash with cheap, limited handsets.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE

Dimensions 145 x 71.5 x 8.95mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A capable alternative to the market-leading Moto G.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





BlackBerry Classic

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £330
uk.blackberry.com

BlackBerry diehards will love the modern touchscreen and keyboard – and even some actual apps, just like a proper smartphone. There are certainly worse handsets you could be issued at work. But there's nothing here to tempt an iPhone, Android or Windows user. For almost everyone other than BlackBerry fans, this phone is just a reminder of how far we've moved on in recent years.

OS BlackBerry OS 10.3.1
Processor Dual-core 1.5GHz Krait
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing

Video 1080p @ 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 131 x 72.4 x 10.2mm
Weight 177g
Battery 2,515 mAh

VERDICT: Difficult to recommend to all but the most ardent of BlackBerry fans.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



BlackBerry Passport

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £530
uk.blackberry.com

A premium device by anyone's standards – if you can look past the thoroughly odd design. Undeniably BlackBerry's most advanced device ever, it's still clearly angled towards the business crowd with a focus on productivity. The same old BlackBerry problems persist though, with an inferior OS and app store. It's just too impractical and limited for personal use.

OS BlackBerry 10.3
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1440 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing,

2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 128 x 90.3 x 9.3mm
Weight 194g
Battery 3,450 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build and top specs are betrayed by off-putting, strange design.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



BlackBerry Z30

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £500
uk.blackberry.com

Perhaps if BlackBerry had focused on its efforts on making a phone like this five years ago we would be looking at a very different picture now. As it stands, a barren app store, odd features and a monster price tag may kill what could have been a competitive device. It's still surprisingly easy on the eye though, and its display doesn't look too bad either.

OS BlackBerry 10
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.7 x 72 x 9.4
Weight 170g
Battery 2,880 mAh

VERDICT: Possibly the best BlackBerry yet, but that's not saying an awful lot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





BWC Stealth V2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £300
www.bwcdevices.com

With good specs available at low prices there's never been a better time to pick up a rugged smartphone (if that's what you need). The Stealth V2 lives up to both the 'rugged' and 'smart' tags, with surprisingly capable insides. It also passed all of our stress tests, with countless drops, bashes and drownings failing to leave so much as a mark.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 133 x 69 x 20mm
Weight 230g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: As smart and tough as it promises.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



CAT B100

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.catphones.com

The CAT B100 withstands harsh conditions and jarring blows with a tough outer shell that absorbs the impact of falls, and impressive waterproofing. Beyond that, the phone lacks features games and apps – but chances are that's not why you're buying this phone. If you need a rugged handset to take adventuring, though, it's more than tough enough.

OS Nucleus 2.1
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 2.2 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 50MB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 3MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video QVGA

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 122.94 x 55.88 x 7.6mm
Weight 136g
Battery 1,150 mAh

VERDICT: Tough enough to take into a warzone, if a little light on actual function.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Doro 820 Mini

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £169
www.doro.co.uk

The Doro 820 Mini's software is simple to use; first-time smartphone users and the elderly won't get confused by any cumbersome on-screen options. Unfortunately, this usability has been hampered by hardware problems. A slow processor creates annoying delays when navigating through the phone, while a poor build quality ruins what could have otherwise been a decent budget phone.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Size 125 x 69.5 x 14.95mm
Weight 170g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A rugged phone for those who need to rely on it in any environment.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Doro Liberto 820

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £186
www.doro.co.uk

It's easy to dismiss Doro phones as obsolete. This is to ignore that Doro isn't interested in attracting phone geeks and techno-fashionistas. These phones are for those value simplicity above processing power. Doro targets the 'senior' market. But with its SOS button and useful short cuts the Liberto 820 will appeal to those are not slaves to trends in consumer electronics.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat with Doro Wizard
Processor 1.3Ghz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 940 x 560
Memory 1GB
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 13mm x 71mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,900 mAh

VERDICT: A surprisingly well-featured phone for the more tech-savvy of seniors.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Doro PhoneEasy 624

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £100
www.doro.co.uk

The PhoneEasy 624 is Doro's best feature phone offering for those who want to keep things as simple, while making sure important contacts are only a button push away. It's got a 3G antenna, lengthy battery life, but a needlessly dire camera.

OS Custom
Processor N/A
Screen 2.4 inches
Resolution 320 x 240 pixels
Memory N/A
Storage N/A
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 2MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G

Dimensions 102 x 52 x 19mm
Weight 104g
Battery 800 mAh

VERDICT: A well featured phone for the price if you're in the market for that sort of thing.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



EE Kestrel

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £99
www.doro.co.uk

The EE Kestrel is the best entry-level 4G handset on the market and this is in no small part due to Huawei. The manufacturer has built a solid handset that consumers will use beyond its 4G-LTE capability. Although, its weak resolution is a major flaw, it has plenty of other positive attributes including a smooth UI, the ability to handle a vast range of games and decent web and app browsing speeds.

OS Android 4.3 (Jelly Bean)
Processor 1.2Ghz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G, 3G
Dimensions 131 x 65.3 x 7.85mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A reliable handset that boasts good usability, if underwhelming specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Google Nexus 6

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £499
www.google.com/nexus/6/

The Nexus 6 is a reminder of exactly what so many manufacturers are doing wrong by overly modifying Android. Google's flagship is a tremendous powerhouse – more of a media hub than a mere smartphone, and one of the best phablets on the market. Whether you'd rather it had a stylus is a matter of preference, though.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2.7 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.96 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 4K

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 82.98mm x 159.26mm x 10.06mm
Weight 184g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Fast, fresh and tremendously powerful. A dream for Android purists.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Honor 7

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £250
www.hihonor.com/en/pages/products/honor7

The Honor 7 is a solid handset that has the looks and appeal to captivate many buyers. It's got a great screen and impressive camera that has a few unique features up its sleeve. Unfortunately, it also suffers from mixed performance that seems to be a result of the Kirin chipset. If you're a keen mobile gamer, this could be an issue.

OS Android Lollipop v5.0
Processor Kirin 935 (8 cores: 2.2 GHz quad core + 1.5 GHz quad-core)
Screen 5.2-inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB
Storage 16GB/ 64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Camera 20MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 143 x 72 x 8.5 mm
Weight 157g
Battery 3,100mAh

VERDICT: Great looks and impressive camera but performance could be an issue.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC Desire 626

Reviewed: October 2015, price: £150
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC Desire 626 is a solid handset that performs fine in most areas. Should you decide to purchase one, it will likely serve you very well under most conditions. The only problem arises from the £150 retail price, which puts it squarely in the firing line of budget superstars such as the Vodafone Smart Ultra 6. Had HTC priced it slightly cheaper, it may well have been worth more serious consideration.

OS Android 5.1
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 410
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 512GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing,

5MP front-facing
Video 1,080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 147 x 71 x 8.2 mm
Weight 135g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: There are better deals out there. Still, this is a perfectly capable phone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





HTC Desire 816

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £300
www.htc.com/uk

In a market lacking a viable midrange phablet the HTC Desire 816 stands out. It might have its flaws, but for the price you can certainly look past them. If you can't, then a midrange device probably isn't for you. For the rest of us, there's no better option for getting your hands on a jumbo screen on the cheap.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.6GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1.5GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 156.6 x 78.7 x 7.9mm
Weight 165g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A triumphant, large addition to a fantastic 2014 product line for HTC.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC Desire 820

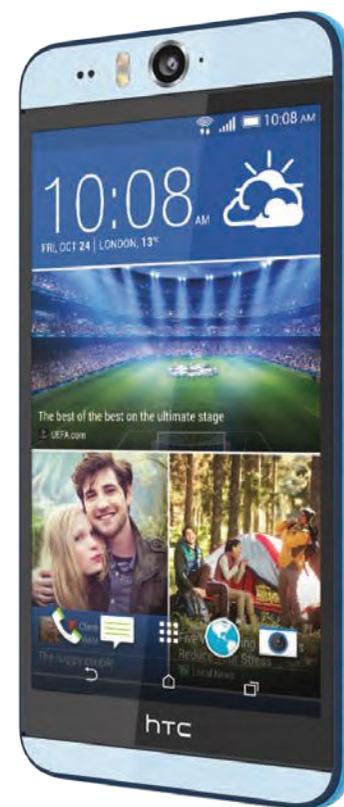
Reviewed: June 2015, price: £299
www.htc.com/uk

A large display, fantastic cameras and attractive design makes the HTC Desire 820 an ideal choice if you're after an affordable phone with plenty of features. It's only been let down by the fact that it doesn't pack an HD screen and that it doesn't run the latest Android software. It's also quite pricey compared to the OnePlus One; a phone that is a serious rival.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.7 x 78.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, attractive and packed full of features.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC Desire Eye

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £365
www.htc.com/uk

While we love the cameras (having a front-facer as highly powered as the rear-facer is a huge boon, particularly for selfie-lovers) the Desire Eye's build quality and price make it a tougher sell than you might think. It does look nice though, and is an interesting concept. Just not a 100% successful one.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 13MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.7 x 73.8 x 8.5mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A hard sell when the superior One M8 can now be bought for the same price.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

HTC One M8

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £530
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One M8 is, in all probability, the best smartphone ever made. It both looks and performs better than almost everything else out there. Features like Blinkfeed and knock-to-wake are a joy to use. If Apple, Sony and Samsung weren't paying attention before, they certainly are now.

| | |
|--|--|
| OS Android 4.4 KitKat | Connectivity 4G |
| Processor 2.3GHz quad-core | Dimensions 146.36 x 70.6 x 9.35mm |
| Screen 5 inches | Weight 160g |
| Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels | Battery 2,600 mAh |
| Memory 2GB RAM | |
| Storage 16GB or 32GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 4MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 5MP front-facing | |
| Video 1080p | |

VERDICT: If you can afford it, buy it. There's no better Android handset on the market.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

HTC One M9

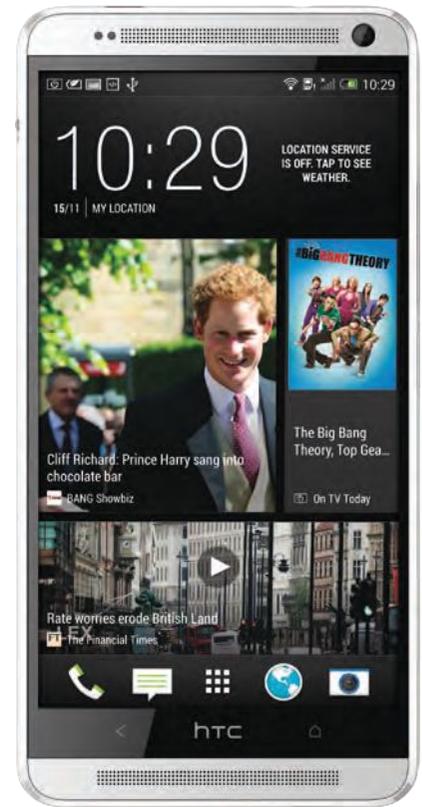
Reviewed: May 2015, price: £580
www.htc.com/uk

The One M9 is HTC's first major release of 2015 and its top-notch build quality, powerful processor and phenomenal battery life makes it one of our favourite phones of this year. However, it doesn't really provide anything different to what flagship rivals like the iPhone 6 already offers. Despite that, the HTC One M9 is still one of the best looking and most powerful phones on the market.

| | |
|---|---|
| OS Android 5.0 Lollipop | Video 4k |
| Processor 4 x 2GHz + 4 x 1.5GHz octa-core | Connectivity 4G |
| Screen 5 inches | Dimensions 144.6 x 69.7 x 9.61mm |
| Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels | Weight 157g |
| Memory 3GB RAM | Battery 2,840 mAh |
| Storage 32GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 4MP UltraPixel front-facing | |

VERDICT: It has no unique selling point but it's still one of the best devices out there.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



HTC One Max

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £599
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One Max piggybacks the reputation of the HTC One, although nothing much has improved. The high-quality display is present but HTC has failed to add processing power and the fingerprint sensor implementation is very disappointing.

| | |
|--|---|
| OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean | Video 1080p |
| Processor 1.7GHz quad-core | Connectivity 4G |
| Screen 5.9 inches | Dimensions 164.5 x 82.5 x 10.3mm |
| Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels | Weight 217g |
| Memory 2GB | Battery 3,300 mAh |
| Storage 16GB or 32GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 4MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing | |

VERDICT: The HTC One's design is still a standout but there's nothing new here.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |





HTC One Mini 2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £360
www.htc.com/uk

Your opinion of the One Mini 2 will come down to what you mostly use your phone for. If you don't put too much strain on its struggling processor then you should be fine. It's got a magnificent pair of cameras, and that trademark HTC metal unibody build can't be beat. Day-to-day users will be more than satisfied – hardcore tech-heads should stick with the One M8.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.4 x 64 x 10.6mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,110 mAh

VERDICT: Powered to match its stature, but still a very polished, attractive device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Ascend G7

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £205
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

With a large screen and the gorgeous looks that remind us of the iPhone 6; the Huawei Ascend G7 might look good on the outside but the software is another story. Huawei has redesigned Google's vanilla Android operating system and reskinned it as something that looks both cheap and ugly. Despite that, the Ascend G7 is a decent choice if you want an iPhone 6-lookalike that runs Android software.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 77.3 x 7.6mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Its great performance is ruined by a cheap and ugly looking operating system.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Ascend P7

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £365
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

The Ascend P7 feels like a missed opportunity. Huawei should have put its full weight into creating a top-level flagship handset. However, its underpowered processor is its only real flaw. It looks premium and its front-facing camera is the best on the market. Its price could be a sticking point, but it's by no means a bad device.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.8GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.8 x 68.8 x 6.5mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: It's not quite a market-leading flagship but at least it looks the part.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Huawei P8

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £395
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An attractive device that gives you top-of-the-range specs and a fantastic camera for half the price of the Samsung Galaxy S6 or iPhone. The performance isn't as slick as its major rivals, but that isn't a deal breaker. Especially when the phone costs half the price of the iPhone 6 and Samsung Galaxy S6.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/64GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 144x72x6.4mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,680 mAh

VERDICT: Flagship specs for half the price of a Galaxy S6 or iPhone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Honor 4x

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £144.99
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An affordable phone that offers solid battery life and plenty of features. The build quality even feels better than the LG G4, a smartphone that costs double its recommended retail price. Honor isn't a big name over in the West, but phones like the 4X are helping it head in that direction. It's just a shame that the processor is a little on the weak side.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor HiSilicon Kirin 620
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 153x77x8.7mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A solid phone at a bargain price, you'll be surprised at how good it looks.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Honor 6+

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £299.99
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

If you're after an affordable device with plenty of top-notch features, you can't really go wrong with the Huawei Honor 6+. The camera is unique, the performance is fantastic and battery life is better than more expensive phones. Its slow camera and inability to handle certain apps are only minor negatives – the Honor 6+ is well worth the money.

OS Android KitKat 4.4.2
Processor Kirin octo-core 925
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera Dual 8MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 151x76x7.5mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,600 mAh

VERDICT: A flagship phone with excellent battery life that doesn't break the bank.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Kazam Tornado 348

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £247
www.kazam.mobi

Despite great looks and smooth performance, lack of 4G connectivity and storage makes the Tornado 348 something of a non-starter for serious users. The casual market will be plenty content with what's on offer here – particularly those eye-catching physical dimensions.

| | |
|---|---|
| OS Android KitKat 4.4 | Connectivity 3G |
| Processor 1.7Ghz octa-core | Dimensions 139.8 x 67.5 x 5.15mm |
| Screen 4.8 inches | Weight 95.5g |
| Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels | Battery 2,050 mAh |
| Memory 1GB RAM | |
| Storage 16GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? No | |
| Camera 8MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing | |
| Video 720p | |

VERDICT: Standout design and performance at an attractive price.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Kazam Thunder Q4.5

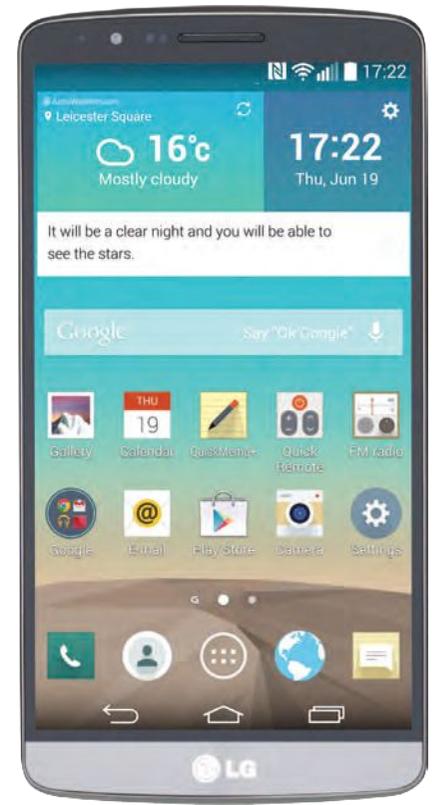
Reviewed: April 2014, price: £TBC
www.kazam.mobi

The Thunder Q4.5 is a sure case of style over substance, but in the lower-cost end of the market you'd usually be lucky to get either. While the phone lacks standout features it won't let you down when it comes to everyday smartphone functionality. If you're in the market and want to try something new, you could certainly do an awful lot worse.

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean | Connectivity 3G |
| Processor 1.3GHz quad-core | Dimensions 136 x 64.6 x 8.9mm |
| Screen 4.5 inches | Weight 137g |
| Resolution 854 x 480 pixels | Battery 1,800 mAh |
| Memory 1GB RAM | |
| Storage 1.74GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing | |
| Video 720p | |

VERDICT: It may be flawed, but at this price point you'd be hard pushed to beat it.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



LG G3

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £499
www.lg.com/uk

Only minor detractions stop the LG G3 from being the perfect smartphone. That said, there's no such thing as the perfect smartphone just yet, so the G3 is still a wonderful piece of kit. It has outstanding features, hardware, and form to boot. The best display around, a monstrous processor and a variety of little touches all make the G3 a special smartphone.

| | |
|--|--|
| OS Android 4.4 (KitKat) | Connectivity 4G |
| Processor 2.5GHz quad-core | Dimensions 146.3 x 74.6 x 8.9mm |
| Screen 5.5 inches | Resolution 1440 x 2560 pixels |
| Memory 2GB RAM | Weight 149g |
| Storage 16GB or 32GB | Battery 3,000 mAh |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing | |
| Video 2160p | |

VERDICT: Want the best? The G3 is absolutely deserving of your consideration.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |





LG G4

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £500
www.lg.com/uk

The unique leather design and incredible camera certainly helps the LG G4 stand out against rivals like the iPhone 6. However, the fact it doesn't have the strongest processor on the market, alongside an average battery and awkward button placement, means it doesn't really stand up as a true iPhone and Galaxy smasher.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.4GHz quad core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 149 x 76 x 9.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A monster device let down by a weak processor. Not a Galaxy S6 killer.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



LG G4c

Reviewed: October 2015, price: £229
www.lg.com/uk

The LG G4c is solidly average, with a few fun gimmicks that don't quite make up for the photo quality. For those who simply want a day-to-day workhorse, it is not a bad option, but it's not for those who are looking for something heavy-duty.

OS Android
Processor Quad-core 1.3 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon
Screen 5.0 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1,080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.7 x 69.9 x 10.2 mm
Weight 139g
Battery 2,540 mAh

VERDICT: Solidly average for everyday use, but not for heavy-duty users.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



LG G Flex

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £570
www.lg.com/uk

The curved display may add very little, but with a state-of-the-art spec sheet and a fantastic display, the LG G Flex nails the basics of a high-end smartphone. However the £570 price and so-so camera make it difficult to recommend – at least when compared to its cheaper, better rivals. The Flex just isn't the innovation LG believes it to be.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 160.5 x 81.6 x 7.9mm
Weight 177g
Battery 3,500 mAh

VERDICT: A powerful phone held back by a steep price for an unnecessary gimmick.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





LG Spirit 4G

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £129.99
www.lg.com/uk

At only £129.99, there's little to criticise in this budget mid-range device that looks a lot like a shrunken down LG G4. It has enough performance for most users and comes with Android 5.0 right out of the box. The only problem is the weak front and rear cameras, which distract from an otherwise competent package.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.3 Ghz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 133x66x10mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A competent mid-range device with Android Lollipop and good specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto E (2015)

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £109
www.motorola.co.uk

Paying £109 for a full-blown, powerful 4G smartphone is seriously good value for money. This value is only increased by a high-quality camera, powerful processor and excellent battery life. The only major faults we found when testing the phone included no LED camera flash, a plastic body that easily picks up marks and a fiddly SIM-card slot.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 410, 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
 Resolution 540 X 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing,

640 x 480 front-facing
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.9 x 66.8mm, 146g
Weight 145g
Battery 2,390 mAh

VERDICT: After a smartphone that's seriously good value? This is for you.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto G (1st Gen)

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £135
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto G is a budget smartphone done right. It makes smart and sensible sacrifices to slash its price to a point that puts its rivals to shame. For people who don't demand the highest specs and best camera from a phone, the Moto G's easy-to-use system and fast speeds make it an ideal choice.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 129.9 x 65.9 x 11.6mm
Weight 143g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: The best option for customers on a budget.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Motorola Moto G (2nd Gen)

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

It's an updated version of the Moto G – nothing more, nothing less. The lack of 4G is extremely disappointing, and a processor upgrade would have been nice. Still, a bigger screen, a better camera and MicroSD compatibility is extremely welcome. When it comes to affordable phones that can actually perform, the Moto G is still untouchable.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 149g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: A solid improvement on the best, but no 4G gives it a limited shelf life.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto G 4G (2nd Gen)

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

One of the best value smartphones on the market, the large display, 4G connectivity and latest Android operating software makes it well worth the price. Combine all of this with the phone's fantastic build quality and the Motorola Moto G 4G is well worth keeping after your contract expires.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2390 mAh

VERDICT: Priced between £200-£400, this smartphone undermines the competition.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto G (3rd Gen)

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £159
www.motorola.co.uk

Motorola has done it again with another device that punches above its weight and mostly improves on its predecessor. Every area is catered for here, offering impressive battery life, a brilliant camera and adequate performance. If you're looking for a solid Android device that won't break the bank, the Moto G is worth consideration.

OS Android Lollipop v5.1.1
Processor 1.4 GHz Snapdragon 410
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM (8GB), 2GB RAM (16GB)
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD compatible?
Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142 x 72 x 11.6 mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2,470mAh

VERDICT: Solid device that offers perfectly fine performance across the board.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Motorola Moto X (2nd Gen)

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.motorola.co.uk

A rock-solid handset with helpful features. This is the best place to experience Google Now, making voice operation genuinely useful. Mix in a sleek design, great camera and long battery life and the £380 price tag is justified. If you can afford the extra £150 then it makes for a sterling upper-mid tier upgrade to the Motorola Moto G.

| | |
|--|---|
| OS Android 4.4 KitKat | Connectivity 4G |
| Processor 1.7GHz dual-core | Dimensions 129.3 x 65.3 x 10.4mm |
| Screen 4.7 inches | Weight 130g |
| Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels | Battery 2,200 mAh |
| Memory 2GB RAM | |
| Storage 16/32GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? No | |
| Camera 10MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing | |
| Video 1080p | |

VERDICT: For those looking to step up from the budget tier: your search is over.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Motorola Moto X (2014) (1st Gen)

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £420
www.motorola.co.uk

Motorola's original Moto X was a nice idea executed a little too late. Competition from superior phones from manufacturers with a stronger recent track record was too great to overcome. But this latest version makes a much stronger case for your cash. It's got some excellent features and will surely be beloved by fans of stock Android.

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| OS Android 4.4 KitKat | Connectivity 4G |
| Processor 2.5GHz quad-core | Dimensions 140.8 x 72.4 x 10mm |
| Screen 5.2 inches | Weight 144g |
| Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels | Battery 2,300 mAh |
| Memory 2GB RAM | |
| Storage 16/32GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? No | |
| Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing | |
| Video 2160p | |

VERDICT: The best Motorola ever, and arguably the best Android handset of 2014.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Nokia Asha 503

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £70
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Nokia's Asha 503 is a brilliantly tiny handset that stays usable despite the smaller screen. If you want a dirt-cheap phone then you might be better off with a sub-£50 handset and its design is a little spiky. But anyone looking for a phone to keep them busy for five minutes on a bus will find plenty to love here.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| OS Nokia Asha platform 1.2 | Dimensions 102.6 x 60.6 x 12.7mm |
| Processor N/A | Weight 110.2g |
| Screen 3 inches | Battery 1,200 mAh |
| Resolution 240 x 320 pixels | |
| Memory 128MB RAM | |
| Storage 4GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 5MP rear-facing | |
| Video QVGA | |
| Connectivity 3G | |

VERDICT: A good entry into the budget market that offers more than the basics.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |





Nokia Lumia 435

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £40
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It won't shake the world but for 40 quid you can hardly expect it to. This is a very cheap phone that has all the features you would expect from more expensive handsets. While it doesn't excel in any particular area and the camera is pretty terrible, you'll be lucky if you find anything that performs this well for the price. A genuine bargain.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 800 x 480
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Cameras 2MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 118 x 65 x 11.7mm
Weight 131g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: A bargain-bin handset that still manages to run Windows Phone very well.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 640

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £109.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It's incredible what Microsoft has managed to cram into such a cheap, inconspicuous phone. It has nailed all the major points internally, with a great camera, excellent battery and an adequate processor for the well-optimised Windows Phone OS. The only problem is Windows Phone itself, which still struggles to convince the sceptics.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 141 x 72 x 8.8mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A brilliant battery and solid performance make this a bargain device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 640 XL

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £180
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although it is more expensive than the 640, you get the advantage of a much bigger screen and some seriously good battery life. The camera has also gotten a bump too, producing some excellent images for this price-point. It's just a shame that the processor hasn't been improved to complement them.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.9 x 81.5 x 9mm
Weight 171g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Not a huge leap up but the camera and battery are worth the money.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 735

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £299
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Microsoft has produced a genuine rival to the bestselling Motorola Moto G in the form of the Lumia 735. With the introduction of an HD display and 4G LTE this is much more than just another selfie phone. But if selfies are what you're after the Lumia 735 offers plenty of fun ways to snap images of you and your friends with its 5-megapixel front camera.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 6.7MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 134.7 x 68.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 134g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: A Windows Phone to match the Moto G, the 735 is a selfie star.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 830

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £267
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Nokia Lumia 830 is not quite the swansong we were hoping for. It's not hugely affordable, and nor does the phone's hardware make full use of that 4G connectivity. Mid-range mobiles seldom convince us of their reason to exist and this final Nokia is no exception. It does look the part, and Cortana is improving, but there are simply better options out there.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 0.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.4 x 70.7 x 8.5mm
Weight 150g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: Underpowered and overpriced, the Lumia 830 is average and forgettable.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 925

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £479
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

With the Lumia 925 Nokia hasn't set out to reinvent the wheel, it has just built on its past achievements to put together a brilliant phone. A gorgeous slimmed-down design, high performance camera and responsive user interface all set this handset apart from the rest of the Lumia range and make it a top level device in the high-end smartphone market. One of the best out there.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 760
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129 x 70.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 139g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic camera, slick design and great user interface make this top dog.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 930

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £420
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The plus side for those looking for something different is that Windows Phone has come along enough now that its mere presence on a handset isn't enough to relegate it completely. The Lumia 930 is the flagship that the range has been crying out for for far too long now, and if you don't mind having a relatively restricted ecosystem then you should have very few issues with it.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 137 x 71 x 9.8mm
Weight 167g
Battery 2,420 mAh

VERDICT: The closest to rivalling Android and iOS that Windows Phone has ever come.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 1020

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £639.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 1020 is an ideal smartphone for those of you who don't care about apps and it's perfect if you love to take great pictures. It might not be the slimmest device you can get your hands on but the 1020's powerful camera is well worth the extra bulk.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 760
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 41MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video: 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 130.4 x 71.4 x 10.4mm
Weight: 158g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A top smartphone with an astounding camera – one of the best.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 1320

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £280
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 925 and 1020 were large enough, and the lack of software taking advantage of the big display, unlike with the Samsung Galaxy Note, means those extra inches just leave you looking faintly ridiculous when answering a call. You're better off spending your money on an Android phablet or Google's Nexus 5.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 164.2 x 85.9 x 9.8mm
Weight 220g
Battery 3,400 mAh

VERDICT: A good phone but the Nexus 5 simply undercuts the competition too well.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 1520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £550
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although the Nokia Lumia 1520 weighs in at a whopping £550 (SIM-free), it could cost you considerably more to purchase a standalone camera, camcorder, satnav, tablet and a laptop computer that can run Microsoft Office.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 162.8 x 85.4 x 8.7mm
Weight 209g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: A great all-in-one device that mashes the best of Nokia together.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



OnePlus One

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £269
www.oneplus.net

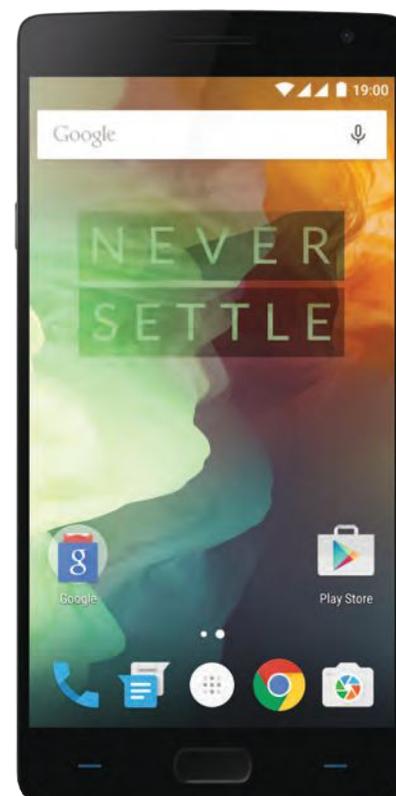
If you're not bothered about Samsung, Apple or any of the other big brand names, then we highly recommend the OnePlus One. It offers class-leading specs for half the price of an iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6. That attractive price is topped off by excellent build quality and unlimited customisation options.

OS Cyanogenmod version of Android 4.4
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801
Screen 5.5 inches Gorilla Glass 3
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes

Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Connectivity 4G, dual-band wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC, GOS antenna
Video 1080 HD
Dimensions 152.9 x 75.9 x 8.9mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3100 mAh

VERDICT: A top-spec smartphone for half the price of the iPhone 6? Yes please!

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



OnePlus Two

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £289
www.oneplus.net

With only its second device ever, OnePlus has knocked it out of the park with the OnePlus 2. It has improved a lot on the OnePlus One with the seemingly endless battery life, souped-up specs and, of course, the incredible price.

OS Lollipop v5.1
Processor Quad-core 1.56 GHz and 1.82, Snapdragon 810
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels (401 ppi pixel density)
Memory 4GB RAM
Storage 64GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing

Video 2160p@30fps, 720p@120fps
Connectivity 3G & 4G
Dimensions 151.8 x 74.9 x 9.9 mm
Weight 175 g
Battery Non-removable 3300 mAh

VERDICT: A phone so affordable for the specs on offer it would be foolish to pass up.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Panasonic Lumix DMC-CMq

Reviewed: October 2015, price: £799
www.panasonic.com/uk/consumer

This is by no means a cheap device but you most definitely get what you pay for. Considering when it first released, the Panasonic DMC-CM1 had flagship specifications and a true camera sensor to match even the best compact/bridge cameras. Fast forward to now and little has changed; this is still the best camera phone you can get and by quite some distance

OS Android KitKat 4.4.2 (upgradable to 5.0)
Processor 2.3 GHz Snapdragon 801
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.1MP front-facing
Video 2160p (15fps only)
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 135.4 x 68 x 21.1 mm
Weight 204g
Battery 2,600mAh

VERDICT: If you've got the wallet and pocket space for it, you'll be blown away.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Prestigio MultiPhone 5430

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £190
www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio MultiPhone 5430 is a bland piece of kit that lacks any real highlights, but is undoubtedly a capable and efficient smartphone. Perhaps its best feature is that it gets the core experience right, if not groundbreakingly so. The very basics of what you expect from a smartphone in 2013 are here but there isn't much else.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor Intel Atom 1.2GHz
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64.7 x 10mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Perfectly ordinary – but it's positioned as an everyday smartphone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy A7

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £319.99
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy A7 is an attractive proposition. But looks aren't everything. The cheaper £269 OnePlus One offers more power, a similar screen size and up-to-date software. And the £129 Vodafone Smart 4 Max with a bigger screen is less than half the price. If it's about power, not just looking powerful, perhaps look elsewhere.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.5GHz Quad-core
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 151 x 76.2 x 6.3mm
Weight 141g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An attractive device but it has less power than similar devices.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy Ace 3

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £180
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Ace 3 is a good handset that's been made irrelevant by cheaper competition. While it packs a vibrant display and solid specs, similar phones sit well below the £180 benchmark set here. Samsung will have to rethink its pricing. If it weren't for the Moto G's release this would be an emphatic recommendation – unfortunately Samsung will have to settle for the silver medal.

| | |
|---|--|
| OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean | Connectivity 4G LTE |
| Processor 1.2GHz dual-core | Dimensions 121.2 x 62.7 x 9.8mm |
| Screen 4 inches | Weight 115g |
| Resolution 480 x 800 pixels | Battery 1,500 mAh |
| Memory 1GB RAM | |
| Storage 8GB/16GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing | |
| Video 720p | |

VERDICT: Premium build quality and visuals at a good price – just not a great one.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Samsung Galaxy K Zoom

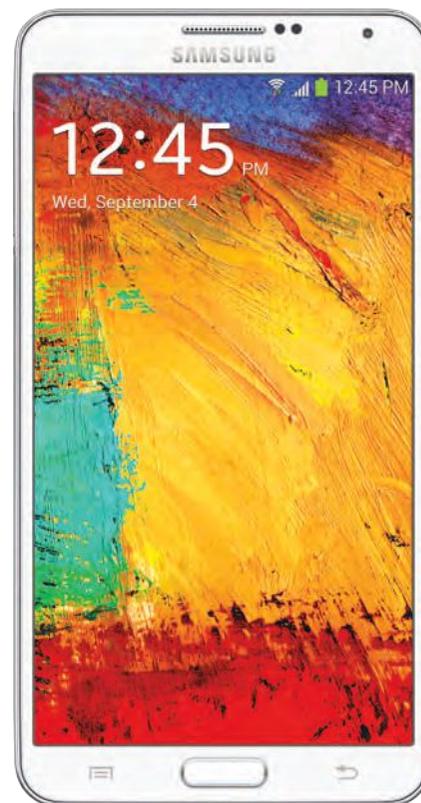
Reviewed: October 2014, price: £400
www.samsung.com/uk

We can see what Samsung set out to achieve with the Galaxy K zoom, and creating a solid Android smartphone with an optical zoom is no small feat. However, it looks like a dated digital camera at best – newer devices are much more compact. If you're after a smartphone with a solid snapper, we'd advise you to seek out the LG G3 or Sony Xperia Z2 instead.

| | |
|---|---|
| OS Android 4.4 (KitKat) | Video 1080p |
| Processor Hexa-core: 1.3GHz quad-core + 1.7GHz dual-core | Connectivity 4G |
| Screen 4.8 inches | Dimensions 137.5 x 70.8 x 16.6mm |
| Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels | Weight 200g |
| Memory 2GB RAM | Battery 2,430 mAh |
| Storage 8GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing | |

VERDICT: A decent smartphone and an excellent camera in a hideous body.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Samsung Galaxy Note 3

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £649
www.samsung.com/uk

The Note 3 steps over the competition with its large, engulfing display and great battery life, but it's the stylus that's the star of the show here, with great integration that makes it an ideal note-keeping device. This makes it ideal for business people on the move, although they'll have to make sure they keep an eye on the easy-to-lose pen at all times.

| | |
|--|--|
| OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean | Dimensions 151.2 x 79.2 x 8.3mm |
| Processor 2.3GHz quad-core | Weight 168g |
| Screen 5.7 inches | Battery 3,200 mAh |
| Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels | |
| Memory 3GB RAM | |
| Storage 16/32/64GB | |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes | |
| Camera 13MP front-facing, 2MP rear-facing | |
| Video 4K | |

VERDICT: A fantastic portable business device with helpful, unique features.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |





Samsung Galaxy Note 4

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £498
www.samsung.com/uk

This year's effort ensures the Note remains top of the phablet pile, but unless you're particularly taken with the stylus and split-screen app combo, you shouldn't discount the latest flagship phones. The LG G3 and new Motorola Moto X are stunning devices, only slightly smaller in size and power. Unless you've got a thing for faux leather, that is, in which case the Note 4 is the best gadget ever made.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing

Video 2160p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 78.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 176g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Still king of the phablets, but not by such a distance this time around.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Note Edge

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £610
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Note Edge points to an exciting future when we no longer have to accept that a smartphone screen has to be rectangular. As is often the case with a new technology, though, it needs more work. As cool as the edge looks, it serves little purpose, other than to make this a more expensive Note 4. Call us when the screen wraps all the way around, Samsung.

OS Android 4.4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.7GHz Krait 450
Screen 5.6-inches
Resolution 1,600 x 2,560 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing,

3.7MP front-facing
Video 4K @ 60fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.3 x 82.4 x 8.3mm
Weight 174g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A worthwhile endeavour – for Samsung's engineers, not the consumer.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S3 Mini

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £300
www.samsung.com/uk

Something of a misnomer, this is no relation to its bigger brother, the S III, despite the design similarities. The Mini is little more than a shrunk down Galaxy S II. If users want a budget Galaxy, they are better off pursuing that (former) flagship on a budget plan – this is extortionately expensive for what you get.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GHz RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions: 121.6 x 63 x 9.9mm
Weight 111.5g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: A cheeky move by Samsung to pass this off as a premium device. It's not.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy S4

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £550
www.samsung.com/uk

An impressive hardware offering with intriguing new software and camera features but these need to be perfected and integrated into the device as a whole before the S4 can really be called a knock out. While the phone's processor seemed to struggle with games and the design is pretty similar to the S3, this is a solid offering from Samsung in the flagship race.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
CPU 1.6 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Cameras 13MP front-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 136.6 x 69.8 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An impressive offering with interesting but not integrated new software.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S4 Active

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £400
www.samsung.com/uk

The Active S4 is ideal for people looking for a more protected smartphone, although it does make some sacrifices. Its design is too rugged for mainstream appeal and its display and camera aren't great. But it's a great hybrid for an underwater camera and is perfect for adventurous lifestyles.

OS Android 4.2.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.9 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.7 x 71.3 x 9.1mm
Weight 151g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: It may not be quite as good as its big brother, but it certainly has its purpose.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £530
www.samsung.com/uk

The thing about Galaxy handsets is that their flaws are often matters of personal opinion. If you don't mind the samey design, plasticky build and irksome user interface, then the Galaxy S5 could be the best smartphone going. It's insanely powerful, has a blinding display and is even waterproof. If you care about substance over style then the Galaxy S5 is as good as it gets.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.1 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 142mm x 72.5mm x 8.1mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: Behind a cheap-looking build lies the beastliest smartphone around.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy S6 edge

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £760
www.samsung.com/uk

This is currently one of the best looking smartphones on the market. That dual-curved screen makes the iPhone 6 Plus and HTC One M9 look boring in comparison. An insanely fast camera and superb performance means that the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge isn't just about looks either.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor octa-core Samsung Exynos 7420
Screen 5.1-inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 16MP rear-facing 5MP front-facing

Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.11 x 70.1 x 7mm
Weight 132g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A phone that grabs attention with both its looks and performance.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z1

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £475
www.sonymobile.com

It's a little on the large side, but Sony's latest handset is rock solid, with powerful hardware and a unique design. Fans of the company will be right at home with the software that stores movies, music and games you've bought across other platforms. Add in a great camera and you've got a phone that stops just short of best in class.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon 800 quad-core 2.2GHz
Screen 1080 x 1920 pixels, 5 inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB expandable up to 64GB via MicroSD
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports MicroSD, microUSB
Battery 3000mAh
Dimensions 144 x 74 x 8.5mm
Weight 170g

VERDICT: Software makes it great for Sony fans, hardware makes it good for the rest

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z1 Compact

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £449
www.sonymobile.com

If you hate giant displays and don't have the patience for Apple's iOS and its restrictive App Store, the Sony Xperia Z1 Compact is your only choice, and a great one at that. Sony has done well to make a phone with the power to rival the mighty iPhone in an equally small package. In-built Sony-branded apps such as Walkman and PlayStation is an inherent plus, too. Fingers crossed for a KitKat 4.4 upgrade soon.

OS Android 4.3
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Screen 4.3-inch HD Triluminos
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB, expandable to 64GB

Camera 20.7MP Exmor RS
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 9.5mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The most powerful, best looking compact Android available. Simple.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Sony Xperia Z2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £579
www.sonymobile.com

The Z2 matches its rivals' power and usability. A lack of design innovation and similar specs might deter Z1 owners from upgrading, though, and the large size might not appeal to fans of smaller devices. That said, superior imaging and a powerful processor and CPU means it excels in the right places.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.8 x 73.3 x 8.2mm
Weight 163g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: An immaculate smartphone, if only a small step up from its predecessor.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z3

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £549
www.sonymobile.com

We were all a little bit surprised when Sony elected to release a new flagship a matter of months after the Xperia Z2 hit shelves. After reviewing it though, the company's reasoning is obvious. The Z3 is a true flagship as worthy of your attention (and cash) as any other in this Buyer's Guide. The Z3 has premium design, hugely powerful internals and an array of neat features. A very impressive device.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing

Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146 x 72 x 7.3mm
Weight 152g
Battery 3,100 mAh

VERDICT: Sony's best full-sized offering yet, although the camera is aging a little now.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z3 Compact

Reviewed: December 14, price: £429
www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia Z3 Compact is indisputably the most powerful compact Android ever made. We can't really slight it for anything, and no other Android phone in its size bracket can come close to matching it. It's remarkable that Sony has managed to squeeze almost the exact same technology from the Z3 into a smaller body. Finally, Android power-users have a valid option in the sub-five inch display category.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 4.6 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing

Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 8.6mm
Weight 129g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: The definitive small-sized Android smartphone. The most powerful yet.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Vodafone Smart 4 Max

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £129.99
www.vodafone.co.uk

If you crave a 6-inch 4G phablet for the equivalent of £2.50 a week over a year the Smart 4 Max is the only game in town. Purists will sneer at its elderly processor, low-res screen and lack of 'Lollipop'. You'll be the one with around £400 more in your bank account. Just bear in mind it can only connect to Vodafone 4G network and you can't remove the Vodafone embedded software.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Snapdragon MSM8926
Screen 6-inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 164x83.4x7.9mm

Weight 170g
Battery 3,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart 4 Power

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £79
www.vodafone.co.uk

The benchmark scores of a £79 phone were never going to impress anyone: the Smart 4 Power is not a handset for playing the latest taxing games on. That said, it's enough to deliver on the advantages of 4G. If instant information rather than instant gratification is what you're after, this phone delivers for the price.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141 x 71.4 x 9.5mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Poor specs distract from what is an ergonomic and capable 4G starter.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart Ultra 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Packing a fast processor, excellent screen and plenty of battery life, you'll be hard-pressed to find a rival phone which offers quite this much for the money. Even the camera is pretty good, offering full manual controls and a high megapixel count. If you're after a true bargain Android device and are happy to forgo the big brands, this is well worth a look.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 1.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p 30fps

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 154 x 77 x 8.4mm
Weight 159g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Excellent specs and great battery life make this seriously good value.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Wileyfox Swift

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £129
www.wileyfox.com

A good budget handset that struggles to stand out from the crowd, the Wileyfox Swift faces stiff competition from the likes of Motorola. Punch-for-punch, it has features to match similar handsets but the difficulty of being an entirely new brand will make it hard to claw loyal fans away from other devices.

OS Android (Cyanogen 12.1)
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5.0 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing
Video 1080p at 30fps

Connectivity Dual-SIM, 4G
Dimensions 141.15mm x 71mm x 9.37mm
Weight 135g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A solid performer that can't quite make itself stand out from the rest.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



YeZZ Andy A5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £207
www.sayyezz.com

Camera phone fans on a tight budget should definitely seek out the Andy A5 for its affordable price and high-quality camera. If taking photos is not that important to you then you'll probably have seen the uninspired design and bland features a million times before.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Quad-core 1.2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Connectivity 3G, wi-fi
Dimensions 144.1 x 73.5 x 8.6mm

Weight 106g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A great camera but the rest struggles against more bullish counterparts.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



YotaPhone 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £549
www.yotaphone.com/gb-en/

The YotaPhone 2 fixes almost all of the original's flaws, and turns the rear E Ink display from an impractical cherry on top, to one of the phone's main ingredients. There's no denying this quirky conversation-starter is for a niche audience, and a rich one at that. We can't wait to see what the YotaPhone 3 will bring – not least a price drop for this model.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.3GHz Krait 400
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing,

2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 69.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: If you're constantly reading on the go this is the best new smartphone in years.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





ZTE Blade Vec 4G

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £153
www.ztedevices.co.uk

Once you've fixed all the software customisations present on the Vec 4G, you're left with a pretty respectable performer for the price. The large, sharp display does a great job of quickly rendering web pages over 4G. Unfortunately, the Vec 4G battery's small capacity and demanding hardware mean you'll often find the phone emptied by the end of the day. It also has storage issues – namely no SD card slot.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.3 x 70.4 x 7.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: Solid specs for 4G at a reasonable price, but there are better options out there.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



ZTE Blade V

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £99.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

A fantastic price makes the ZTE Blade V easy to recommend for first-time buyers. Anyone hoping to get the most out of a smartphone's apps and snaps should look elsewhere, but if you don't want to worry about a phone for the kids being broken or stolen, then this is for you.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon S4 Play
Screen 480 x 800, 4 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Camera 5MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64 x 10.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



ZTE Blade S6

Reviewed: August 2015 price: £169.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

The ZTE Blade S6 is definitely more than just a cheap iPhone 6 rip off. A decent camera helps it stand out from the rest of the mid-range crowd, while performance is surprisingly decent for a phone of this price. It's let down by poor build quality and software that lacks certain features. The price is the most attractive, however, and those negatives shouldn't put you off this decent mid-range phone.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Snapdragon 615
Screen 5-inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 70.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable phone with surprisingly decent performance.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9"

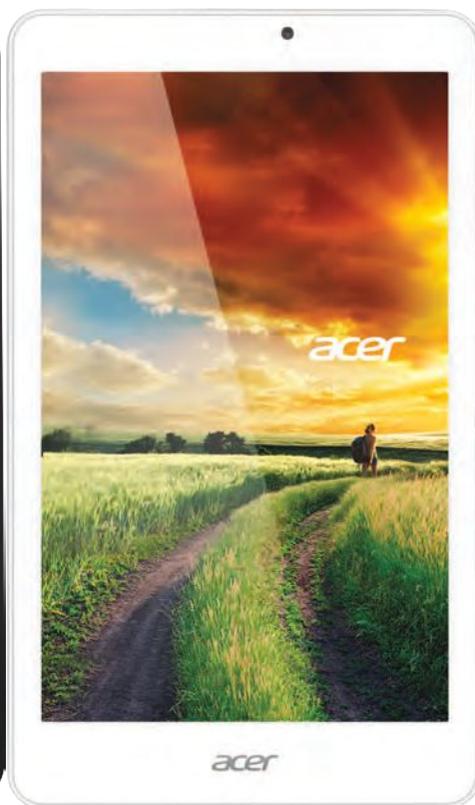
Reviewed: May 2013, price: £229/259
www.amazon.co.uk

A good looking e-reader with tablet capabilities, limited by Amazon's annoying operating system and app eco-system, and an annoyingly slow browser. This device will doubtless be a commercial success, with its branding and ease of use, but for the more serious user there are much better tablets out there.

| | |
|---|---|
| Dimensions 240 x 164 x 8.8mm | RAM 1GB RAM |
| OS Customized Android 4.0 | Storage 16GB/32GB |
| Screen 8.9 inch IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen | Cameras front facing 1.3MP with 720p video |
| Resolution 1920 x 1200, 254 ppi | Wireless 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band |
| Processor TI OMAP 4470 dual-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A9 | Ports USB 2.0, 3.5mm audio jacks, Bluetooth A2DP |
| GPU PowerVR SGX544 | Battery life 10 hours (accurate) |

VERDICT: A solid, functional tablet that is limited by its Amazon associations.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Acer Iconia Tab 8

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £140
www.amazon.co.uk

Acer has managed to do what manufacturers of every cheap tablet should aspire to: create a tablet that is priced extremely competitively, but which performs to a standard much higher than you'd expect for its cost. A few compromises have been made along the way, but this is still a budget slab that's well worth considering.

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| OS Android 4.4 KitKat | 2MP front-facing |
| Processor 1.3GHz quad-core | Video 720p |
| Screen 8 inches | Connectivity Wi-fi only |
| Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels | Dimensions 215 x 130 x 8.5mm |
| Memory 2GB RAM | Weight 360g |
| Storage 16GB/32GB | Battery 4,600 mAh |
| MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB | |
| Camera 5MP rear-facing, | |

VERDICT: It has a few flaws, but for less than £150 you should look past them.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |



Advent Vega Tegra Note 7

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £140
www.nvidia.co.uk

It's a contender, alright. Aside from some clunky desing issues, the Advent Vega Tegra Note 7 is a powerful and punchy little machine. If you're after a compact and affordable tablet its speed sets it aside from its rivals as a device that's great for gaming, customising images and browsing the web.

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| OS Android Jelly Bean 4.3 | Weight 320g |
| Processor Nvidia Tegra 4 | Battery 8 hours |
| Screen 7 inches | |
| Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels | |
| Memory 1GB RAM | |
| Storage 16GB | |
| Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0 | |
| Dimensions 119 x 199 x 9.6mm | |

VERDICT: Its speed sets it apart from its competition. A cheap and capable device.

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| PERFORMANCE | ★★★★★ |
| FEATURES | ★★★★★ |
| USABILITY | ★★★★★ |
| DESIGN | ★★★★★ |





Amazon Kindle Fire HDX

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £199-329
www.amazon.co.uk/kindle

The Kindle Fire HDX is around £100 more than the Fire but the improved screen and processor justifies the extra cost. The real human Help feature will be a boon to tablet newbies; experienced users will regard it as a gimmick. The HDX is a top-rate device – but if you're not a regular Amazon customer you're better off with a Nexus.

OS Amazon customised Android OS, v4.1.2
Screen 1902 x 1200 pixels, 7 inches
Processor Snapdragon 800 2.2GHz quad-core
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/ 32/64GB versions available
Camera 8MP front-facing
Video 720HD
Wireless Wi-fi (optional Vodafone 4G version)
Ports microUSB
Dimensions 131.8 x 66.9 x 9.9mm
Weight 302g

VERDICT: A significant update to the Fire and ideal for Amazon users.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPad Mini

Reviewed: December 2012, price: £269
www.apple.com/uk

The iPad Mini represents Apple playing it safe, which is to say: disappointing. This is little more than an iPad 2, with all its limitations – a low-res screen and weak processor power – shrunk down to an odd 7.9-inch size. It is also overpriced, the Google Nexus 7 offers superior performance for £100 less. Despite its luxurious design, you really are paying for little more than 4G support and Apple's App Store. Average.

OS iOS 6.0.1
Screen 7.9-inch LED-backlit IPS LCD
Resolution 768 x 1024 pixels at 162 pixels per inch
Input Capacitive touchscreen
CPU Apple A5 1GHz dual core
GPU PowerVR SGX543MP2
Memory 512MB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1920x1080 (1080P HD) at 30fps. Video stabilised
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, Apple Lightning port (USB 2.0)
Size 200 x 134.7 x 7.2mm
Weight 308g

VERDICT: Little more than a shrunken iPad 2 with 4G. Disappointing.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPad 3

Reviewed: April 2012, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

The new iPad boasts the highest-resolution display of any tablet, as well as an improved 5MP camera and better connectivity. Not to mention a high-powered new processor which makes it the most powerful iPad ever, too. Though some may resist the upgrade path, the unrivalled Retina display is a subtle but deeply appealing feature that will become more and more desirable. The new iPad is by far the best tablet around

OS iOS 5
Screen 9.7-inch TFT
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Processor 1GHz Cortex-A9
Memory 1GB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Wireless 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, proprietary Apple connector
Standby time 720 hours
Use time 9 hours
Size 241 x 186 x 9mm
Weight 662g

VERDICT: There's simply no contest – the new iPad is the best tablet in the world.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPad 4

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

A rather cheeky move by Apple to release the iPad 4 (or 'iPad with Retina Display') just months after the iPad 3. All it really adds is a new processor (the iPhone 5's A6X) and Apple's new lightning connector. However, this means it remains as the best tablet money can buy – and Apple's App Store and its 300,000 dedicated tablet apps only make the proposition more enticing.

OS iOS 6.0.1, **Screen** 9.7 inch LED
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels at 264 ppi pixel density
CPU Apple A6X, Dual-core
GPU PowerVR SGX554MP4,
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB storage
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1080P HD at 30fps
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, Bluetooth 4.0
Cellular 4G, 3G, 2G
Ports Lightning Connector (USB2.0) and 3.5mm audio jack,
Dimensions 241.2 x 185.7 x 9.4mm
Weight 662 g

VERDICT: The best tablet money can buy.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Archos 79 Platinum

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £150
www.archos.com

With so many budget tablets to choose from the Archos 79 Platinum has no features or unique selling points to attract the consumer in a saturated market. Its hardware is woefully underpowered, its features are bog standard and it is at least £10 too expensive. Its attractive looks are not enough to redeem it. The bottom line is that it should have never been conceived.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean **Weight** 366g
Processor Quad-core A9 **Battery** Lithium Polymer
 1.6GHz
Screen 7.85 inches
Resolution 1024 x 768 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 2MP rear-facing
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth
Dimensions 201 x 137 x 8mm

VERDICT: There is no reason you ever would, or should, buy it. Avoid, avoid, avoid.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Archos 101 XS 2

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.archos.com

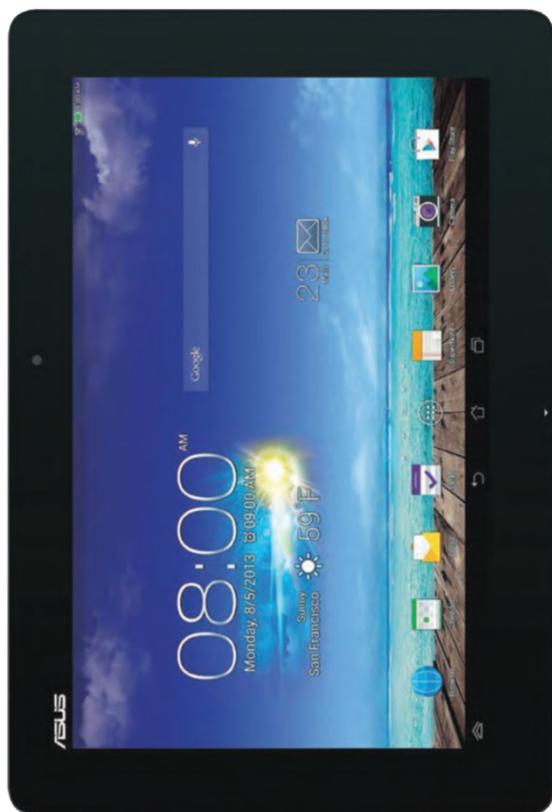
A couple of years ago, the 101 XS would have had us singing Archos' praises, but by today's standards its processing power and screen quality fall short. It might, though, find a home with users limited to spending £250 on a 10-inch tablet

OS Android 4.2.2 **Screen** 10.1-inch/1,280 x 800 pixels
Camera 2MP rear, 2MP front
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Memory 16GB expandable via MicroSD
Dimensions 273 x 169 x 10.1mm (tablet), 273 x 169 x 5mm (keyboard)
Weight 636g (tablet), 200g (keyboard)

VERDICT: A great price is let down by a poor screen and cheap build.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Asus Transformer Pad TF701T

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £429
www.asus.com

The Asus Transformer Pad TF701T packs a beautiful screen and the keyboard dock is well thought out. But dated software and the threat of a Google Nexus 10 sequel make this a niche device. Do you really need a keyboard? The iPad mini begs to differ.

OS Android 4.3 (via an over-the-air update)
Screen 10.1 inch/2,560 x 1,600 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack

Memory 32/64GB
Battery Tablet 31Wh, dock 16Wh

VERDICT: It packs fast hardware but can't compete with the iPad Air or Nexus range

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Google Nexus 9

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.google.co.uk/nexus

The Google Nexus 9 is an impressive and welcome return to the tablet market for HTC, and a jewel of a gadget for Android 5.0 to debut on. The size is right, and if you know for sure you want an Android tablet, it's your best bet – it's certainly the best slate HTC has ever made – but for the money we'd still go for the quality build and thriving eco-system of an iPad.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Screen 8.9-inch
Resolution 2048 x 1536 pixels
Processor Tegra K1 2.3GHz
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB internal
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD

Dimensions 153.68mm x 228.25mm x 7.95mm
Weight 425g
Battery 6,700 mAh

VERDICT: The best tablet on the market – if you insist on Android, that is.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Google Nexus 10

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £319
www.google.co.uk/nexus

Finally, the Android tablet everyone's been waiting for – except Apple. This is a tablet that can go head to head with the best in the Apple iPad stable – it has a powerful processor, a Retina Display quality screen, the latest version of Android. Along with the Nexus 7, this is the best tablet Android users can buy. The only flaws are an uninspired body, and a dearth of tablet specific apps.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Dimensions 263.9 x 177.6 x 8.9mm, 603g
Screen 10 inch
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Input Super PLS TFT capacitive touch-screen
CPU Exynos 5, Dual-core ARM Cortex-A15
RAM 2GB

Cameras 5MP (main), 1.9MP (front)
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth
NFC Android Beam
Storage 16GB/32GB
Connectivity Micro USB, Micro HDMI, 3.5mm headphone jack
Battery 9,000 mAh

VERDICT: The best Android tablet of 2013 slips behind the iPad only due to apps.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





HP Slate 7

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £125
www.hp.com

The steel frame makes the Slate 7 an impressive sight and its audio uses Beats technology to great effect. The fantastic price will help it to undercut some of its rivals, though the slow processor and low quality camera keep it from besting them elsewhere.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Dual-core 1.6 GHz Cortex-A9
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7.0 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB expandable to 32GB via SD card
Camera 3.15MP pixel rear-facing, VGA front-facing

Video 720p
Dimensions 197.1 x 116.1 x 10.7mm
Weight 372 g
Battery non-removable, 5h media time

VERDICT: Great audio and build, but corners have been cut to keep costs down.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Lenovo ThinkPad 8

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £424
www.lenovo.com

If you just want a device for general tasks then you can find better alternatives within Lenovo's Yoga range of Android slates, and elsewhere. If you're a fan of Windows and in search of a bulkier device that offers plenty of productivity tools, then the ThinkPad is an (almost) viable option.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 2.4GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1200 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 8.83 x 5.2 x 0.35 inches
Weight 439g

VERDICT: Even with so few Windows tablets available the ThinkPad still fails to stand out.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Lenovo Miix 2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £255
www.microsoft.com/surface

With solid performance across the board, frequently usable built-in apps and compact size the Miix 2 is a small but surprisingly versatile slate. Despite the limitations that come with the Windows OS, it performs general tasks well and, for the price, won't let you down. With 3G capability you can even connect to the internet on the move. Overall, it offers plenty of pleasant surprises to combat the weaknesses of its OS.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 8.3 x 215.6 x 131mm
Weight 350g
Battery 4,730 mAh

VERDICT: A small but substantial Windows offering that still trails its Android rivals.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £249
www.lenovo.com

Lenovo certainly deserves credit for trying to break the 'black slab' mould. It's an interesting attempt at something different, but unless you have a real need to hang it up from the ceiling or to perch it upright on a train table every day its mediocre internals and display don't represent that much value for money.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.86GHz quad-core
Screen 10.1inches
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G optional
Dimensions 255 x 183 x 7.2mm
Weight 619g
Battery 9,600 mAh

VERDICT: A nice idea, but one we don't fully buy into. Not quite up to scratch.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Microsoft Surface 2 Pro

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £720
www.microsoft.com/surface

We can't fault Microsoft's ambition for the powerful Surface Pro 2 to become your all-in-one portable work and play device. It's got a great display and solid hardware but a lack of dedicated apps, software compromises and stiff – cheaper – competition make it a tough sell.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.6 inches/1920 x 1080 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 720p resolution front and rear
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Memory 64GB/128GB/
 256GB/512GB
Battery 48Wh

VERDICT: Price holds back what is an otherwise excellent work/play hybrid.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Microsoft Surface Pro 3

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £640
www.microsoft.com/surface

From software to hardware and even design, the Surface Pro 3 is a wonderful piece of kit. It's refreshing to come across a tablet with grander ideals than the norm, challenging us to rethink the notion of the medium. For most people this could genuinely replace their laptop. It's just a shame, and an almost inexcusable mistake, that the keyboard which is so integral to its function is sold as an expensive extra.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.5GHz Intel core i3/2.9GHz Intel core i5/3.7GHz Intel core i7
Screen 12 inches
Resolution 2160 x 1440 pixels
Memory 4/8GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB/256GB/512GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 292.1mm x 201.4mm x 9.1mm
Weight 800g
Battery 42Wh

VERDICT: The first tablet with enough function to conceivably replace a laptop.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 2520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £399
www.nokia.com

The Windows-run Lumia 2520 is a decent first effort from Nokia – and it's certainly one of the more attractive and solid pieces of tablet hardware on the market. It has a few issues with the weight and a lackluster camera but overall we have no trouble recommending this to Windows 8.1 and Lumia fans.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.1 inches, 1920 x 1080 pixels, 218PPI
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Memory 2GB
Camera 6.7MP with Carl Zeiss lens
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack

Dimensions 168 x 267 x 8.9mm, 615g
Battery 8120 mAh

VERDICT: A rock-solid first effort from Nokia in this market with powerful specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.nokia.com

The Tab 3 Kids is surprisingly robust, with a solid camera, great battery, fantastic educational apps and software to suit kids. But the premium design doesn't feel like it was meant to be enjoyed by young users and we'd suggest going with a company that specialises in the market rather than one that's testing it out.

OS Android 4.1
Processor Dual-core 1.2GHz
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB, expandable up to 64GB
Camera 3.15MP (back), 1.3MP (front)
Video 720p@30fps

Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 3.0
Ports micro-USB, MicroSD
Dimensions 188 x 111.1 x 9.9mm
Weight 306g
Battery Li-Ion 4,000 mAh

VERDICT: A little too premium for the market it is aimed at.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Tab S

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £319
www.samsung.com/uk

While the Tab S may not be a radical departure from other Android tablets, it encompasses everything that is great about a top-notch Samsung product. It's enough to rebuild the Korean giant's brand image, and proof that the company can still surprise us with a fantastic all-round product.

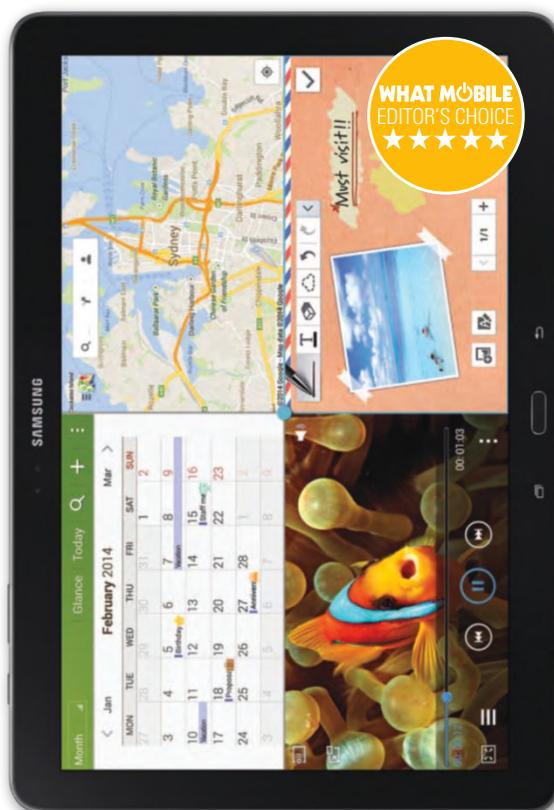
OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8.4 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 125.6 x 212.8 x 6.6mm
Weight 294g
Battery 4,900 mAh

VERDICT: Simply put, it's the best Android tablet on the market.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy Note Pro 12.2

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £649

www.samsung.com/uk

One of the biggest displays ever seen on a tablet – at no detriment to quality. Combine that with solid design and a super powerful processor to run loads of unique applications and the NotePRO 12.2 is arguably the best tablet on the market. It's certainly the best Android slate, although it's definitely priced as such.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Octa-core (1.9GHz + 1.3GHz quad)
Screen 12.2 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB/64GB
Camera 8MP rear/2MP front-facing
Video 1,080p Full HD
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 295.6 x 204 x 7.95mm
Weight 750g
Battery 9,500 mAh

VERDICT: Big, beautiful, functional and priced to match. Android's finest.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet

Reviewed: October 2015, price: £499

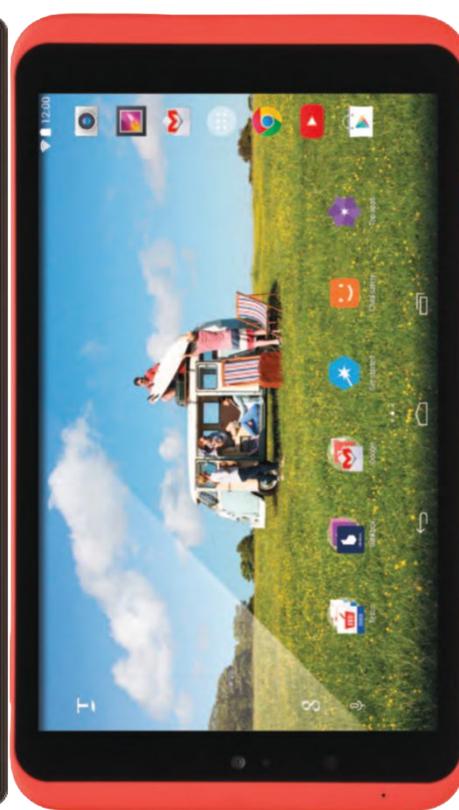
www.sony.co.uk

The Sony Xperia Z4 is a beautifully engineered tablet with more than enough power to run even the most demanding app smoothly. Unfortunately, while slimline and lightweight, its listed price of £499.00 is surprisingly high for its provided specifications. Powerful but pricey.

OS Android 5.0 (Lollipop)
Processor Octa-core 2.0 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 810, 64 bit
Screen 10.1 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes,
 up to 128GB
Camera 8.1MP rear-facing, 5.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G, Wi-Fi
Dimensions 167 x 254 x 6.1 mm
Weight 393g
Battery 6,000 mAh

VERDICT: Beautifully engineered, slimline tablet but pricey considering specification.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Tesco Hudl 2

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £129

www.tesco.com/direct/hudl

This is no Tesco Value attempt at a tablet. Make no mistake, the Hudl 2 is a fantastic Android slate that's great value for money. Sure, it's not on the cutting edge like Google's Nexus series of devices, but if all you want is a gadget to casually surf the web, watch some films or read a few comics, this device is every bit as capable as an iPad Mini.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.83GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity Wi-fi
Dimensions 224 x 128 x 9mm
Weight 410g
Battery 4,900 mAh

VERDICT: Don't be fooled – Tesco is now a serious contender in the tablet space.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Toshiba Excite Pure

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.toshiba.co.uk

The Toshiba Excite Pure's £250 price is attractive but its display is far too faded. It means apps and the like don't look very good. It might appeal to families looking for a cheap way to keep the kids entertained but little else. Even so, the slow processor and useless apps force us to recommend you look elsewhere.

OS Android v4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Nvidia Tegra 3
Memory 1GB
Storage 16GB
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 10.1 inches
Video HD
Audio Stereo
Dimensions 261.6 x 177.8 x 10.2mm

VERDICT: It's got a cheap price tag but the poor display and tech shows why.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart Tab 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Attractive, cheap and feature-packed; the Vodafone Smart Tab 4G looks more upmarket than its affordable £125 pricing suggests. It's let down by a slow processor, but that shouldn't put you off what is basically well-designed and ideal family tablet.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.2 GHz Quad-Core
Screen 8.0-inches
Resolution 1280 x 800-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Connectivity GSM/EDGE/3G/4G/HSPA+/LTE
Dimensions 209 x 128 x 7.99mm
Weight 309g
Battery 4060 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable and easy-to-use tablet that offers something for everyone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart Tab 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £150
www.vodafone.co.uk

The Smart Tab 6 is definitely cheap but we'd suggest looking elsewhere for a good budget tablet. The screen isn't that great and performance can't quite keep up with more intensive tasks and games. It has a large battery and the build quality is definitely better than the price suggests, but these points aren't enough to redeem what is an average tablet at best.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.3GHz
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 9.6 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, expandable up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 4.1
Ports micro-USB, MicroSD
Dimensions 146 x 244 x 7.9mm
Weight 406g
Battery Li-Ion 4,600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap but not quite good enough to worry the competition.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Asus ZenWatch

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £204
www.asus.com/uk/

The Asus ZenWatch is handsome enough, but fails to stand out from the crowd of Android Wear devices. Google's wearable OS still feels like a solution in search of a problem – unless you have a specific use in mind for its features you may want to hold out for the next generation of devices.

VERDICT: Attractive, but with too many caveats to recommend outright.



Fitbit Flex

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £79.99
www.fitbit.com

Minor niggles aside, the Fitbit Flex is possibly the best fitness wearable on the market. Its features are so diverse, and its app so beautiful and intuitive, that it can be tailored to just about anyone's lifestyle. With interchangeable bands in a variety of colours, and a low price, the Flex is practically a must-buy.

VERDICT: A fantastic companion app and great functionality put the Flex on top.



LG G Watch R

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £180.00
www.jawbone.com

The LG G Watch R may be one of the most mature-looking smartwatches yet, but not everyone will find it attractive – or appreciate Android Wear's limitations. The market's set to explode with the advent of the Apple Watch and the Pebble Time. Unless you're desperate for what the LG G Watch R does right now, it's hard to see the value in yet another second-generation Android Wear watch.

VERDICT: Although attractive, it has limited functionality compared to other smartwatches.



Nike+ Fuelband SE

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £89
www.nike.com

The Nike+ FuelBand SE is close to being the perfect sports tracker. It's social capabilities combined with its numerous features to keep you motivated ensure that it will be a permanent mainstay in any gym addicts kit bag. You might not be so keen on wearing it every single day, though, with its appealing design being more clearly tailored to a casual setting. Plus, its lack of waterproofing could be a deal-breaker for some.

VERDICT: When it comes to fitness, Nike is a name you can trust – this is no exception.



Samsung Galaxy Gear 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £250
www.samsung.com

The design needs a rethink but the Samsung Galaxy Gear 2 provides decent fitness tracking features and a good music player. Trimming down on other functions, however, would have made for a slimmer and sleeker product. It would be unfair to say this is a needless addition as it packs a lot of functions, but it's an expensive product that's hindered by an impractical design and redundant features.

VERDICT: A decent effort that has since been eclipsed by superior Android Wear devices.



Vector Smartwatch

Reviewed: November 2015, price: £80
www.vectorwatch.com

An ambitious attempt to inject some much-needed class into the smartwatch. It's beautiful. But the level of interactivity is minimal and its software lacking. Ultimately, we came away wondering what a Pebble Time with Vector's hardware and battery life might be like. We can only hope this becomes just that, but the company has a long road to travel first.

VERDICT: Beautiful but basic, the Vector Smartwatch is a bit of an oddity.



Wearable compatibility guide



LG
G Watch R



Pebble
Watch



Samsung
Gear Live



Sony
Smartwatch 3



Garmin
Vivofit



Archos
Activity Tracker



iPhone
6 / 6 plus

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HTC
One M8

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Samsung
Galaxy S5

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Sony Xperia
Z3 / Z3 Compact

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