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Chinese whispers



Another year lies ahead, and it's tempting to offer predictions about the developments that await us in the exciting world of mobile tech. Unlike previous years, when it was fairly easy to guess that the new launches would have faster processors, better screens, and slimmer cases, we've now reached a plateau in what smartphone hardware can offer. So how will manufacturers differentiate themselves? The truth is, they can't. Consumers aren't interested in gimmicks, curved screens and 3D imagery. Nor are they particularly bothered that their handsets are slightly thicker than a biscuit. We predict that 2016 will see a plethora of new challenger brands from China, such as Xiaomi. They will offer amazing value for money. Think of specs to rival top phones, such as the Samsung Galaxy S6 and iPhone 6s, at less than half the price. This will increase the pressure on struggling brands, including Sony, HTC and BlackBerry, to a degree they may find hard to resist. These once-dominant players can no longer compete with similar products that are half the price. Apart from Apple, a world of Android clones means brand loyalty doesn't count for much. Consumers no longer need better cameras or software.

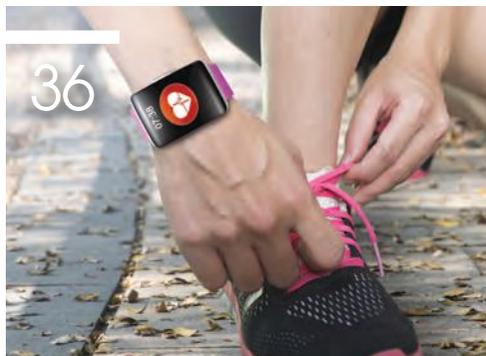
Watch out Apple

Here's another prediction. We think Apple will stop production of the Apple Watch. An Apple Watch 2 will be launched but it will have minimal success. The truth that Apple will have to accept is that consumers don't need, or want, yet another gadget that merely emulates the screen of the iPhone in their pocket. Unless Apple can invent a smartwatch that can function without being tethered to a nearby iPhone we reckon the Apple Watch is toast.



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YOUR CHANCE TO WIN

AN IPAD BLUETOOTH KEYBOARD WORTH £99.99



The guys over at Brydge have been kind enough to gift us a brand new Bluetooth keyboard, which we reviewed in this month's accessories round-up and gave a very impressive four stars. To be in with a chance of winning, all you have to do is answer the simple question below:

What material is the Brydge keyboard constructed from?

- A. Plastic
- B. Aluminium
- C. Rubber

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

competitions@whatmobile.net

Alternatively, head to:
www.whatmobile.net/competition
and fill in the online form.

The winner will be contacted via email on the 6th February 2016.

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: 11 February 2016. 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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Oppo R7s

Chinese smartphone manufacturer Oppo is back with a new premium handset that wants to captivate the mid-market. Will it be style over substance?

Oppo probably isn't the most recognised company here in the UK but its handsets are gaining quite a reputation for being extremely premium mid-range handsets. They're usually a little costlier, but you are paying for sleek metal materials here. The R7s is the latest addition to its line-up and slots in nicely between the R7 and R7 Plus, delivering the 5.5-inch handset people have been waiting for.

On the design front, the R7s continues the uber-premium build quality which sets its devices apart from the competition. Measuring 152 x 75mm, it's about the same size as the OnePlus 2 and just a little bit longer than the LG G4. At 7mm thick, it's also a little thinner than the competition, which will probably feel immediately apparent due to its flat casing.

Aesthetically speaking, it borrows several traits from the Apples and HTC's of the world, with a curved aluminium unibody finish and exposed antennas. The rear camera is located in the top left much like on iPhone devices, while a tiny flash sits underneath. The metal comes in a gold finish, with the top and bottom panel being a little glossier than the brushed centre. The front has a minimal white finish with no physical buttons, while the Oppo logo is proudly displayed on both sides.

Internally, it differs little from its brethren, which is no surprise given the mid-range target market. This means the absence of a fingerprint sensor, NFC and USB-C, which are becoming increasingly more common on high to mid-range devices.

The screen is like the a 1920 x 1080 AMOLED panel much others, albeit with a 5.5-inch screen. The processor remains an octa-core Snapdragon 615,



while the RAM is the same as the R7 Plus at 4GB.

This is pretty lavish by mid-range standards and should help to future-proof a little bit. The camera is the same 13 megapixel sensor with phase detection, while the impressive eight megapixel front snapper also remains. Battery life is no slouch at 3,070 mAh and has the addition of VOOC charging, Oppo's own in-house fast charging implementation.

LOOKS THE PART

The Oppo R7s is available online in the UK, now for a retail price of around £259.99. That's about the standard cost for a 'premium' mid-range handset and puts it in the same league as the Honor 7, which is also slightly faster.

Those searching for a bargain will probably be able to find something more cost-effective such as the OnePlus 2 or Vodafone Smart Ultra 6, though build quality won't quite match the Oppo. If you're a person who likes style, the R7s could be worth a look.

WHAT MOBILE Excitement Meter



A premium handset that certainly looks the part but doesn't offer much different to its brother and sister.

Huawei Mate 8

Huawei is looking to build on its incredible momentum with a new and improved phablet. But is the beefy device a welcome step forward or just more of the same?

It seems that Huawei can do no wrong at the moment. The Huawei Nexus 6P went down well with critics and fans, with excellent performance and a big screen to satisfy all phablet-loving Android fans. Huawei ended 2015 as the third-highest smartphone seller on the planet, behind only Apple and Samsung respectively. Since entering western markets, Huawei has proven to be a formidable competitor. Carrying on the momentum is the Huawei Mate 8, a bigger and badder phablet.

The Mate 8 is one for those who think 5.5-inches is.... average, it retains that massive six-inch display seen on predecessor the Mate 7. A big screen was seen as ludicrous and downright unnecessary, but even Apple are getting in on the phablet trend when they released the iPhone 6 Plus.

The Mate 8 will not be a pocket-friendly device with dimensions sizing up to be a challenge for average hand sizes. It measures up at 157.1 x 80.6 x 7.9 mm, which seems daunting, but with 7.9 mm of thickness it's up there with other flagship devices.

IS THAT A PHONE OR ARE YOU HAPPY TO SEE ME?

A full metal body is being retained as Huawei continues with its growing reputation of quality. Similarities with the Mate 7 will be made and that is justified as the Mate 8 has chamfered round corners, metal band and that full metal body.

One difference is the Mate 8's circular more natural looking fingerprint sensor, as opposed to the Mate 7's square sensor.

Close to the fingerprint sensor is the camera which will be upgraded to 16 megapixels, phase detection auto-focus, optical image stabilisation and dual-LED flash.

That is, of course, not the only difference; you can expect the Mate 8 to be a more powerful beast. Purring under the hood is the new Kirin 950. Huawei announced HiSilicon's new chipset weeks ago and the Mate 8 will be the first device to use it. Kirin 950 will have eight cores; split in half in the shape of quad-core 2.3GHz Cortex A72 and quad core 1.8GHz Cortex A53. Supporting the new processor will be 4GB RAM, an upgrade from 3GB.

IS THAT A PHONE OR ARE YOU

We can expect the Mate 8 to have Android Marshmallow 6.0, bringing phablet fans an improved fingerprint sensor interface. Huawei's Android skin Emotion skin (EMUI) is unique because it does not support an apps tray seen on other Android skins.

But Emotion features have matured and got around without an app tray, we can still hope that Huawei will change their mind and include one. We won't see many groundbreaking features, but if Emotion can improve one-handed use it'll stand up from the phablet crowd.

Huawei's new phablet will be bringing us more of last year but beefier. It's nothing ground breaking but for those that desire a bigger than average phablet, this could be a good shout. The Mate 8 will come in four different colours, a price has not yet been confirmed but we will definitely know more soon.



WHAT MOBILE Excitement Meter



It's not going to change the world, but the Mate 8 is a solid improvement on its predecessor

SteelSeries – Stratus XL

Cost: £55.00

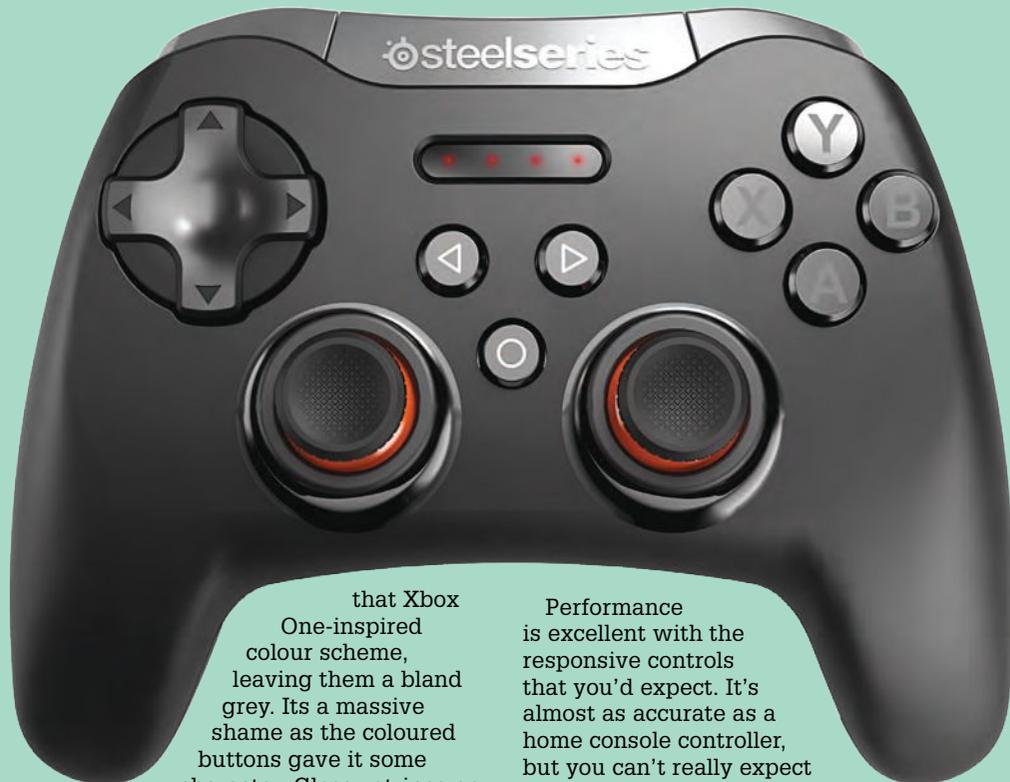
Reviewer: Manny Pham

There's a lot of reasons why mobile phone gaming will not replace traditional handheld console gaming, a big one is the controller. Very few 'real games' have made it onto smartphone screens as only certain genres crossover well on touchscreen. Turn-based strategy games like the *Final Fantasy* series worked due to the slower pacing. Racing games have done well making great use of gyroscopes to provide a new and immersive experience.

What you won't really find is action heavy games that require constant control and attention. Last year we saw *Bioshock* pulled from the App Store due to compatibility issues. Which basically means it did not play well at all on a touchscreen. To be fair, this was the developer's fault, there are plenty of First Person Shooter (FPS) titles for smartphones that handle a lot better. But not with the accuracy you demand from a FPS.

Substance over style

SteelSeries are aiming to sort this problem out with the Stratus XL. Already released for iOS SteelSeries has now brought it over to Android and Windows. Strangely enough, SteelSeries has gone for a different look for the Android/Windows version. SteelSeries seemed to have cut back on this version, the four buttons on the right of the pad does not have



that Xbox One-inspired colour scheme, leaving them a bland grey. Its a massive shame as the coloured buttons gave it some character. Glossy stripes on grips have also been removed in what appears to be a cost-saving measure. This was all pointing worryingly towards SteelSeries putting less effort into this iteration, but thankfully, internally, the controller performs spot on.

We can't avoid the fact that the controller looks almost exactly like the Xbox One controller – from the grips to the shoulder buttons. It's not very original at all.

You can forgive them for the massive plagiarism in design as

Microsoft has got the perfect controller design. It shouldn't come as a surprise as we've said the same thing about the

Xbox 360 controller, and Microsoft went off and made a better one (Xbox One).

Performance is excellent with the responsive controls that you'd expect. It's almost as accurate as a home console controller, but you can't really expect it to be on that level. Playing *Asphalt 8* was perfect; drifting through tight spots and jumping off ramps had never felt so simple. With the new found accuracy, *Asphalt 8* became easier and we were able to annihilate opponents at will.

The price is wrong

The same can't be said for FPS titles, unfortunately, as Android titles were not developed with the full motion of a joystick in mind. The controls are comparable to *System Shock 2*, meaning you can't move instinctively diagonally. You're required to almost pivot in one spot and then proceed in the direction you desire. *Dead Trigger 2* was really guilty of this, while *Dead Effect 2* wasn't as bad, but it is apparent.

This is no fault of the pad – SteelSeries has developed a well-made control pad that heightens mobile gaming. The only complaint we have is the high price point – it's more expensive than an Xbox One controller.



- + Tactile buttons
- + Comfortable
- + Easy to set-up
- More expensive than a console controller
- Material feels cheap
- Aesthetically bland



Momit Home Thermostat Starter Kit

Cost: £99.00 Reviewer: Manny Pham

Christmas came and went, but winter didn't show up at all. It was reportedly one of the mildest Christmases on record with certain parts of the UK experiencing temperatures up to 17 degrees celsius. We all know what this means: winter is coming and it's going to hit us hard.

With the winds of winter (last *Game of Thrones* reference I swear, but is it really coming out George? Hmm?) eventually touching our shores there are measures we can take to prepare. Aside from using ugly Primark Christmas jumpers as fireplace fuel, you can get yourself a smart thermostat.

Time can be saved as the momit Home Thermostat is connected to your router, just like every other smart device in existence. By being connected to the internet, you're able to control the thermostat wherever you may be. There's a geolocation feature that detects when your close-by, automatically warming up your house before you get in. The detection

doesn't stop there, there's a sensor that detects presence in the room. If no presence can be detected the thermostat will adjust itself accordingly.

What really appealed to us is how you're able to budget your energy consumption. By entering what you can spend for the month in gas bills, the thermostat can help you spend less. Momit claims the Home Thermostat can save you up to 30% on your bill and for us it did help save money, but it really depends on your own personal consumption.

It's compatible with iOS, Android, Blackberry and Windows. We used iOS and ran into no problems adjusting the mood from the Kingdom of the North to Lee Evan's armpits.



- + Saves you money
- + Convenience is an understatement
- + Would not look out of place in a contemporary living room
- Setting it up can be a bit daunting
- Feels a bit cheap
- Did I mention setting it up?



BrydgeMini

Cost: £99.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham

A decent on-board physical keyboard is all tablets need to really replace your laptop nowadays. Assuming you only need a laptop for the simple things in life like Skype, writing and browsing. Brydge has developed an excellent keyboard for your iPad Mini.



From the moment you type with the BrydgeMini you feel that Apple quality straightaway, surprising as you're actually using a third party peripheral.

The keys are tactile and responsive, exactly what you'd expect from a keyboard. If you accidentally updated to the latest OS (which you really should) and typing is a literal chore, we cannot recommend getting a keyboard enough. The BrydgeMini brought new life to our chunky old third gen iPad, which really struggled when we typed with the touchscreen.

Typing away late at night is not a problem as keystrokes do not generate annoying clunky sounds as you would get on a standard keyboard.

More importantly, for night owls who love to type, there is a backlight for the entire keyboard. In pitch black the readability of the keys

is spot on with no troubles locating desired keys.

As comfortable as the BrydgeMini is, there is a slight problem with the space bar location. The entire keyboard is in a slight concave, rendering the bottom panel and space bar at almost the same height. Experienced typist will find this annoying as pressing the space bar with your thumb was not thought out here. It isn't too detrimental, a slight adjustment on our behalf was needed to overcome this minor issue.

- + Elegant all metal body
- + Lightweight
- + Easy connection

- Stand only works with iPad Mini range
- Space bar is slightly obstructed
- Can be too small for bigger hands



Wacom Bamboo Spark

Cost: £109.99 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

Japanese tablet manufacturer Wacom are well-known for producing excellent digital design products aimed at desktop amateurs and professionals alike, though their mobile equipment line is a lot smaller. The Spark is Wacom's first major mobile companion tool and acts as both a notepad and a visual backup aid. With the included application, the device syncs to your mobile device and essentially creates a backup digital copy of what is written on the notepad. With an A5-sized writing surface, it's wrapped in an attractive portfolio cover that makes it look suitably professional for client and business meetings.

Pairing is easy with the included set-up instructions, though we noticed a few minor details missing that made the writing experience a little confusing at first. The notepad includes a button in the middle that must be pressed after each page so that it can be uploaded onto your cloud account. Forgetting to do this means that all of your writing gets scrapped, leading to some angry moments. There's also a clear writing border where the Spark can sense your writing, so it's important to take this into account when buying a replacement notepad.

Minor criticisms aside, once you get the hang of the Spark it functions incredibly



well, actively backing up all of your pages in the background, while you're busy working. The pressure sensing isn't exactly top notch but it doesn't really matter all that much; this is a note-taking device and not a digital design tablet. The included pen is of high quality and has a nice feel to it, while the slick and seamless nature of the back-up process helps to ensure this is a solid productivity device.

- + Seamless backup and sync
- + Accurate notes
- + Classy design

- Pressure sensitivity could be better
- Somewhat confusing instructions



View Quest Retro Mini (Emma Bridgewater edition)

Cost: £79.99 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

The View Quest Retro Mini Bluetooth speaker has been re-released in three limited edition Emma Bridgewater print options. The overall design remains the same, which was already very attractive to begin with. It feels like a high-quality device, with a leatherette covered outer case and carry handle for easy transport. Powered by either 4xAA batteries or mains voltage, you have the advantage of being able to use it both indoors and outside.

Pairing it with Bluetooth was easy on an Apple device but we struggled to make it work on Android. Once connected, the signal was good with plenty of



range and no signal dropouts.

An aux jack and headphone socket are also included should you want to run it directly via a cable or listen through some cans in privacy.

You also get an FM and DAB radio thrown in for good measure, which is a welcome addition that makes this more than just a device slave. Possibly the coolest feature on the Retro Mini is a USB charging port for juicing your phone directly from the speaker, but it boggles our mind why you can't use it when the device is running on batteries.

Then you get to the sound quality, which is decidedly average overall. A recessed frequency range that cuts out the highs and lows is typical of cheaper speakers and you can hear it here. It's not as bad as some, but when faced with a track that has lots of percussion (we used *Brasilia* by Populous for the test), it struggles to sound exciting. There's also a noticeable rattle at high volumes when the antenna is down, so it's best to keep it away from the back when blasting out your favourite tracks. All in all, an attractive and comprehensively-equipped speaker with sound quality that falls slightly short of the front runners.

- + Attractive design
- + Solid build quality
- + Plenty of connectivity

- Charging port only works on mains
- Average sound quality
- Some pairing issues



If, like Charlie, you have splashed out on a brand spanking new mobile phone and promptly dropped it in the street where it was run over by a passing mobility scooter, don't despair. Just follow these **5 easy steps** to mobile salvation...



01

Stop crying.

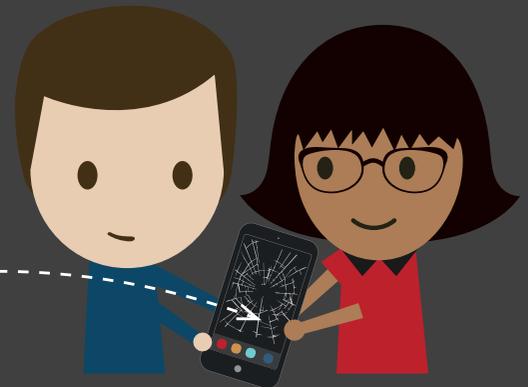
It's OK. Really. These things happen and can easily be fixed...



02

Head for the Phone Service Centre.

Check online at phoneservicecentre.co.uk for details.



03

Hand over the phone...

Just pass it over to one of our expert technicians who will assess the damage.



05

Take back your shiny repaired phone

and resume your digital life...



04

Relax

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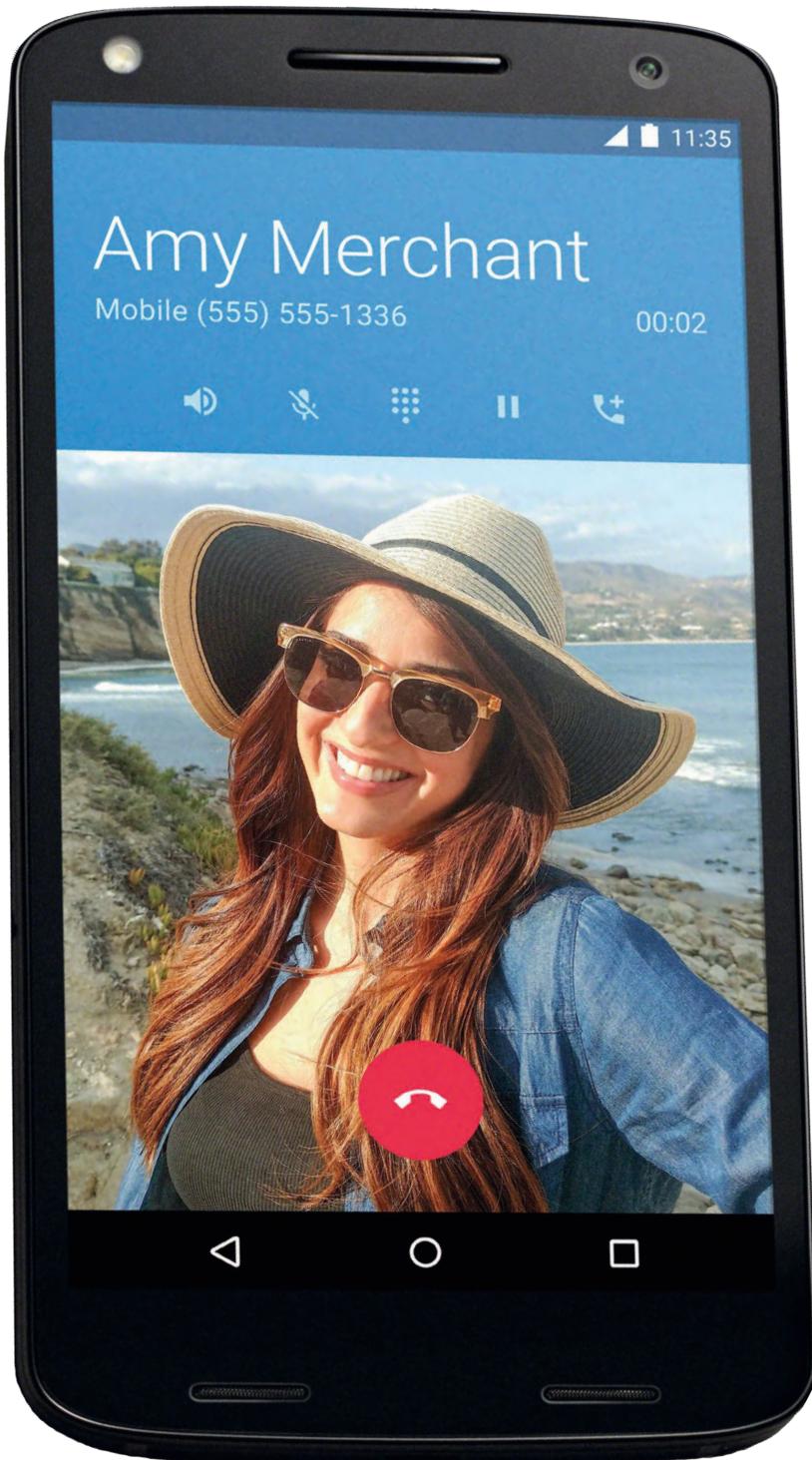
If you'd like to join our franchise please get in touch on franchise@phoneservicecentre.co.uk

or call us on **0333 999 7927**

Motorola Moto X Force

Motorola has followed up its successful new Moto X range with a fresh and unbreakable addition that has a few unique tricks up its sleeve.

Price: £499.99 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



SPEC SHEET

OS: Android 5.1.1 (upgradable to v6.0 Marshmallow)
Processor: Snapdragon 810
Screen: 5.4 inches
Resolution: 2560 x 1440 pixels (540 ppi)
Memory: 3 GB RAM
Storage: 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 200GB
Rear camera: 21MP
Front camera: 5MP
Video: 4K
Connectivity: 3G, 4G LTE
Dimensions: 150 x 77 x 9.2 mm
Weight: 169g
Battery: 3,760 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4⁴/₅

Camera



4⁴/₅

Battery



4⁴/₅

Ever since Google revitalised the Motorola brand, the company has been going from strength to strength with aggressively priced and solid performing handsets. The Moto G line has long been hailed as one of the best value handsets money can buy, while the Moto X range aims at the more flagship sector. Blending premium performance with a competitive price-tag, they continue to sell very well in a crowded market. The new Moto X Force is the company's latest edition to the range, sporting an upgraded processor and 'shatterproof' glass that is reportedly unbreakable. Will it be a worthy addition to the line? Let's find out.

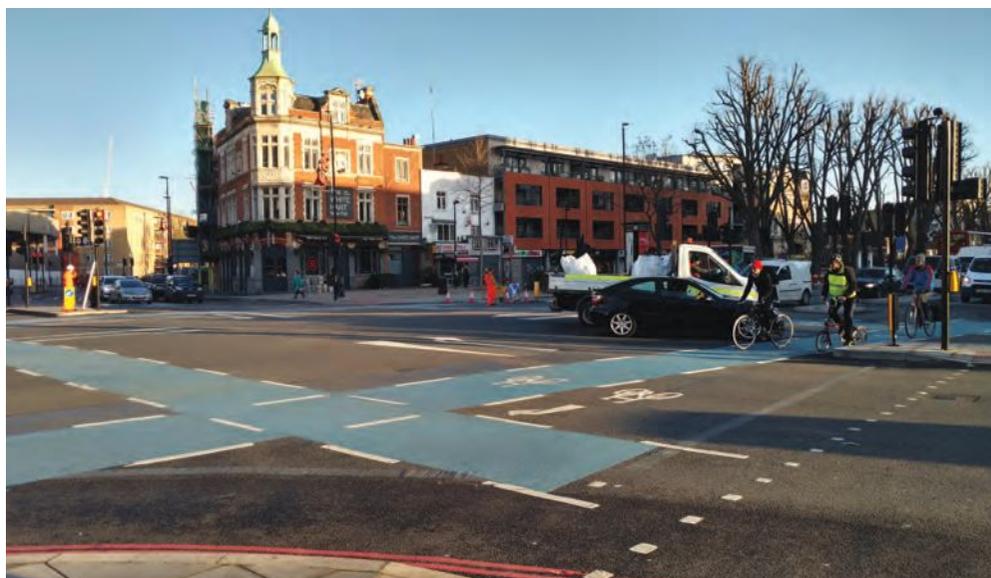
DESIGN

The word "functional" springs to mind when describing the new Motorola X Force. While it won't win any awards for attractiveness, it's also not very ugly either. There's an all glass front, which Motorola claims is shatterproof, while several speaker grilles flank either side of the screen. There's two on the bottom and a larger one up top, indicating stereo sound. Oddly, out of the three speakers only one produces sound, which we can only assume is a cost-cutting measure. Physical buttons are absent, with the display housing virtual keys instead. The lack of a fingerprint sensor is an obvious omission and may disappoint some who intend to use services such as Android Pay.

On the sides, you get a sturdy piece of metal trim that goes along the edges of the device. Holding it in our hands, we never felt like it was going to break. In fact, it feels like



Colour reproduction was strong and vivid



At 21 megapixels, the rear camera captures strong pictures with impressive finer detail

an absolute tank. Volume and power buttons sit on the right side of the handset, with the latter getting a textured finish so it's easier to differentiate. On the top is a headphone jack and SIM slot, which also holds a microSD tray. For connectivity, you'll only be getting a last generation Micro USB port, which is a little disappointing, when other handsets are beginning to adopt USB-C.

On the back, our device shipped with a rugged black nylon material. There's several other options to choose from including leather and various other textured finishes. They all help to give it some serious grip, which only adds to the overall robustness of the device. The Motorola camera sensor is once more surrounded by that metal bezel, with the logo proudly on display underneath. A dual-LED rear flash is also included to help illuminate your pictures

CAMERA

Shipping with the same sensor previously found in the Moto X Style, image quality is generally the same as its predecessor. This is no bad thing, as the Style already had a fantastic camera to begin with. That said, Motorola still couldn't help themselves from adding a few extras. The rear camera on the Force includes optical image stabilisation for removing hand shake, which works really well, though from what we could tell it's not available for 4K video.

At 21 megapixels, the sensor is capable of taking some very detailed images. We were especially impressed with the finer detail in images, which managed to come through very well on landscape and macro shots.

Colour reproduction was also excellent, with plenty of vibrant imagery and a good automatic exposure. Noise was always kept to a minimum in daylight shots, helping to make this a reliable shooter in brighter weather conditions.

After such great daytime performance, low-light shooting is only average. Detail is retained well and the scene is very evenly lit but it's all a bit dark when compared to similar devices, such as the Nexus 6P and Galaxy S6. Hopefully when the new Marshmallow update hits the device, developers should be able to make better use of the sensor with the new camera API. There's also some pretty obvious noise in images, which is more apparent when shot in front of a white background.

The built-in Motorola camera application contains very little editing tools for manual photos, with only basic adjustments possible. Panorama and HDR modes are included for a bit of variety but other than this, there's little on offer to tweak your photos. One thing we did like was the included exposure wheel, which functions much like the one found in Apple's devices. Simply adjust the dial around the focus area to make fast adjustments in dodgy shooting conditions.

The five megapixel front facing camera on the Moto X Force is very good, with a nice wide-angle lens and good colour reproduction. Noise is low and the addition of an LED lamp really helps make this a brilliant device for selfies and video calling. This is a feature we always like to see included on smartphone



The camera produces very detailed images with daylight shots keeping noise at a minimum

devices, as it's something of a necessity that is often overlooked.

SCREEN

The main selling point of the Moto X Force is the shatterproof screen, which is definitely more than just a gimmick. Motorola has a four-year guarantee on this device in the event that the screen cracks or shatters, which is a hell of a bold claim. After locating a loose hammer in the office,

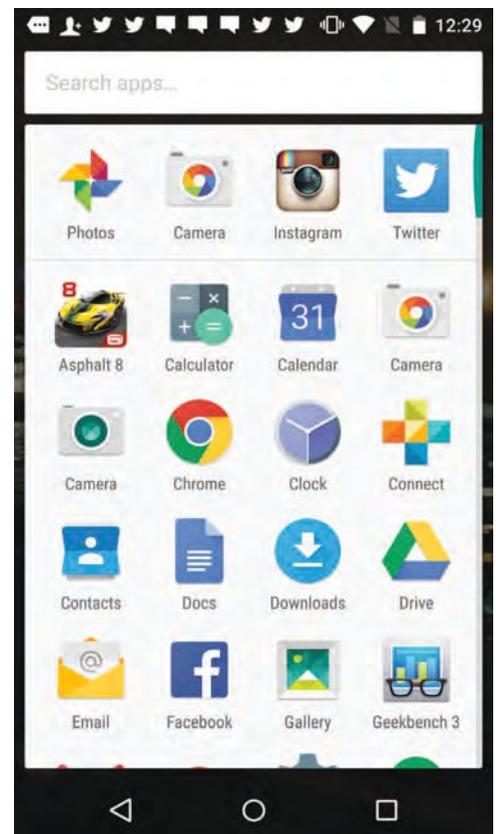
we proceeded to hit the screen several times with moderate force. The intention was never to break the device but simulate a pretty hefty fall. The result was pretty incredible, with zero marks and a perfectly functioning panel. If you're the type of person who is pretty careless with their device, this is just about the best handset you can get aside from a specialist rugged device.

The panel itself is also no slouch, with a 5.4-inch 2560x1440 AMOLED display putting it in the same league as current flagships. This equals an extremely high 544 DPI, which is way above the print standard. As such, pixilation is a thing of the past, even at the most scrutinous of distances. Colour reproduction is generally excellent, with spot on calibration straight out of the box. There was literally no change to the image quality before and after, which is a testament to the colour tuning on this device. Viewing angles are great with the screen viewable from even the most obtuse angles, though there was a noticeable green hue that overcomes the panel from one side. We're not exactly sure why this is but it may be due to the construction of the shatterproof glass.

Outdoor readability is very good, with high maximum brightness that is easily viewable under bright conditions. You should be able to comfortably get by using the device both indoors and outside.

PERFORMANCE

With a Snapdragon 810 and 3GB of DDR4 memory, the Moto X Force has exactly the same specifications as the Nexus 6,



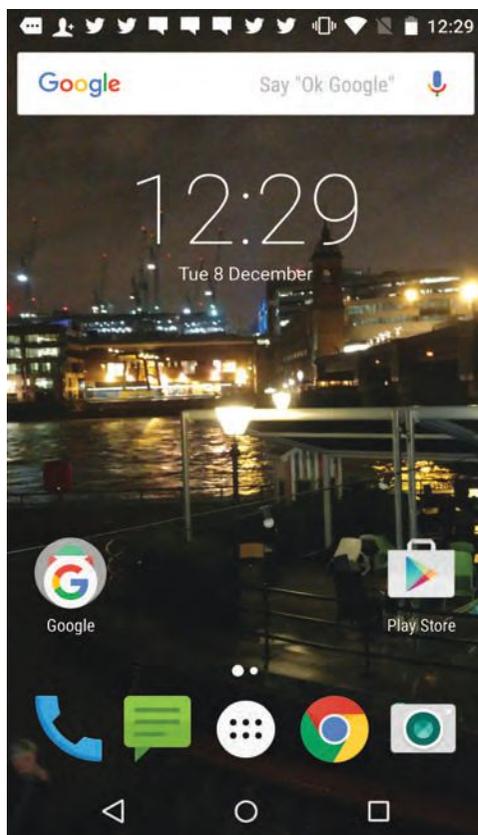
Android 5.1.1 is included with updates to follow

which we reviewed last issue. As such, performance is excellent and the stock Android operating system only helps things further. We were surprised to see that the Moto X Force scored significantly higher than its Google competitor, with 4618 for multi-core and 1326 single-core. This is a very high score that even places it above the Galaxy S6 Edge.

Asphalt 8: Airborne ran buttery smooth on the new device with zero lag whatsoever, even on the highest settings. Even better, we never experienced any heat issues while putting it through the 30-minute intensive gaming session. For general UI browsing, the Moto X Force gives you pretty much the best experience you can currently get on Android right now. App switching is immediate, with only a slight delay from opening to usage. While you won't get the performance benefits included in the Marshmallow update, Lollipop is now a mature and stable release with little real-world difference to its newer sibling.

SOFTWARE

A highlight of Motorola devices since their acquisition (and subsequent sale) by Google has always been the inclusion of stock Android; the Moto X Force is no



The shatterproof screen is a huge selling point



Asphalt 8: Airborne performed strongly with zero lag, even on the highest settings

different. Shipping with Android 5.1.1 out of the box, it could be a little disappointing to some that the newest Marshmallow OS isn't included. This isn't a major issue as Motorola has confirmed that the device will receive the newest version in a later update – likely released sometime in January. With that aside, the OS is equal to any other Motorola handset running stock Android. You won't be getting the benefits of Marshmallow-specific features such as Doze and Memory Monitor, but you will get the performance benefits that were introduced at the beginning of Lollipop.

Motorola has once more included their own Moto application, which is similar to the version last seen on the third generation Moto G. It essentially acts as a hub for the various deeper features buried within the handset, allowing you to create certain profiles for working, sleeping and driving. There's also a basic glance function allowing you to see application notifications while your device is sleeping, plus various gesture functions that can be used to activate certain features. These can, of course, all be controlled via voice commands which are detailed within the app itself.

VERDICT

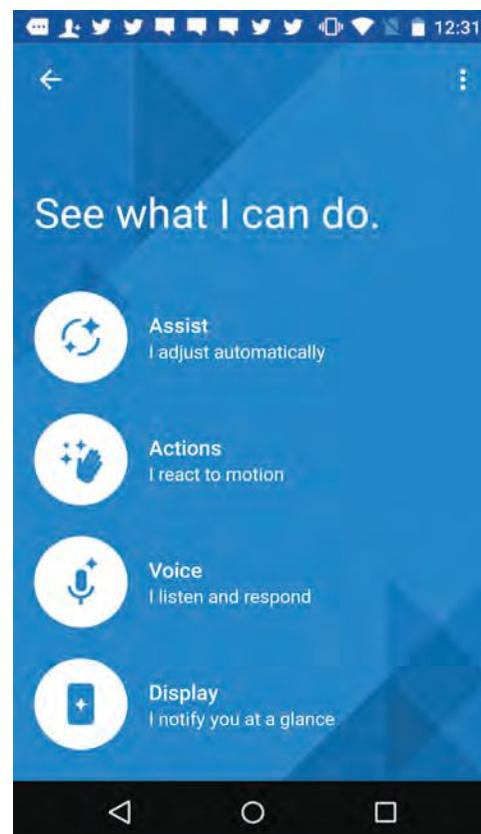
If you're the type of person who isn't bothered by design or flashy features, the Moto X Force could well be the perfect phone. It feels like it's built to last, while the battery life and performance are both excellent. Even the camera manages to excel, producing great images in daytime scenarios and acceptable ones under low-light. As a purely functional handset, this may well be the best device we've ever reviewed.

- + Built like a tank
- + Excellent performance
- + Huge battery with Turbo Power
- Dull design
- Lacks some flagship features
- No USB-C

BATTERY

The battery in the Moto X Force is an incredible 3,760 mAh, which is bigger than every other comparable device on the market. Motorola proudly boasts that the device is capable of getting two solid days of battery life; we found this to be spot on in testing. If you're frugal, it could probably manage an extra half day on top, which is truly an excellent result. After 30 minutes of intense gaming on *Asphalt 8: Airborne*, the overall life only fell by 13%. This is the best result from any phone we've tested thus far.

Motorola has decided to opt for its own version of fast charging in the Force, with the company implementing 'Turbo Power' into the device. Using the included charger, it's possible to fully charge the device in just over an hour. Those who only have enough time for a quick charging session will also be happy to know that it reaches over 50% in under 30 minutes, which is again faster than any other device we've tested. The only caveat is some moderate thermal issues, as the Force does seem to get pretty toasty when charging in Turbo Power mode.



The device includes various gesture functions

CONCLUSION

The Moto X Force is a substantial upgrade over the previous flagship, the Moto X Style. The shatterproof screen really is more than just a gimmick, while the device as a whole is built like an absolute tank. Internal hardware is excellent, with improvements to all the right areas making this one of the most powerful handsets you can currently buy. The added optical image stabilisation on the camera is the icing on the cake, making an already great shooter even better. Add to this a mammoth battery and if you're not the type of person bothered by aesthetic style and fingerprint sensors, this is probably the most complete handset currently available. Did I also mention it's slightly cheaper than its competitors?

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★	USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★	FEATURES ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★	VALUE ★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z5 Premium

Sony has pulled out the big guns for this one, with a larger footprint and the world's first 4K smartphone display.

Price: £629.99 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



The last time we reviewed one of the Z5 series we were a bit gutted. Mixed performance and overheating issues hampered what was otherwise a competent handset. The camera was excellent and in a league of its own but we just couldn't justify the cons. As such, Sony had a lot to prove with the bigger Z5 Premium. Aside from the inclusion of a 4K panel, it still needs to function well if we're going to give it a better score. Will Sony pull it off?

DESIGN

Being that we've already reviewed the Z5, a lot of this is going to feel like regurgitation, as there really is little that's different between these two devices with regards to design, performance and camera. Compared

to the previous generation Z3+, you'll find a slightly squarer design with edges that are a little sharper. The glass rear remains, along with the potential for cracks and smashes.

Our version was in a mirrored chrome finish and attracted fingerprints like a monster. After about five minutes the thing was a mess. Also, seeing our reflection perfectly on the back of the device was a little unnerving.

On the front, the stereo speakers have been moved to the very edges of the device, with only a subtle grille peering over the edge of each bezel. There seems to be less dead space on this device than the earlier Z5, though perhaps it's just an illusion due to the bigger screen. In reality, there's only about a one percent difference between them.

At 154 x 76, it's a very tall device that looks lanky next to similarly decked out competitors like the OnePlus 2 and Galaxy S6 Edge+.

On the side, buttons are the same as the Xperia Z5 and there's the all-new power button which doubles as that awesome fingerprint sensor. A two-phase camera shutter remains for focusing on objects before taking the photo.

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 3.5/5

The Sony Xperia Z5 Premium contains the same 23 megapixel Exmor RS IMX300 sensor found in the Z5, packing

SPEC SHEET

OS: Android 5.1.1 Lollipop (upgradable to 6.0)

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

Screen: 5.5 inches

Resolution: 2160 x 3840 pixels (428 ppi)

Memory: 3 GB RAM

Storage: 32GB

Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 200GB

Rear camera: 23MP

Front camera: 5.1MP

Video: 4K

Connectivity: 3G, 4G LTE

Dimensions: 154 x 76 x 7.8 mm

Weight: 180g

Battery: 3,430mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4⁴/₅

Camera



4⁴/₅

Battery



4⁴/₅



Phase focus almost reaches DSLR speeds

in some serious upgrades when compared with the previous generation IMX220. We've tested both devices and the results are identical. As such, we're only going to skim over this as you've probably read it before.

The default snapping mode is set to eight megapixels and employs a form of oversampling to get better image quality. You can opt for the full 23 megapixels, but it is overkill for most tasks. We'd advise you take the image quality advantages that oversampling offers over raw pixel count.

The new phase focus is seriously fast, nearing DSLR speed at times. Colours are dynamic and dripping with vibrancy and saturation, yet still manage to come across as natural. Auto settings do very well on even the more difficult images, with exposure and contrast well adjusted for the scene.

There's also an incredible amount of detail to be had from the images, with no evidence of any over-sharpening. When viewed up close, there is some crosstalk noise due to the astronomically high number of pixels they've managed to cram into the sensor, but it doesn't detract from the viewing experience at normal levels. Low-light results are highly dependent on the scene but do have the potential to produce some very clean images.

Sony has employed area-specific noise reduction in an attempt to only clean up the areas which are darkest, thereby leaving the detail on lighter areas intact. It mostly works in practice, though there were some occasions where the results came out a little soft.

There's no real manual mode to speak of. You'll find some editable parameters, while others such as ISO are buried in the settings. The lack of optical image stabilisation disappoints, especially as we thought they might be able to fit it in the bigger model.

The five megapixel front camera is the same as the Z5 and won't win any awards, though it is 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

This is an area where the Premium has something unique. The 5.5-inch screen is the biggest talking point of the Z5 Premium, with an absurdly high 4K resolution. At 2160 x 3840 pixels, it has a PPI rating of 806. This is truly incredible and borderline absurd.

We expected to be blown away with the quality, but it just wasn't the case. That's because what Sony doesn't tell you is this panel doesn't output 4K for most material. The UI and applications are all rendered in 1080p, which is actually a lower resolution than most comparative flagships. As such, you won't really notice a difference because there literally isn't one. The only time you'll really be able to take advantage of the huge resolution is through Sony's own video

application. Even YouTube is only capable of 1080p, which is hugely disappointing.

Getting down to image quality, it's again a mixed bag. Colour reproduction is fantastic and the fine detail in 4K clips was pretty mind-blowing, but I wouldn't call it a pivotal leap like 720p vs 1080p. We're definitely reaching a point of diminishing returns here and it all feels a bit like bragging rights.

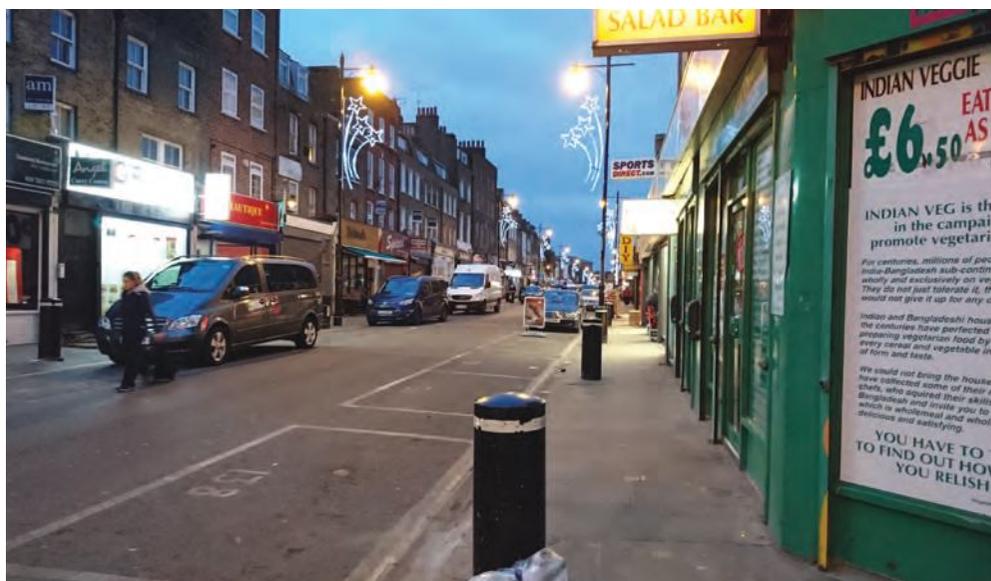
Also, the panel suffers badly from ghosting which is due to a reduced refresh rate. Running at 30HZ, it's just not sharp enough in motion and really lets the device down.

Calibration out of the box was also a bit off, with a cold blueish hue that needed some correction. On the other hand, viewing angles were some of the best we've seen, with the device viewable from the most obtuse of angles with no colour deviation whatsoever.

Outdoor readability was much better, with the result close to the Z5, which happened to be 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 glaring summer sun.

PERFORMANCE

Much like the Xperia Z5, the Premium uses a top-end Snapdragon 810. But, this time, benchmarking scores are much better with no strange performance jumps. Multi-core averaged in at 4751, which is a very high result, even beating the Samsung Galaxy Edge+ and Moto X Force. Benchmarking scores are not the be-all and end-all, but it's still a stark difference from the regular Z5. Single core continues this impressive run,



The camera comes with 23 megapixels but has a default mode of eight megapixels



The camera's area-specific noise reduction feature makes it ideal for shooting in low light

with an excellent 1351. It's worth noting that although the Z5 Premium has the same 3GB RAM, it's the faster DDR4 variant. This could be responsible for the higher score.

We're also pleased to confirm that the heating issues which affected the Z5 were not found in the Premium, with acceptable temperatures during our extended gaming session. As such, we didn't feel like the long-term health of the device was in danger.

Asphalt 8: Airborne played without hiccups on even the highest settings and general UI navigation was good, though some of the apps still failed to load as quickly as we'd have liked. The camera application has a notable delay of about a second when opening, which is laughable for a photography-orientated device. Still, it's a big improvement on the standard Z5 and makes it the preferred purchase over the two.

SOFTWARE

The Z5 Premium 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. This isn't

necessarily a bad thing, as it should mean that the performance is a lot speedier. Err... Not quite as we discovered earlier, though the general experience is still fluid.

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. Movie Creator is a decent video editor for splicing together clips but apps like PS Video feel like a cheeky attempt at drawing you into their ecosystem.

BATTERY

At 3,430 mAh, the battery included in the Z5 Premium is much bigger than the standard Z5 and definitely ranks at the higher end of the spectrum. Our 30 minute intense gaming session on *Asphalt 8: Airborne* consumed 16% of the battery, which is a disappointment.

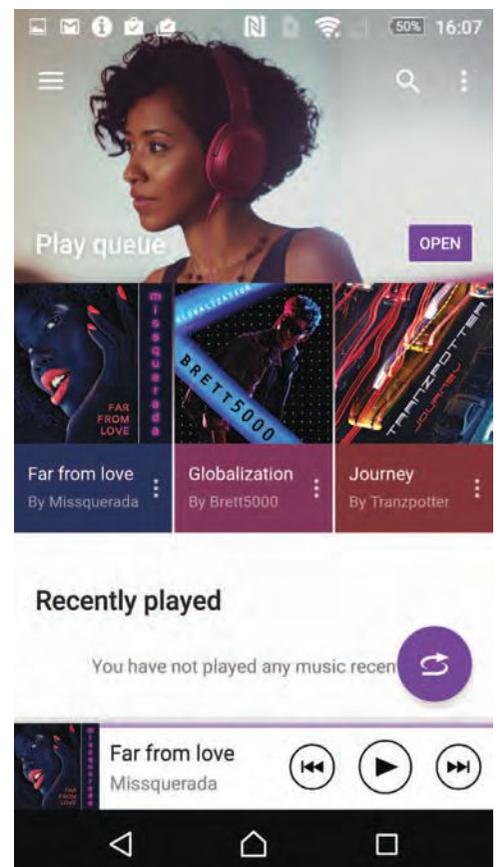
On a typical day, our personal experience depended heavily on the screen utilisation. 4K video drained the battery by about 3%

every five minutes, which is about as much as an extended gaming session. However, using the screen normally limits the resolution to 1080p, which makes the battery last much longer. That said, you still only expect about a day and a half of moderate usage.

Quick-charge 2.0 makes a return on this device, allowing you to charge the device in under two hours. Like previous Z series handsets, the battery is non-removable.

CONCLUSION

The Z5 Premium is a definite improvement over the standard Z5, with better performance and no overheating issues. The excellent camera is carried across from its smaller sibling and we still love the fingerprint scanner placement. It's just a shame the claimed 4K screen isn't really 4K.



The Sony Xperia Z5 Premium boasts a 4K panel

VERDICT

The bigger size helps thermal dissipation and improves performance, making this a much more worthwhile device. It has the same great camera and that awesome fingerprint scanner. Annoying app hangs aside, Sony has mostly gotten this bigger model right and as such, we feel much more comfortable recommending it.

- + Fingerprint scanner is still great
- + 4K screen great when it works
- + Attractive design
- Screen isn't technically 4K
- Large footprint
- No USB-C or Marshmallow

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★	USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★	FEATURES ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★	VALUE ★★★★★

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Apple Watch

Apple are back again with a second stab at the wearables game. Succeeding the Apple Watch is the... Apple Watch, cue fanfare and rows of geniuses clapping.

Price: £299.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham



SPEC SHEET

OS: Watch OS 2
Sensors: 4
Processor: Apple S1
Screen: 1.5 inches
Resolution: 340 x 272
Memory: 512 MB
Storage: 8GB

Connectivity: WiFi & Bluetooth
Dimensions: 38.6 x 33.3 x 10.5 mm
Weight: 55g
Battery: 250 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



3¹/₅

Comfort



4¹/₅

Battery



3¹/₅

We're still trying to work out whether we actually need a wearable in our lives.

A wearable above all should be an extension of your smartphone device, helping you to look at your smartphone less. It should also be exquisite in the looks department – being on display all the time, you would expect no less. Truly defining wearables have only been around for a couple of years and Apple has only entered the wearables arena recently with the release of the original Apple Watch in April last year. The Samsung Gear S2 is the closest comparable smartwatch, offering similar features. Does the Apple Watch stand up well against its rotund rival?

DESIGN

The Apple Watch is distinctly Apple; their designers have done it again in making a device that looks unique to the Apple brand. The chamfered edges and metal frame seen on the iPhone 6s make an appearance to give it that 'Apple' look. Apple retained that iPhone square shape which isn't as pleasing on the eye as the round shape seen on the Gear S2 and Huawei Watch.

Physical buttons run down the right side of the watch, adding to that 'Apple' look with a smooth curved tactile power button, and a digital crown that doubles as a button.

Apple has released three versions of the Watch: Apple Watch; Apple Watch: Sport; and Apple Watch: Edition. The difference between the three is the material they've been constructed with and the strap material. All three come in two sizes; 38mm and 42mm. The 38mm watch is a bit on the small side, male or female it will look a bit dainty on your wrist and punching in your passcode is quite troublesome due to the diminutive screen. If you're Tarzan instead of Jane definitely go for the 42mm.

Straps are interchangeable with Apple offering a wide range if you don't like the one included in the box. There is a locking mechanism for the straps, offering security and ease of use when changing your strap. Apple, of course, offers a range of straps if you're unhappy with the plain silicone one that comes with it. Even though it's not aesthetically pleasing, the silicone band is



extremely comfortable, more so than the leather strap of the Samsung Gear S2. Contributing to the comfort is the lightweight 55g frame; at times we forgot we were wearing the device until notifications were buzzing away on our wrists.

SCREEN

As mentioned the screen for the 38mm is really small and interacting with the screen comes with a bit of effort, but after wearing it for a while you do get used to it. A concern when choosing a wearable is whether the screen will survive being pressed against sleeves, coats, keyboards and desks. The Ion-X glass does well to protect against all of these elements – after weeks of using it, there were no scratches visible on the screen.

Hiding behind the Ion-X glass is an OLED display. The use of an OLED display makes sense to minimise power consumption as it powers the pixels that are in use with the black background not consuming any

power. By using only parts of the screen, coloured images are more highlighted and stand out more. Visually the OLED display is one of the best we've seen on a smartwatch, with a 272 x 340 resolution on the 38mm display.

PERFORMANCE (BATTERY INCLUDED)

Smartwatches are still in their infancy.

When Apple came into the market the public were expecting a smartphone killer – the next evolution in communication. Maybe in a few years we could expect that but for now, all smartwatches are just an extension of your smartphone, a convenience, not a necessity like a smartphone. A burning question for Apple to answer is whether Steve Jobs would have released the Apple watch in its current state?

The Apple Watch, like all other smartwatches, is just a notification device that tells the time (with the difference that it only works on iOS devices). Which it does very well, with the haptic feedback giving you a comfortable nudge when a message comes through. In regards to responsiveness, the Apple watch unsurprisingly is most suited for an (shock horror) iPhone as Android Wear devices push through notifications a second later on our iOS devices.

The gyroscope is extremely reactive, with a turn of the wrist the display immediately turns on.



Return to its natural position turns the display off, although if you're really paranoid about battery life you can turn it off with a simple palm tap.

Speaking of battery life, those who are used to 'proper' watches will be disappointed with how long smartwatches actually last. The Apple Watch is no different with a battery life that would last you a whole day with normal use, for us lasted 17 hours. We lost an hour and a half the next day once the heart rate monitor came to our attention. Charging at any opportunity is a wise choice, the battery percentage dropping into the teens is a common sight.

SOFTWARE

Carrying on with the theme of smartwatches being just an extension of your smartphone, apps are not standalone, they're counterparts to the apps on your smartphone. Unfortunately this means a very slow and laggy experience when trying to use non-Apple native apps. Our favourite app to use, despite the lag, was Shazam, with a few small motions we were identifying



songs, but it doesn't actually use the built-in mic. So those planned fist pumps were half in vain.

Watch OS 2 speeds up performance as well as adding more native apps to play around with. Facebook Messenger has been included in this upgrade, allowing you to send voice notes via the built-in mic. There's also Time Travel, which allows you to fast forward your calendar to see your schedule. Time Travel was hardly used; the digital crown does not play nicely and trying to get to a specific moment in the future proved to be tricky.

CONCLUSION

The Apple watch is the undisputed choice for owners of an iPhone. The price tag is the same as the competition but you'll be getting an optimised experience with Watch OS 2. It prevents you from constantly looking at your smartphone, which is the main point of a smartwatch. But the smartwatch has yet to become a necessity like a smartphone. However, Apple Watch is one of the best smartwatches out there and we can expect Apple to continue being one of the forerunners in the wearables market. Just improve the battery life and transfer

Apple Watch vs Samsung Gear S2

Both devices have the same features with the Apple Watch being the optimal choice for iPhone users. The Gear S2 still has an infant OS making it a device that's only halfway there, especially compared to the Apple Watch which out of the box will notify you on all messaging apps and social media. But the Gear S2 is nicer to look at with a classic round design, there's also the rotating bezel to manually scroll through options, which is more tactile than the digital crown of the Apple Watch.

Apple Watch vs Microsoft Band

The Microsoft Band is a fitness tracker with more sensors than any other wearable. It has a barometer which measures vertical distance travelled by detecting atmospheric changes. But it doesn't support apps the way Watch OS 2 does. To anthropomorphise this the Apple Watch is a happy casual while the Microsoft Band is a fitness freak. The Apple Watch still does a decent job in monitoring your heart and counting your steps. But it won't appreciate that you walked up the escalators like the Microsoft Band.



VERDICT

An extension to your iPhone that will have you looking at your handset less and overall make your life a bit easier. What makes the Apple Watch stand out is Watch OS 2 offering more notifications and more features than the Samsung Gear S2. It may not be the best looking of the wearables top dogs, but it offers more.

- + Watch OS 2 offers more with notifications and features
- + Silicone bands are well made and comfortable
- + Easy to use
- Does not offer that revolutionary necessity expected
- Retaining of the square screen
- Non-native apps are painfully slow to load

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE	USABILITY
★★★★★	★★★★★
DESIGN	FEATURES
★★★★★	★★★★★
INNOVATION	VALUE
★★★★★	★★★★★



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Huawei Watch

The only smartwatch that would not look out of place in a casino, but Huawei has plenty of competition to compete against. Does it stick out enough?

Price: £299.99 Reviewer: Manny Pham

It literally does stick out more than any other smartwatch with a protruding height of 11mm. The thickness adds to the classy design, making it the best looking watch we've looked at so far. Some may balk at its bulkiness, but we can all agree that Huawei has brought classic design and fused it with modern technology. Google currently don't allow customisation of Android Wear; this could change as we've seen different Google skins on Android smartphones. Until then we have a device that's very similar to other Android Wear devices, it's also the most expensive Android Wear device, retailing at £299.

DESIGN

As mentioned this watch is the best looking smartwatch we've seen so far, with a classic round look, which is on-trend. The

SPEC SHEET

- OS** Android Wear
- Processor** Snapdragon 400
- Screen** 1.4 inches
- Resolution** 400x400
- Memory** 512MB
- Sensors** accelerometer, gyro, heart rate, barometer
- Storage** 4GB
- Micro SD Compatible** N/A
- Connectivity** WiFi & Bluetooth
- Dimensions** 42 x 42 x 11.3 mm
- Battery** 300mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Comfort	Battery
		
4 / ₅	4 / ₅	4 / ₅

thickness makes it stand out, looking more like a glamorous super brand watch. Adding to this look are genuine leather straps. Unfortunately, its classy look, is also the Huawei Watch's weakness. While it may go with your tuxedo, suit and smart casual wear, the Huawei Watch looks out of place with very casual attire. If you're one to wear Huaraches and a classic Adidas tee regularly, you might want to consider a different smartwatch.

There's a physical button positioned at 2 o'clock on the watch, acting as a home button and screen dimmer. The positioning is perfect as most traditional watches place the winder at 3 o'clock, forcing an awkward twist of the wrist. It feels natural to just reach for the button when need be. On the rear is the heart rate monitor with the four gold charging contacts next to it.

Despite the size it only weighs in at 61g, so your wrist won't be hunkered down by something obstructive. The leather straps aid comfort, easing further the worry about how big and uncomfortable the Huawei Watch looks.

The Huawei Watch has been given a rating of IP67, meaning it's dust resistant and can survive in one metre of water for half an hour. It doesn't make the Huawei Watch an ideal fitness tracker for swimming, but that heart attack mid-shower will be followed by relief (yes, it happened, don't judge me).

SCREEN

With a 1.4 inch display, the Huawei Watch is one of the biggest wearables you can get, bested in size only by the 1.56-inch Moto 360. It also features an AMOLED display, not surprising as this prolongs the battery life by not activating black pixels. This also provides a natural deep

black, emphasising everything else on the screen.

The 1.4-inch screen measures up with 400 x 400 resolution, giving it 286ppi, almost on par with the retina display of the Apple Watch (290ppi for the 38mm).

The quality of the Huawei isn't only on the strap and body; the screen has sapphire glass protecting it from the elements. Huawei are really going toe to toe with Apple on quality as the American tech giants also has sapphire glass on the more expensive





The stylish watch is the most expensive Android Wear device on the market

high-range of Apple Watches, a minimum spend of £479.

In terms of visual quality, Apple bests Huawei. The Apple Watch looks more clean and fluid compared to the Huawei Watch display. The Huawei Watch does work on iPhones thanks to the latest version of Android Wear, but in terms of performance and display, the Apple Watch is the clear choice for iOS users.

What could have been included is an ambient light sensor as you have to manually set the brightness to your desired level. Having it at full brightness enables great readability even in sunlight, and in low light there is little problem reading the screen. We kept the smartwatch at three mostly and readability was not hindered.

PERFORMANCE

Snapdragon 400 is the processor for Android wearables at the moment with the ASUS ZenWatch 2, Moto 360 (2nd Gen) and LG Urbane also including Qualcomm's processor. The devices also pack 512MB of RAM just like the Huawei Watch (except for the 768MB LG Urbane). There's not much to really talk about in terms of performance as Android Wear devices are so similar in specs and run the same OS.

VERDICT

The overall choice for Android Wear, making life easier and stylish from strap to strap. We only wish there was room for Huawei to flex their creative side with the UI and provide a more unique experience with Android Wear. You can use with an iPhone but for the same price an Apple Watch is better suited.

the gold slots match up otherwise it won't charge. The Gear S2 and Moto 360 came with a nice wireless charging dock that doubles as a nice stand, and charges them without any fear of connectivity issues. Huawei had to cut corners somewhere to keep the price below £300. The cut wasn't made on the watch itself, but this could prove to be costly – we did experience false charging a couple of times.

SOFTWARE

Android Wear is just a notification centre, and with Google not allowing manufacturers to apply their own UI skin, the experience

Huawei claim the battery will last between a day-and-a-half to two days. On average, we got about a day-and-a-half out of the 300mAh battery. Worrying about running out of juice shouldn't be problem.

What is troublesome is the proprietary charger, the charger latches onto the smartwatch via a magnet but users have to ensure

is too similar across Android Wear devices. You receive notifications with Google Now cards – viewing emails, social media and messages. You can use the gyroscope sensor to dismiss notifications with a flick of the wrist which is a convenient feature, especially for users with disabilities.

Your watch is constantly listening for the phrase "OK Google" to activate Google Now. Talking to your watch still feels weird for us but it is a feature that is standard for smartwatches. Speaking to the Huawei Watch is a simple procedure, but like other smartwatches, it suffers in loud areas.

What Huawei has done to add its own touch to the software is the customisable watch faces. Huawei offer an impressive choice of faces, again showing how important it is, that you look great with your new Huawei Watch.

CONCLUSION

The Huawei watch is the best looking smartwatch we've seen so far, with the emphasis on classic watch design, and incorporation of modern technology. Our only problem is that Android Wear is no different between all Android Wear devices, providing similar experiences and nothing much to wow us. It is a beautiful watch – one that will run all day for you and make notifications easier to handle.



The high-end Huawei Watch fuses classic design with modern technology

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★

- + The most gorgeous smartwatch currently
- + Fast and easy to flick through
- + Great watch face designs

- Android Wear is similar on all Android Wear devices
- Proprietary charger can be in inconvenience
- Price is too high for just a notification centre

Microsoft Surface Pro 4

Microsoft's revolutionary Surface line reaches its fourth incarnation, but just how much has it changed over the already excellent Surface Pro 3?

Price: £749.00 - £1799.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



SPEC SHEET

OS: Windows 10
Processor: Intel Skylake core i3 / i5 (reviewed) / i7
Screen: 12.3 inches
Resolution: 2736 x 1824 pixels (267 ppi)
Memory: 4 / 8 (reviewed) / 16GB GB RAM
Storage: 32GB
Micro SD compatible? No

Rear camera: 8MP
Front camera: 5MP
Video: 1080p 30FPS
Connectivity: Bluetooth, WiFi
Dimensions: 292 x 201 x 8 mm
Weight: 796g
Battery: 5,087mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



5¹/₅

Camera



4¹/₅

Battery



4¹/₅

What a long way Microsoft has come with its Surface line. The initial concept was scoffed at by some critics, yet that didn't stop the Redmond giant from beavering away at each little flaw and slowly sculpting it into the beast it is today. Surface VP Panos Panay says the laplet line now has a customer satisfaction rating of 98%, which is a hell of a claim to make for any product. With the fourth iteration now firmly in our hands for testing, can it really offer that much different over the already great Pro 3 and keep up the momentum? Let's find out.

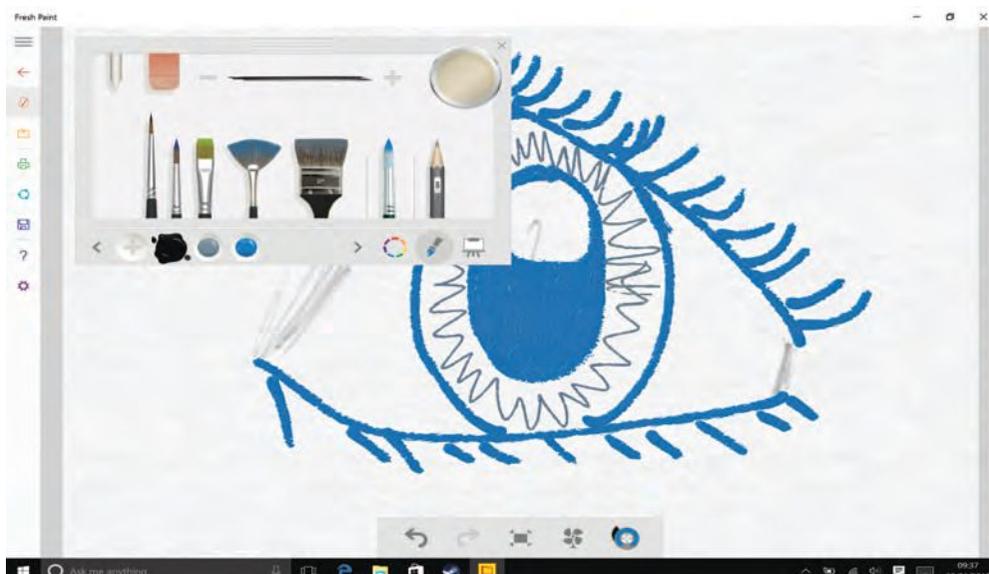
DESIGN

The Surface Pro 4 is very similar to its predecessor the Surface Pro 3, which received a significant revamp over the Surface Pro 2. What you get is that same all-metal finish with a hulking Microsoft logo on the rear, replacing the more subtle 'Surface' writing that adorned the earlier model. Overall footprint is the same in terms of lateral dimensions, but Microsoft has somehow managed to shave a further 0.3-inches off the thickness. Heat vents around the edges of the device remain, while the volume controls have now been moved to the top edge so they don't interfere with the pen placement. The Surface employs a new and stronger magnetic pen mechanism that allows you to store the stylus simply by snapping it onto the edges of the tablet.

Connectivity is also the same as the previous generation, with just enough ports to make it useful but not much else. The inclusion of only a single USB port



Daytime pictures are impressive for a tablet



Get creative and produce vibrant images with the surface pen

on the hardware itself is once again a bit of a disappointment, though Microsoft has included one on the charging brick for good measure, even if it's only really useful for charging your smartphone. The mini DisplayPort connector is back, this time supporting 4K at 60Hz thanks to the new and improved Intel Skylake processors used in the device.

Also shipping with the Surface Pro 4 as an optional extra is the new Type Cover, which Microsoft has improved on nearly every aspect of the awkward original. The new chiclet keys feel so much better for typing. There's also a much larger glass trackpad that actually works this time round, unlike the tiny matted one you got on older versions. Those who own the Pro 3 shouldn't worry either, as it's also fully backward compatible with your devices.

CAMERA

The rear camera on the Surface Pro 4 is not the main focus of this device, so we weren't necessarily expecting mind-blowing quality. At eight megapixels, it sits at the top of the tablet spectrum for sheer resolution but as we know, pixel counts are not everything. Nevertheless, the pictures produced are quite decent for a tablet, with acceptable daytime images. Low-light is a write off, with the tablet completely failing in our darkest test. This is hardly surprising, however, considering most others do the same.

The five megapixel front camera is more interesting, incorporating Windows Hello for some very cool instant login capability.

Next to the physical camera sensor itself is a second infrared imaging sensor that is used for scanning the room. During the initial set-up of Hello, Windows will ask to take a profile of your face and from there it's all pretty straightforward. Simply look into the camera when you see the login screen and if all goes well, it should recognise you.

SCREEN

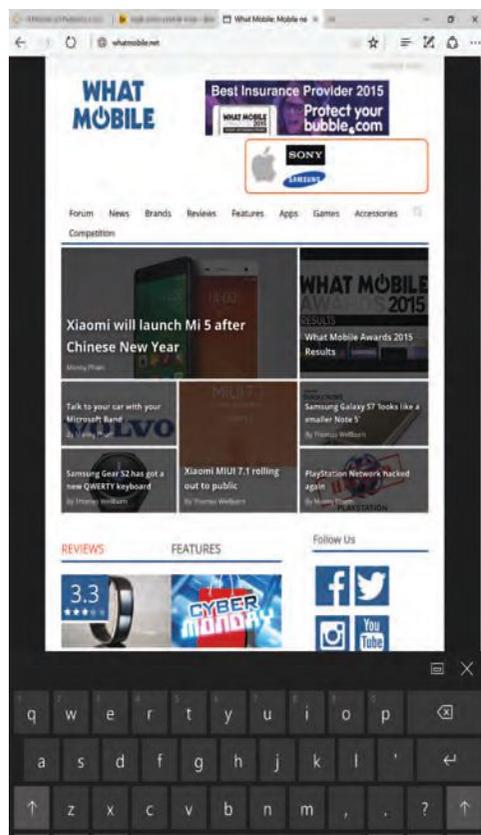
A major highlight on the new Surface Pro is the display, which boasts the highest pixel density rating of any device in its category. Microsoft increased the resolution to a mind boggling 2736 x 1824, which equates to a class-leading 267 DPI. At 12.3-inches, it's also bigger despite the overall device taking up the same footprint as the original. Microsoft achieved quite a feat with the new Surface Pro 4 by reducing the optical stack to just 0.4mm, meaning the actual panel is closer to your finger than ever before. They're calling the new technology 'PixelSense' and it works in tandem with a dedicated custom G5 chip which analyses pen movements and controls latency. Put it all together and you have one of the most natural writing experiences we've ever felt on a tablet.

After calibration, there was little difference in the before and after. That's because this panel has one of the most accurate colour readouts we've ever seen, with only a slight blue bias that is virtually impossible to see. For professional users who primarily work on digital content, it represents the sRGB colour space better than any mobile device we've ever

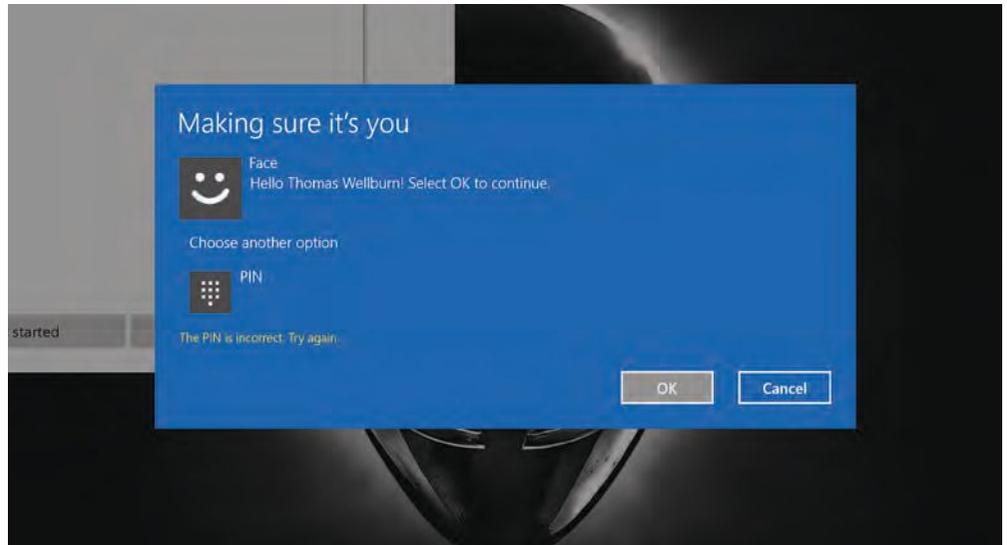
tested. It's a highly commendable feat of engineering from the calibration guys at Microsoft. It's also got one of the highest contrast ratios ever recorded, at a whopping 1406. Reputable screen testing website Displaymate said that it was one of the best mobile tablet displays they had ever tested. This stellar result continues with outdoor readability, with a high maximum brightness that allows it to be read in most lighting conditions.

PERFORMANCE

Being a fully-fledged Windows 10 tablet with laptop level components, it's a little unfair to compare this with the traditional tablet. As such, we've decided to test this much like you would a laptop, with true X86 benchmarking tools for an honest comparison. Intel's new sixth generation Skylake CPUs are the weapon of choice for the Surface pro 4, with the chips being a significant jump over the older fourth gen processors used in the Pro 3. They mark the first time Intel has transitioned to a 14nm manufacturing process, meaning less heat emission and power consumption. Our model shipped with the i5-6300U processor and 8GB RAM, which is the mid-configuration of the bunch.



Laptop or tablet? Hard to tell



Windows Hello uses facial recognition to unlock your device

- PC MARK 08 HOME** - 2415
- PC MARK 08 WORK** - 2572
- PC MARK 08 CREATIVE** - 2478

- 3D MARK 08 CLOUD GATE** - 5315
- 3D MARK 08 SKY DIVER** - 3289

Doing a round of PCMark 8 tests showed promising results. It scored 2572 in the work benchmark, 2478 in the creative test and 2415 in the home trial. This bested the previous generation Surface Pro 3 in all categories by quite a margin, once again showing the prowess of that new CPU. 3DMark 8 scores were almost double that found in Surface Pro 3 across the board, another excellent result for the new Skylake chipset.

- CIVILISATION 5 AVERAGE FPS**
- 1280 X 720 - HIGH 12 FPS, LOW 139 FPS
- 1920 X 1200 - HIGH 6 FPS, LOW 96 FPS
- 2736 X 1824 - HIGH 3 FPS, LOW 30 FPS

- ROCKET LEAGUE AVERAGE FPS**
- 1280 X 720 - HIGH 25 FPS, 61 FPS
- 1920 X 1080 - HIGH 15 FPS, LOW 49 FPS
- 2736 X 1824 - HIGH 8 FPS, LOW 36 FPS

- METRO LAST LIGHT AVERAGE FPS**
- 1280 X 720 - HIGH 13 FPS, LOW 17 FPS
- 1920 X 1080 - HIGH 9 FPS, LOW 14 FPS
- 2736 X 1824 - HIGH 5 FPS, LOW 9 FPS

Gaming performance was generally fine but we'd hardly call it a strong contender. You'll be able to play some Steam games at native resolution, however the quality settings will need to be crushed as a result.

SOFTWARE

The Surface Pro 4 marks the first in the range to ship with Windows 10, which is a major overhaul of the marmite Windows 8 OS. It's still doesn't have the conventional menu that Windows 7 users will be used to, pushing users to utilise Cortana and the search functions to find their programs rather than system folders. The Metro Start screen from Windows 8 now resides in the start menu itself, with all your applications along the right-hand side of the panel. They're fully adjustable and removable, so if you'd rather not use them you can simply unpin then from the start menu to get a more old-school feel.

As mentioned earlier, Cortana has been carried across from Windows 10 Mobile in largely the same form as before. You'll be able to use her for quick searches and speech communication, while also managing your calendar, making appointments and getting a daily overview of your schedule. Continuum is also on full show and acts as Microsoft's answer to a one-size-fits-all operating system. With the ability to dynamically change the interface depending on what device you're using, it's an impressive accomplishment that mostly works effortlessly. Teething bugs aside, they've managed to smooth out a lot of the random crashes and hanging issues that plagued it initially at launch. When you remove the type cover, it just works.

Aside from the above, there's also numerous little improvements that add up to make a big difference. The Settings

menu is now a true substitute for the Control Panel, while the Action Centre is great for keeping informed of any updates or app notifications that need to be addressed, plus giving you plenty of shortcut buttons for faster UI navigation.

BATTERY

The 5,087mAh battery on the Surface Pro 4 is roughly 10% smaller than the 5547mAh version found in the previous version, which is no surprise since the device is slightly thinner. Still, with the more power efficient Intel CPU's we didn't expect there to be much of a difference between the two. Our predictions were proved correct, where we got between five and six hours of casual use browsing the web and watching videos. It's hardly a stellar result, but it's better than the Pro 3, which lasted around an hour less in general testing. Gaming and intensive tasks sapped the battery pretty heavily, with just over two hours of life from a full charge. This is well short of the best tablets on the market but hardly unexpected, especially when it is running a higher tier Core i5.

Obviously, we think it goes without saying that the battery on the Surface Pro 4 is non-removable... So don't even bother trying to pry this thing open and swap it.

CONCLUSION

A much-improved screen with better touch and response are the biggest changes to the Surface Pro 4, with enough clout to sway it for many potential buyers. Factor in all the other little things that Microsoft has adjusted for the better and it becomes clear that this is much more than just a fresh pair of eyes. While it won't hold up to the strenuous design tasks unless you opt for the top i7 (which is incredibly pricey... and it's still only two cores), most end users will be more than happy with its chameleon-like ability to act as both a powerful tablet and a decent laptop. Just don't expect it to be cheap.

VERDICT

Constant refinement is the ethos of the Surface line and it certainly shows here. They may be subtle but every little adjustment is a positive one here, making an already class-leading device even better. If you're after the ultimate Windows tablet that can run full desktop software, there's still nothing better.

- + New Skylake CPUs
- + Truly incredible screen
- + PixelSense is a big deal
- Gets a little toasty under load
- Minor parallax issues
- Still only one USB port



The Microsoft Surface Pro 4 comes with Windows 10

SURFACE PRO 4 VERSUS THE IPAD PRO
APPLE'S NEWEST COMPETITOR HAS ITS SIGHTS DIRECTLY ON THE SURFACE

It was only a matter of time before Apple got in on the laptop/tablet hybrid market. The new iPad Pro is the tech giant's attempt at taking a stab at the Surface, though on raw specs it leaves a lot to be desired. The new Apple A9X chipset claims to be desktop level, however it is really only an enhanced version of the existing mobile A9 chip. The 4GB RAM is much higher than its iPhone devices but still far less than the mid-range Surface Pro 4, which has double the amount at 8GB. It also runs on the same operating system as its mobile counterpart, Apple iOS 9, which is not a fully-fledged OS like Windows 10. This means a lack of proper desktop applications, something which makes the Surface line its peers so successful.

It looks like a missed opportunity for Apple, as the potential was there for a device with so much more.



OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

VALUE

★★★★★



Lord of the Spies...

Steve Lord is a White Hat hacker and runs his own company, Mandalorian Security Services Ltd. With over a decade of experience on information security, he works for good and would choose to destroy the Sith, not join them. Join us every month as he gives his view on the world of privacy.

The £4 computer that changes everything

As I write this, British Astronaut Tim Peake is preparing his pivotal Astro-Pi mission on the International Space Station, which will run code developed by British school pupils to test scientific research concepts in space. The original Raspberry Pi was a revolutionary device because it was cheap and powerful enough to attract some great hacks. At only £35, the circuit board had roughly the equivalent power of an old mobile phone but in the form factor of a credit card. Meanwhile, on planet Earth, Pi's inventors have just released the Raspberry Pi Zero. This slimmed down model packs quite a punch and is only half the size of a credit card. At just £4 including VAT, it unsurprisingly sold out.

Easy as Raspberry Pi

To use it, you'll need a micro-USB adapter, USB hub, mini-HDMI adapter, USB WiFi card and a Micro-SD card, but kits are available online at just £11... and that includes the Pi Zero itself. Most other extras can be easily obtained at your local pound shop, making it a bit of a steal for professionals and amateurs alike. So what can you actually do with £4-worth of computing power? Surprisingly, a lot.

I managed to hack together a fleet of Raspberry Pi computers using several cheap

PS3 EyeToy USB cameras with Calin Crisan's MotionEye software (github.com/ccrisan/motioneyeos). This allowed me to use them as a connected mobile security solution to detect movement in the house when I'm not at home and relay the information back to my smartphone or tablet.

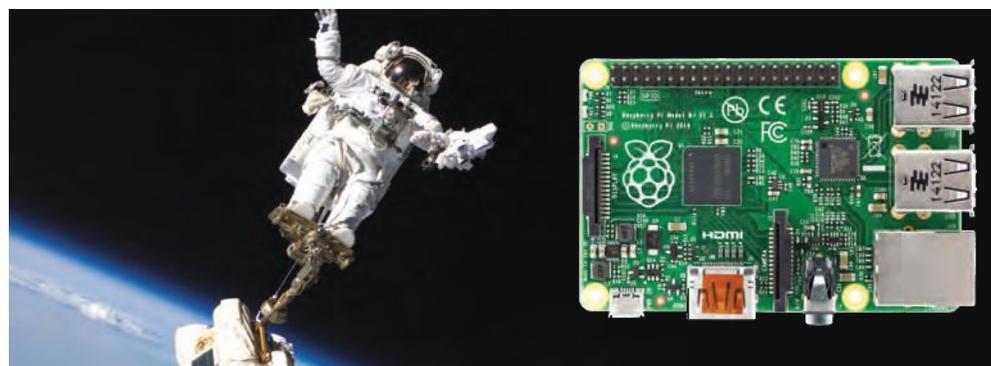
Money well spent

If that sounds a little too complicated, the Pi also makes a great TV media centre for casual users. OSMC (osmc.tv) is a special media centre built just for the Pi, so you can watch your films, videos or even stream them into your living room.

If you already use the popular Plex (plex.tv) media server then take a look at RasPlex (rasplex.com), giving you the full Plex service on your TV without needing a set top box.

You can also use the Plex App or various XBMC Remote apps available to control either Plex or OSMC from your smartphone or tablet. Another great piece of software is RetroPie (blog.petrockblock.com/retropie), which turns your Pi into a retro games console.

It takes a bit of effort to set up and is hampered somewhat by the Pi Zero's low power limit, but for older retro titles, it's hard to beat at under a fiver.



The hard sell for mobilepornapps

Security firm ZScaler found two fake porn apps stealing personal data this month. "To avoid being a victim of such malware, it is always best to download apps only from the trusted app stores, such as Google Play." Said the firm.



iOS jailbreak nets hackers \$1 million

Start-up company Zerodium ran a \$1,000,000 hacker competition for anyone who could jailbreak an iPhone remotely through a browser in September. It initially looked like there were no winners until the prize was claimed by an unnamed team just before the deadline in early November. Zerodium only shares its results with paying government customers, so don't expect a publicly available iOS 9.1 jailbreak anytime soon.





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2016

THE GRACEFUL EIGHT

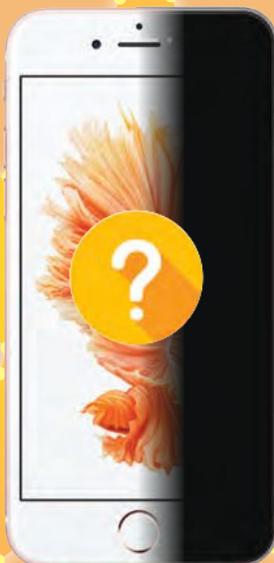
2016 is set to be a great year for mobile already, with plenty of devices expected on the horizon. With yearly devices launches now a popular choice among the big smartphone players, there's more than a few easy predictions. Here's our rundown of the top eight best handsets you can look forward to this year!

iPhone 7

What we know:

Apple announcing an iPhone 7 this year is about as predictable as rain in the UK, so it comes as no surprise we've included it on the list. Current rumours point to an even thinner device, with TSMC expected to be the new processor manufacturer, instead of the usual Samsung. There's also talk of the home button being integrated into the panel itself, allowing for an even more compact device. Design is still unknown, though a patent revealed in December says full waterproofing could also be happening thanks to a unique flexible rubber port cover that retains its original shape.

Likelihood: 10/10

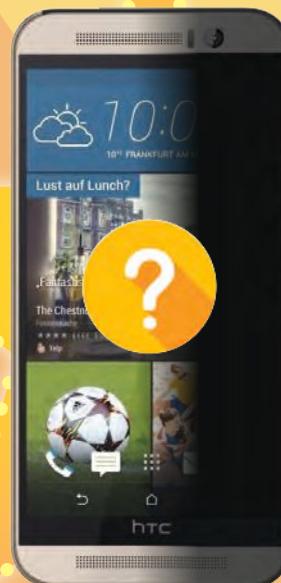


HTC One M10

What we know:

If there's one thing HTC needs next year, it's a solid flagship that can really challenge the greats. After the M9 failed to captivate fans despite being a solid handset, it sounds like the M10 should be a return to form for the under-fire smartphone manufacturer. Rumours about this device have been around for quite a while and these are just some of the things we could expect to find in the upcoming flagship: 4K resolution screen, Snapdragon 820, 4GB RAM, USB-C and a large 3,500 mAh battery. February/ March is tipped as a possible release date.

Likelihood: 10/10





Samsung Galaxy S7

What we know:

With the Samsung Galaxy range now a yearly device launch, we await the S7 sometime this year. Rumoured to be announced sometime at the Mobile World Congress, it will likely ship with either a Snapdragon 820 or Exynos 8890 and should carry a design not too much different to the current S6. Rumours of various camera improvements are rife, with Sony a contender for the next sensor deal. There's a possibility that it may be available in two size variants much like Apple did with the iPhone 6, though nothing has been confirmed.

Likelihood: 9/10



LG G5

What we know:

Rumoured to be going head-to-head with the Samsung Galaxy S7 in February, the LG G5 is punching with the heavyweights this year. The processor is expected to be the top-end Snapdragon 820, after LG dropped the 810 last year due to overheating issues. An iris scanner may also be included, plus the use of a Sony sensor instead of LG's own 16 megapixel shooter. The screen could also remain the same at QuadHD rather than 4K, which is a fair compromise given it doesn't really offer any noticeable benefits.

Likelihood: 10/10

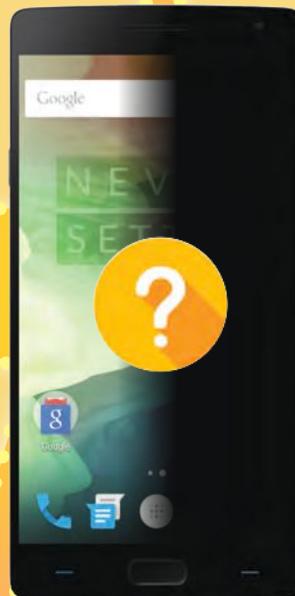


Sony Xperia Z6

What we know:

The Xperia Z5 was a bit of a mixed handset, combining a great camera with mixed performance that was in part due to the overheating Snapdragon 810. Sony is definitely revealing a smartphone at CES this year, though whether or not it will be the Z6 remains to be seen. Current rumours suggest 4GB RAM and a Snapdragon 820, plus the same camera sensor previously used in the Z5. A 4K screen is unlikely unless they reveal another premium variant, though critic feedback could've persuaded Sony to opt for QuadHD instead.

Likelihood: 9/10



OnePlus 3

What we know:

Carl Pei continues to enjoy success with his ever-expanding OnePlus brand, though it could be argued the second iteration has not been as well received as its predecessor. It's likely the successor to the OnePlus 2 will drop sometime in 2016, given that they have released on a yearly basis since April 2013. Don't expect any huge announcements at trade shows, since OnePlus much prefers to advertise via social media channels. Rumoured specs are still pretty vague at the moment, but expect a Snapdragon 820 and a potential front-facing speaker this time around.

Likelihood: 7/10

Project Ara

What we know:

Project Ara has been in production for quite a long time and is the combination of the Modu project and Motorola's Phonebloks concept. When Google acquired Motorola, they were combined into the vision they push today. Ara aims to make the smartphone more like a desktop computer, with a modular design consisting of various pieces that snap together magnetically. Modules will be divided into areas such as core functionality, camera and speaker. Delayed until 2016 due to issues surrounding the magnets, we should hopefully get to see the fruits of their labour sometime this year.

Likelihood: 5/10



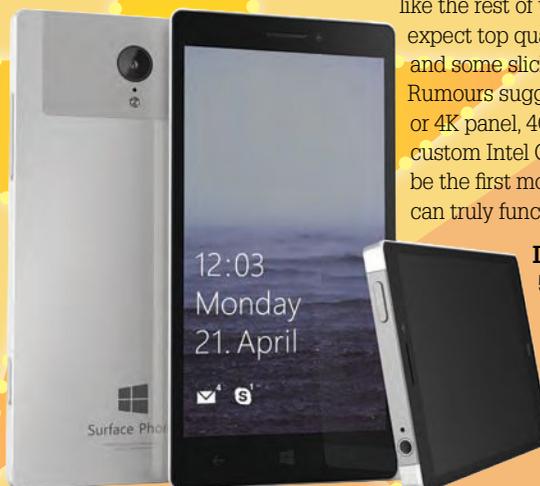
Surface Phone

What we know:

While Microsoft's leader of hardware, Panos Panay has been reluctant to reveal any details surrounding the Surface Phone, we think it's safe to say it will happen. He's already confirmed to testing a prototype mobile device, though there's little else to say at the moment. Much

like the rest of the Surface line, expect top quality hardware and some slick design. Rumours suggest a QuadHD or 4K panel, 4GB RAM and a custom Intel CPU. Could this be the first mobile device that can truly function like a PC?

Likelihood: 5/10



BACK ON TRACK

Christmas was a gluttonous period, everything in sight was consumed as we all expanded our waistlines. But, who can blame us? It's been a tough year and all that time off opens up a gaping hole in your life, that can only be filled with mince pies and *Die Hard*. Now as we start a new year, we're regretting our excesses – especially with the Gaviscon running out.

It's 2016, and it's time for those typical New Year's resolutions that you probably won't adhere to – 90% of it will be forgotten like that last bit of turkey fused to the back of the fridge (if it's starting to show signs of sentience, kill it with fire). What usually stays on the list are building that "beach body," "shedding unwanted poundage" and becoming "less rotund". If those phrases echo loudly then you're clearly like us and not one of those lucky people with a high metabolism.

Fear not, as we have a comprehensive list of fitness wearables to help get you in shape for 2016. Fitness trackers have been around for a while, but we've only recently started paying attention to them. GPS has been much improved for that desired accuracy, newer and more useful sensors are being squeezed onto ever-smaller silicone bands. It's safe to say fitness trackers are no longer your assistant, but now a solid training partner.



Fitbit Surge

£199.99

Fitbit are the most popular fitness trackers at the moment with high sales and good vibes all round. The Microsoft Band isn't the be-all and end-all of fitness wearables, not with the likes of the Surge out there. What we really enjoyed about using a Fitbit is the gamification of the ordeal that is exercising. Some people are masochistic weirdos who enjoy the pain, but for the rest of us, we need extra motivation. Fitbit challenges you to beat daily challenges and pits you against friends on a leaderboard. It feels gratifying to see what you've achieved for the week, and it's even sweeter to see yourself beat the fitness freak in the office (hate that guy). The silicone band is very comfortable, but the big screen is a huge hindrance for shirt wearers. With a bigger screen it can, however, perform smartwatch duties to a level not many fitness trackers can replicate.

The importance of a good diet cannot be forgotten, you can workout as much and hard as you want, but a Big Mac with a diet Coke makes all the hard work futile. You can log whatever you eat into Fitbit's app but it isn't the best food logger you can get. At times, barcodes fail to scan and some popular foods are not yet in the system. But kudos to Fitbit for including one as many do not, and we can expect more updates and improvements to this feature.

BATTERY



FITNESS



COMFORT



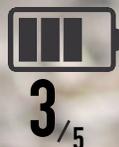
Garmin Vivoactive

£199.99

Garmin's effort may not be as pretty on the eyes as other wearables, but it was one of the trailblazers in fitness wearable tech and continues to be so this year. GPS isn't perfect on any fitness wearable at the moment but it's pretty close with the Garmin Vivoactive. What the Vivoactive also does pretty well is tracking your chosen activity, you could say the Vivoactive is a pure fitness tracker, with no smartwatch distraction features. You know what else it doesn't have? A heart rate sensor. Yes, that's right, shock horror, but do you really need it? The answer is not really, a heart rate sensor is great and provides great data but the Garmin Vivoactive does a better job in pushing you towards what you want to achieve. There's a lot that you can do as the Vivoactive tracks running (both indoor and outdoor), cycling, swimming, golf, and walking. With such a choice on show it gave us a lot of room to mix it up and do something different to stay motivated.

Unfortunately, the Garmin Vivoactive's not much of a looker, the bezels are way too big and the overall design just looks a bit dated. The touchscreen isn't super responsive and not exactly easy on the eyes. But does this really matter? Well, to some yes, but those simply looking to improve themselves can easily look past its flaws.

BATTERY



FITNESS



COMFORT



Withings Pulse O2

£79.95

A fitness band that doesn't like being a band. With the included clip you can run with comfort, attaching it to your t-shirt. And for the price point it offers almost the same features as the big boys. However, the sleep tracker is a bit inaccurate, seemingly more of a horizontal tracker than a sleep one. But for exercising it performs well with the heart rate sensor aiding the experience. If you can't afford a Microsoft Band, the Withings Pulse O2 has your back as it does almost everything its rival can, but with less pizzazz. If the banter from the social side of Fitbit really appeals but finance is in the way, Withings has you covered. Withings also provide social features in its well-built app, with a daily leaderboard for you to compare. It's not as advanced and encouraging as the Fitbit but it does motivate you to carry on towards your goals.

BATTERY



3/10

FITNESS



3/10

COMFORT



4/10



Moov Now

£79.99

The smallest of the lot but also the biggest surprise. Despite not having a screen the Moov Now makes up for it by being an excellent fitness tracker. Sporting 3D motion the Moov Now has unique exercises that make working out fun. We particularly enjoyed the boxing workout, despite not having a second Moov Now to fully utilise the exercise. The analysis of form and power seemed accurate and really encourages you to do better. Moov Now has an edge over the Vivoactive in monitoring swimming, because it is the more comfortable wearable. It feels like it's not there as you strive for aerodynamism in the water. The band is versatile and it's encouraged for you to wear the band where it's needed, for cycling you're expected to wear it on your ankle to accurately measure your journey weaving through on-coming traffic. We're still a bit miffed on how Moov makes us want to buy a second one to get the full experience.

BATTERY



4/10

FITNESS



4/10

COMFORT



3/10

Sony SmartBand 2

£99.99

Sony are still finding themselves with fitness trackers, the original SmartBand was more a life tracker than fitness tracker. They're back with a better effort in the form of the SmartBand 2. Now more durable and comfortable to wear, there's even a heart rate monitor included to shake off that "life tracker" tag. The SmartBand 2 also has a IP38 rating, meaning it is completely water and dust proof. All which makes it quite weird that Sony hasn't included a swimming tracker in Lifelog. The only thing on-board is a standard running tracker, which is decent enough but for almost £100 you'd expect a bit more. Still the SmartBand 2 is a solid fitness tracker which hasn't shaken off the "life tracker" tag. We'd wait for the price to go down before going for a SmartBand 2.

BATTERY



4/10

FITNESS



2/10

COMFORT



3/10



Microsoft Band 2

£199.99

Our favourite fitness tracker at the moment, released late last year, it has shackled itself onto our hearts. What makes the Microsoft Band a standout wearable is the amazing OLED screen. Pixels are non-existent, giving it a clear and seamless experience as you navigate through the simple UI. What gives the band an edge is the fact that it's the most advanced wearable at the moment, sporting 11 sensors. Not many fitness trackers have a barometer and a golf tracker on-board – there's just so much that the Microsoft Band 2 offers. Unlike most wearables, the Band offers smartwatch capabilities such as checking messages, without forgetting that it is fitness tracker at the core. Running with the band proved to be an accurate experience, more so than anything else we've tested. Microsoft has also included weight training in the band, which has been really helpful. Squeezing out that last rep without having to count works really well. Microsoft Health also stores all the data it collects from the band to give an accurate reading on the calories you burn off in a workout session.

The Microsoft Band is one for fitness warriors – it's pretty big and can feel quite constrictive. This proved to be problematic when using the sleep tracker. But given time it won't feel so bothersome. Although, you could just get a wearable that's comfortable off the bat – if you don't mind the lack of golf tracking.



BATTERY



3/5

FITNESS



4/5

COMFORT



3/5

Interview with Alex Yau Aspiring Athlete



We consulted a seasoned fitness freak with pistons for legs, lungs that would put Ji-Sung Park to shame and fashion choices that confuse the entire office. You might remember this face. Alex Yau, *What Mobile's* former senior reporter is back to give us his insight. You can find Alex typing away at *Mobile News* or pounding the pavements around Hyde Park as he prepares for the London Marathon – just look out for the fluorescent footy socks.

What is your wearable of choice at the moment?

Microsoft Band

How has a fitness wearable helped you with your regime?

A fitness wearable helps me by telling me my overall pace when running. It alerts me to whether I'm overworking myself, going too fast or whether I'm putting just the right amount

of effort in. This is perfect for when I am running longer races like 10ks or half marathons as it prevents me from going out too fast and using too much energy too soon.

What are your favourite features?

The heart rate monitor because it tells me whether I'm dangerously close to having a heart attack or whether I can push harder and faster. I also think the most important feature includes pacing information.

What can be improved?

The design can be improved to offer more comfort and make them look more like conventional watches.





CHINA IN YOUR HAND

The sun rises in the east and settles in the west, it's not the only thing rising in the east and now settling in the west as Chinese manufacturers are now becoming a big deal. China is the manufacturing juggernaut of the world, most products in the UK are manufactured there. And in the mobile sector, the likes of Huawei, Xiaomi and OnePlus are appearing and offering consumers glorious smartphone alternatives.

The rise of Chinese manufacturers has been impressive, globally Huawei and Xiaomi fight to be third in the world with Apple and Samsung occupying first and second respectively. Currently Huawei are in that coveted third spot but that could all change. Kantar Worldpanel Comtech consumer insight director Imran Choudhury believes Samsung's place could be in jeopardy.

"It all depends on Samsung's handset releases in the next 18 months, the S6 and S6 Edge were a welcome respite, as the S5 hadn't done well and the S4 was pretty stagnant," said Choudhury.

On the topic of how Chinese brands will snap at Samsung's heels, Choudhury revealed they will use a strategy the Korean giant are familiar with: "Chinese brands are doing what Samsung do to everyone else. They're providing something very similar, but at a lower cost. They're bringing features that we've not seen in mid-range handsets before. It's making things more competitive and ultimately that benefits the consumer.

"Samsung will continue to try and close the gap with Apple, but with activity behind them they'll start to look backwards too. In the UK, Huawei are starting to develop a much stronger foothold, they were at the value end but are now moving up the chain."



DEVICE COMPARISON



OnePlus 2

VS



HTC One M9

HTC could do no wrong before as the Taiwanese tech giants were responsible for spearheading Android into the consciousness of consumers. But that was then and now they're suffering financially and enduring dwindling popularity.

It hasn't helped that new players have entered the game like OnePlus. Established just two years ago, OnePlus has brought to the table flagship specs at a low price. This proved popular with consumers as invites for their devices are constantly sold out. With the fledgling company showing signs of maturity, established manufacturers need to watch their backs in 2016.

The OnePlus 2 is touted as a "flagship killer" and OnePlus has the specs to back up that claim. The OnePlus 2 and HTC One M9 both run Qualcomm's latest processor the Snapdragon 810, GPU in Adreno 430 with all protected by Gorilla Glass 4.

What you won't find on the M9 is a fingerprint sensor, a feature expected on flagship devices. The key feature we haven't mentioned is the price. Starting at £239 you can have this powerhouse in your pocket, but it's worth throwing in a bit more to get the 64GB internal memory and 4GB RAM, for £289. A clear winner here, despite the fact there's no NFC chip, meaning no Android Pay.



Nexus 6P

VS



iPhone 6s +

Apple are the current kings of the smartphone world and frankly that does not seem to be changing anytime soon. Year after year we see new innovations and retainment of that famous quality we expect.

The iPhone 6s Plus was no different as it brought 3D Touch to the game, changing the way we use our touchscreen. With Apple being the forerunners of innovation, Android manufacturers have to play catch up when something like 3D Touch comes along. A significant advantage that Apple has over everyone is optimisation, with an operating system that will fully utilise the specs on-board. It's hard to find a device that can offer the same snappiness.

That said the Nexus 6P isn't far behind the 6s. For this year's iteration of their Nexus device, Google opted for Huawei to develop their new flagship device, which goes to show how highly regarded Chinese manufacturers are becoming.

Huawei has made a smartphone that is arguably the best Android device at the moment. The 6P runs the revised version of Snapdragon 810, which addressed the overheating issues the 810 had. It is an excellent device with many comparable specs to the iPhone 6s Plus. With a starting price of £449 you also won't have to sell the kids to play around with industry leading specs.



Xiaomi Redmi Note 3

VS



Samsung Galaxy Note 4

A bit of a David and Goliath story here and if we're going to compare them in raw power the Galaxy Note 5 picks up the Redmi Note 3, and smashes it into a fleshy mess, no challenge. The Note 5 does have a lethal stone in the sling, hurtling towards that beautiful SAMOLED screen is the attractive low price.

Low pricing is the constant theme with Chinese manufacturers and it's a concept that transcends language and culture.

Xiaomi has upgraded from the Note 2 by giving the Note 3 an all metal unibody. Under the hood is a Helio X10 processor, giving the Redmi Note 3 enough power to perform exceptionally well.

There is no official UK price for Xiaomi products as Xiaomi devices are not officially available in the UK. Importing is the measure you'll have to take to grab some "small rice" (Xiaomi translates to - small rice), but the effort is worth it as you can grab the device for well below £200, depending on the website.

ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE



Can mobile devices kill television?

The smart device is a bit of a scary breed. Sure it's powerful and capable of some pretty amazing things, but it's also all-encompassing and downright dangerous to other technologies. We've already seen companies like Kodak fall from grace, in part due to the success of the modern smart device, but what about the influence of them within the TV market? Recent research into smartphone usage by Flurry suggests that the fastest growing areas are still personalisation and news content, while music, media and entertainment trail at the bottom of the list. Does the TV industry really need to feel threatened by such a small, pocket-sized device?

Well, the general consensus is yes. Although television will never completely disappear, it's likely to be integrated into existing set-ups because of convenience. Consumer insights director for consumer experts Kantar Worldpanel ComTech, Imran Choudhary believes that the shift in the way we consume television content is primarily down to enhanced portability. "We need to take into account that traditional TV

and media viewing habits are becoming more fragmented”, he says.

“For example, a sizable proportion of people who have Netflix or over-the-top subscriptions are starting to view things on their tablets and phones. Consumers now have the flexibility to watch things how they want and where they want”.

Netflix and chill

Of course, Netflix is the major player in home streaming and continues to grow rapidly in the mobile sector. Nielson compiled a report way back in 2011 concluding that most people watched content on a computer, with mobile devices at a lowly 3% in comparison.

Fast forward a few years later in 2013 and a similar study had 23% of users admitting to using their tablet or smartphone for video streaming. Now in 2015, just over 50% of mobile users regularly watch video clips on their devices according to Kantar Worldpanel ComTech, a figure that speaks for itself. Mobile TV is on the rise and in a big way.

Netflix itself is only a small piece of the entertainment market and represents a mere fraction of what’s actually available. There’s plenty of other services which are just as powerful – FilmOn being a prime example. Available on Android and iOS, it allows users to freely watch 1,000 channels from all across the world, showing the full power of streaming media when co-ordinated in the right way.

Unbound by the copyright issues which usually prevent people from watching certain shows abroad, you basically get free reign of all your favourite television shows. As we begin to lead ever more autonomous lives, services like this are going to get ever-more popular as a way of keeping up with our regional content when away from home.

What’s more, the steady decline of PC streaming year-on-year combined with the rapid acceleration of mobile streaming sets it up to become the next market leader within the coming decade... And this doesn’t even take into account the increase in mobile streaming capabilities.

Data revolution

Previously, perhaps the one major hurdle mobile devices had from successfully topping the list is the networks themselves, which provided frugal data allowances and slow speeds. Back when 4G initially launched in 2012, you may remember EE controversially stating that ‘500mb was enough’ for the new mobile spectrum. They released statistics to back this up,

“(The networks) must embed itself in the ecosystem where the TV becomes another connected device as part of the consumer’s portfolio”

quoting that the average unlimited user barely consumed 1GB of their allowance.

It’s worth bearing in mind that this study was conducted under previous generation 3G speeds, which were understandably much slower and not a direct representation of future trends. Users on the whole were limited by what they could do, simply



Many of us have swapped the TV for smart devices

“Traditional TV viewing habits are becoming fragmented”

because the overall speed of the networks failed to handle it.

With the advent of 4G, speeds made a monumental jump from an average of 6.1Mbps to 15.1Mbps. This is equal to many fixed internet lines that go directly into your home. Prices were also grossly inflated, with a 500MB data plan costing £36 per month when EE first launched their 4G service. Today, you can get 10GB of data allowance at just a fraction of that (£26.09). So not only is it becoming more efficient but it’s also becoming cheaper.

However, it’s worth noting that this data revolution is also happening at spectrum level. Changes to the overall bandwidth of our network capabilities will allow double the amount of data to be sent over certain spectrum areas,

meaning even faster speeds are just on the horizon.

EE is already pushing its 4G+ service to select areas in London, with claimed speeds of up to 90Mbps. If this is true, your router suddenly looks slow in comparison.

That all sounds great, but we still have the issue of data allowances. While 10GB is a nice gesture, it can’t match the unlimited allowances we get on our home networks.

As such, for television to really get knocked off its pedestal, something will need to take the heat off our usage. WiFi hotspots are that answer and, if used effectively in the future, have the ability to completely change the way we consume data when on the move.

When the BT/EE merger is finally completed, they will become the biggest mobile network operator overnight, giving them the capability to take the fight to television in a whole new way. The company’s BT TV service already uses a streaming-based system to deliver content to your living room – with the benefit of the EE network they could potentially offer the full service to mobile consumers by using the WiFi masts as interim networks which help reduce data usage on the move.

Then there’s Sky, which is looking to get into the smartphone market and currently have the biggest TV content library of any company. If anyone can take the big screen to the small screen, it’s the Murdoch Imperial Empire.

Adapt to survive

So, if the TV will inevitably be absorbed by the all-powerful smartphone, how should the networks expect to survive? Choudhary points to co-existence as the key to its survival, rather than relying on direct competition.

Embedded technology will help networks keep making money, with the TV just becoming another extension of our increasing number of smart devices. “They must accept a long-term future where they are co-existing. They need to embed themselves in the ecosystem where the TV becomes another connected device as part of the consumer’s portfolio.

“Eventually, the majority of content will be consumed outside of regular television consumption.

“EE’s new TV proposition is a very realistic way of how people may be consuming television content in the future. It’s based on a box that streams channels from the internet, however you and everyone else in the household can also view that content on your tablet or mobile phone”.

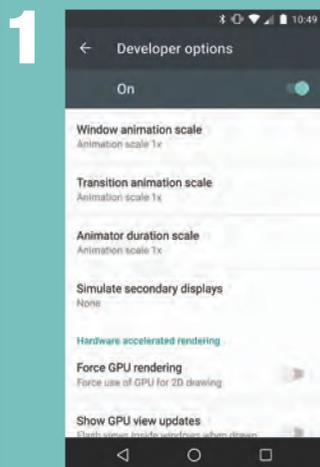
It seems the logical step for television companies would be to embrace and not compete if they want to avoid a very inevitable and ugly end.



HOW TO

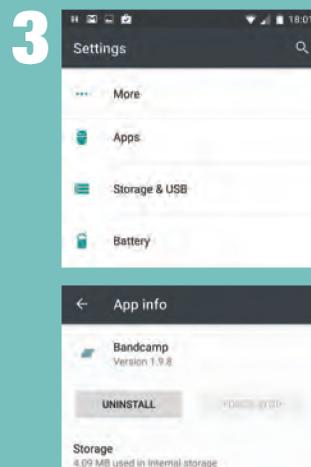
Improve Smartphone performance

This month signals the start of our very first 'How To' guide, in which we'll be including some very handy smartphone tips for the everyday user! Expect to see a different topic in every issue, spanning everything you'll need to get the best from your mobile device. We begin with one for the Android users out there, as we give our top 5 best tips for improving Android performance.



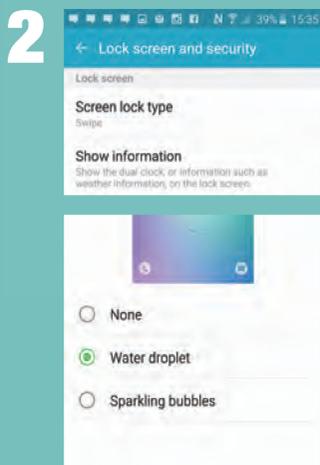
1 Disable UI animations

Since the Lollipop update, animations have become much more prominent within the Android UI. Turns out they're also quite the memory hog too. To disable them, head to your Settings, then About Phone and hit the Build Number several times until it notifies you that you're now a developer. You'll now notice a new Developer Options menu in the Settings, which includes several tools for modifying your handset. Head down the list until you reach Drawing and you'll see three options for animations: Window animation scale, Transition animation scale and Animator duration scale. Switch them all off for improved performance.



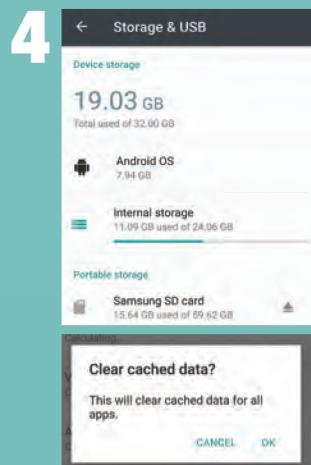
3 Disable bloatware

Unless you root your phone, you'll only be able to disable preloaded apps and not delete them completely. We'll be looking at this in a later 'How To' guide but for now, this achieves the same effect but with less effort and overall risk. Head to Settings and choose Apps. You should see a list of everything on your phone, bloatware included. Simply click on each app you want to remove and hit the uninstall button. If it's a non-removable app, it will change to 'disable' instead. Go through the list and disable all the unwanted bloatware for a nice performance boost.



2 Disable lock screen animations

If your phone supports fancy lock screens with rippling effects and the like, you may want to get rid of them for an extra boost. Some devices such as those that run on stock Android don't have this option, but a lot of handsets with third-party launcher will likely include this somewhere. Head to the Settings and navigate to Lock Screen. From here, select Unlock Effect and choose none to make things a little quicker.



4 Clear application cache

The cache is a place where temporary app data and files will be stored to help improve short-term performance, though over time it can bloat and have a detrimental effect on speed. To clear the cache, you'll once more head into Settings and navigate to Storage & USB. Here, you'll see the various partitions and storage locations for the operating system and any external storage you have. Simply navigate to the correct one (usually Internal Storage) and scroll down to the Cached Data section. Click on it and press 'OK' when prompted to clean up some space and hopefully bring some life back to your device.



Never Stop Exploring.

Wherever you go, whatever you're into, Survivor rugged cases for iPhone make sure you're ready for anything.



WatchStand Charging Dock

WatchStand is the elegant way to charge and display your Apple Watch.



Shop griffintechology.com for the best in protective cases, innovative chargers, long-life cables and more.

Puzzle it out

Give your brain a proper workout with some of the best puzzle games on the market

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

Tales from the Borderlands

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

Telltale Games are the masters of the point and click adventure genre, they know it and now they're giving you a taste for free. *Tales from the Borderlands* follows the story of Rhys as he makes an unlikely alliance with thief Fiona after a deal goes wrong. Gameplay isn't the driving factor, it's the story and the script that will have you laughing and engaged. A stellar voice case is present with the likes of Troy Baker (*Bioshock Infinite*), Nolan North (*Uncharted*) and Patrick Warburton (*Family Guy*).



ZigZag

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

Like living dangerously? Well here's a game that will keep you on edge. *ZigZag* is really simple but horribly addictive – zigzag a small ball through a speeding path to avoid certain death. Controls seems more responsive on iOS devices but still very playable on Android devices. Comparing high scores with mates will end friendships.



Cut the Rope 2

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

"Baby-ish" is the word that comes to mind playing this game. But then we kept on playing and eventually we were the babies having tantrums and crying about the most sadistic puzzle designs we've come across on a smartphone game. Graphics have been improved from the original but sadly infuriating ads will disrupt your game between rounds.



Can You Escape

Free/Android and iOS

Another puzzle game for you boffins out there and a ridiculously hard one too. The objective is simple, find the key to the lift and escape the room. What isn't simple is the process in getting the key. There are no clues in this minimal game, but there is a YouTube tutorial to get you started. Interact with the environment and channel your inner *MacGyver*.



Balance 3D

Free/Android and iOS

ZigZag's hi-res cousin just walked into the party and she's pretty but more high maintenance. Surprisingly, *Balance 3D* does not use a gyroscope as the main driver of its gameplay, instead you'll be balancing a ball by guiding with on-screen directional buttons. If you have ever had to guide a drunk mate home, you will be really good at *Balance 3D*.



Magic 2015

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

Something for those that require more strategy in your lives. *Magic the Gathering* is a tried and tested formula, and guess what? It works! Well, it works for those who are willing to sit down and learn the game. *Magic the Gathering* can be a complex game but that is what makes it beautiful. *Magic 2015* is a hefty download but the 1GB game will give you plenty to play with.



Broken Sword 5

£3.99/Android and iOS

An episodic murder mystery game and more of the usual from the *Broken Sword* series. A click and point puzzle game that shows just how far smartphone games have come. *Broken Sword* is driven by an interesting plot complemented with engaging cut scenes. *Broken Sword 5* game that will have you wanting more and downloading every episode.



Where's My Water 2?

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

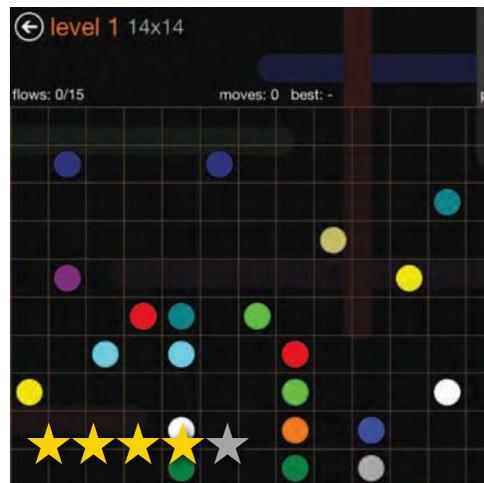
Help Swampy complete his ablutions by swiping away dirt and guide water into his plumbing in this incredibly addictive game. Sounds glamorous, doesn't it? Each level gets increasingly difficult, forcing you to think of creative new ways to guide, divide and save water. Don't let the Disney tag give you a cold shower, this game will consume you.



Flow Free

Free (in-app purchases)/Android and iOS

You might be noticing a pattern here and yes we love our puzzle games over here. *Flow Free* is another that will have you scratching your head until your nail turns red. There are over a thousand free levels to play, with more available to purchase. If that isn't enough there is a time trial mode to really test your mental prowess.



Dead Center

Free (in-app purchases)/iOS only

A dead simple game for those who want a quick distraction on the tube. This is based on an arcade game found nestled beside the one-arm bandits in every seaside town. Except there is no Xbox to win or any consequences. Lives don't matter as it seems you have an unlimited supply, which takes away replay value. You will be bored in no time.



Get connected

From GPS trackers to messenger applications there's a number of new ways to stay in touch.

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

Navmii featured

(Android, iOS, Windows and Blackberry) free

Recently awarded 'Best consumer app of the year' by Appsters, *Navmii* is a turn-by-turn navigation app that works offline thanks to downloadable maps. Featuring a cartoony user interface, it sets itself apart from the usual nav apps with some unique features. *Navmii* has full TripAdvisor and what3words integration – users can easily view what is nearby and communicate quickly. It's also getting a burst of artificial intelligence, with a crowdfunding campaign funding a feature which scans drivers' surroundings using the



Vismo

(Android, iOS, Windows and Blackberry) free

Vismo is a GPS positioning app that provides real-time monitoring on a small scale. With the capability to check location, calls and SMS, it can track people in high-risk areas and also offers a panic alarm function. Organisations can also use it to monitor staff and ensure



6Tribes

(iOS only) free

Aiming to bring a twist on the social media paradigm, *6Tribes* is a new iOS app where people are connected with groups of like-minded folk through various 'tribes'. The app is capable of analysing your Facebook likes for relevant tribes and with over 100 to choose from, there should be something for everyone.



Sharethymeal

(Android and iOS) free

Sharethymeal is a new application developed by the United Nations which focuses on helping those in need. By sharing virtual meals, you donate money that helps to feed a child for between 35p a day and £127.75 a year. Essentially a charity app, it's a nice gesture that you should check out.



Firefox

(Android and iOS) free

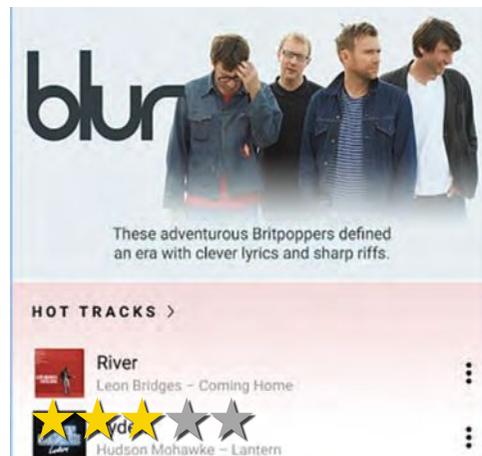
Finally available for iOS, the popular web browser is now here for all Apple fans to enjoy. It features full FF Syncing and allows the choice of default search providers, although we found it to be a little slower than Chrome on initial testing. Gesture controls are also fully implemented and arguably work better than Safari. A good adaptation on the desktop classic.



Apple Music

(Android and iOS) free

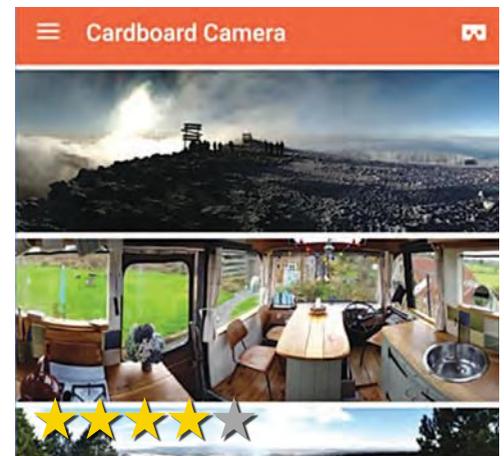
Making its debut on Android, *Apple Music* brings a 30-million strong song catalogue and handpicked recommendations by music experts. Unfortunately, it also likes to close unexpectedly and lags a bit behind Spotify on overall features. With a bit of work, this could be a great music app. At the moment, there are better ones out there.



Cardboard Camera

(Android only) free

If you happen to own a VR headset that can be attached to your smartphone device, *Cardboard Camera* could be worth a look. It gives the ability to take photos in full 3D VR, allowing a 360-degree view of your favourite place. While it recommends using Google Cardboard, any VR device will work just as well, if not better.



PlayStation Messages

(Android and iOS) free

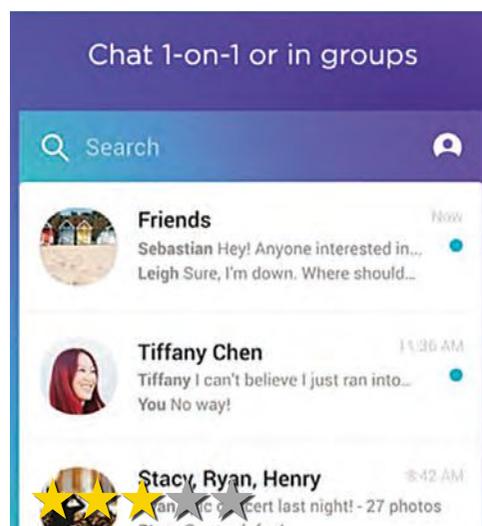
A bog-standard messaging application that allows you to communicate with your PlayStation buddies, with a fresh UI update making things a bit slicker. Our only problem is why it needs to be a standalone app. Surely it could have been included in the PlayStation application for a more consistent experience?



Yahoo Messenger

(Android and iOS) free

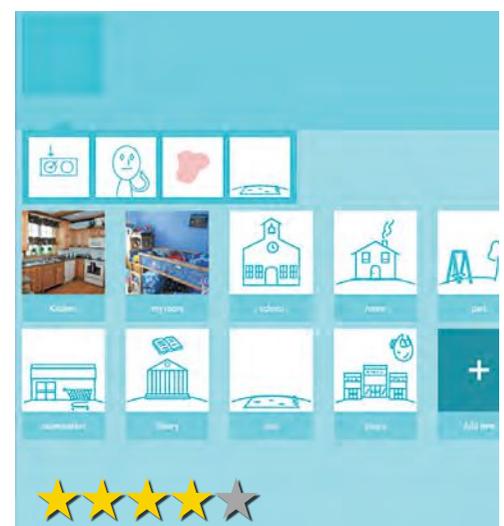
A substantial update to *Yahoo Messenger* that includes a revamped user interface and integration with many other popular Yahoo apps. Unfortunately, it's a bit buggy on Android, with issues connecting to friends. While it's a worthy update, it might be best to wait until teething issues are sorted.



SwiftKey Symbols

(iOS only) free

SwiftKey Symbols is a new communication app powered by prediction technology, which aims to help non-verbal individuals communicate through pictures. Users select images to construct sentences. A great idea for children with learning difficulties who struggle to express themselves.



Nintendo 3DS

Yet another remake of a Pokémon title on the 3DS is one for fans of nostalgia.

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

Pokémon Alpha Sapphire/ Omega Ruby ★★★★★

Developer: Game Freak **Publisher:** Nintendo

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £34.99

Pokémon is back again bringing that classic RPG formula to our portable screens. What's changed you may ask? Not much, as we see another remake of a beloved Pokémon title. Pokémon Sapphire and Ruby were released back in 2002, introducing us to the Hoenn region and its new Pokémon.

Depending on which title you choose, you will face different adversaries. Alpha Sapphire has Team Aqua going all old testament on everyone, trying to flood the world to cleanse it. Omega Ruby are stuck with Team Magma who simply just want to burn everything.

What has changed is the graphics, both titles run on the Pokémon X & Y engine to bring life and beauty into the Hoenn region. Random battles aren't so bad now with the new look, but still they do get quite cumbersome after a while.

An even bigger burden is the need for HM moves, a flaw in Sapphire and Ruby highlighted all those years ago, but alas has not been addressed. There are six HM moves whereas X & Y had an improved 5 (X & Y is also better balanced). HM moves are required to access certain areas of the game, so this means having a Zigzagoon HM slave occupying your sixth slot.

Secret bases make a return, allowing you to smash open a cave

and create your very own hideout. You can customise it Animal Crossing style with furniture and truly make it your own. Want to be a gym leader? Customise your hideout to look like one and battle your friends for bragging rights. Once you beat them down and make them your cronies, you can then share your hideout for people to check out, via QR code.

More great features from X & Y are present here, our favourite being DexNav, a tool that displays all the Pokémon you've already caught in a certain route. Once you do "catch 'em all" a crown appears to notify you that you've caught all the possible wild Pokémon in the area. An excellent feature for those who intend on playing after the main adventure, and to "catch 'em all." The DexNav is also a scanner, every once in a while a Pokémon will appear physically and you can sneak up on it. The scanner will identify levels and hidden move sets that you may desire, before provoking it.

That's not the only extra goody to keep you playing – after defeating the Elite 4 an extra side story called Delta Episode unlocks. Delta Episode links the story to X & Y somewhat and more back story on mega evolutions. Delta Episode is definitely worth playing as you'll get to catch the legendary Deoxys, who proved to be an immense challenge, one maybe worthy of that one Master Ball you have.

Alpha Sapphire and Omega Ruby is one for nostalgia and for those who desire to fully complete their Pokédex with Pokémon from the Hoenn region. With modern features implemented the gameplay is much improved, but the original DNA of the game remains the same.



Chibi-Robo!: Zip Lash

Developer: Nintendo **Publisher:** Nintendo

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £24.99 ★★★★★

Chibi-Robo was working at a space station when a distress call from Earth alerts his attention to invading aliens who are stealing natural resources. An unrealistic story as the US would have nuked them all before they'd have the chance. We're talking about a country that would probably annex Canada if they can't make Big Macs in time.

Guide Chibi-Robo as you traverse through levels in the sky, sea and land. With it being a Nintendo title you can expect platforming done right. The controls are sharp and responsive to your touch, with only three main controls you need to know being jump, whip lash and the titular zip lash. Again with it being Nintendo the controls are kept simple to let the level design speak for itself. The levels force you to be creative to solve puzzles and use the environment to your advantage.

An annoying feature Chibi-Robo!: Zip Lash has is selecting stages. Once you beat a stage in one tier, a numbered spinner will appear, determining how many spaces you move around the six stages. You can easily land on a stage you've already completed and will have to replay to access the spinner again. Stages can be bypassed with in-game currency 'moolah', which we used to only advance one space to ensure we play all of the stages without repeating. Rendering the spinner feature useless.

Chibi-Robo!: Zip Lash is a decent platformer but nothing groundbreaking. There are a lot of excellent platformers on the 3DS already. Chibi-Robo should be considered after you breeze through them.



Adventure Time: Finn & Jake Investigations ★★★★★

Developer: Viscious Cycle Software **Publisher:** Little Orbit

Where to buy: In-Store **Price:** £15.99

In this point and click adventure reminiscent of Monkey Island, there is more immersion as you can move Finn and Jake around unlike other click and point adventure games. The story begins with Finn and Jake discovering the Ticker Type, a device their parents used when they ran an investigation agency. Inspiring the delightful duo to start their own investigation agency – Finn and Jake Investigations.

There are five chapters to go through as you traverse Ooo, talking to it's citizens to find problems you can solve. Any click and point adventure game worth its salt has to be charming and interesting through dialogue and story. You can definitely expect this with Adventure Time: Finn and Jake Investigations as it's really well written with dialogue that'll keep you engaged. It also helps that the entire voice cast of the show, reprised their role for this game, retaining the authenticity and uniqueness of Adventure Time. This will definitely please fans who are known to go quite over the top with their obsession with the animated series.

Gameplay is focused mainly on exploration and puzzles. There is combat with team combo attacks from Finn and Jake. But this really feels like padding to add to the experience, there isn't really a challenge in pressing one button to overcome enemies.

PlayStation Vita

Strategic battle simulator makes its debut on the Vita and feels like it was made for the handheld.

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

Dynasty Warriors 8 Empires

Developer: Omega Force **Publisher:** Koei Tecmo

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £19.99



It's taken a while but Dynasty Warriors 8 Empires has arrived on the PlayStation Vita and boy, was it worth the wait. Everything has been carried over from the console versions, which means a fully strategic battle simulator complete with hack 'n' slash elements. To give a bit of background, Dynasty Warriors Empires is a popular spin-off of the franchise that focuses more on large-scale army management than the story-based progression found in the standard games. For players new to the series this can be somewhat daunting, though it's worth persevering as it adds a whole other dimension to the game.

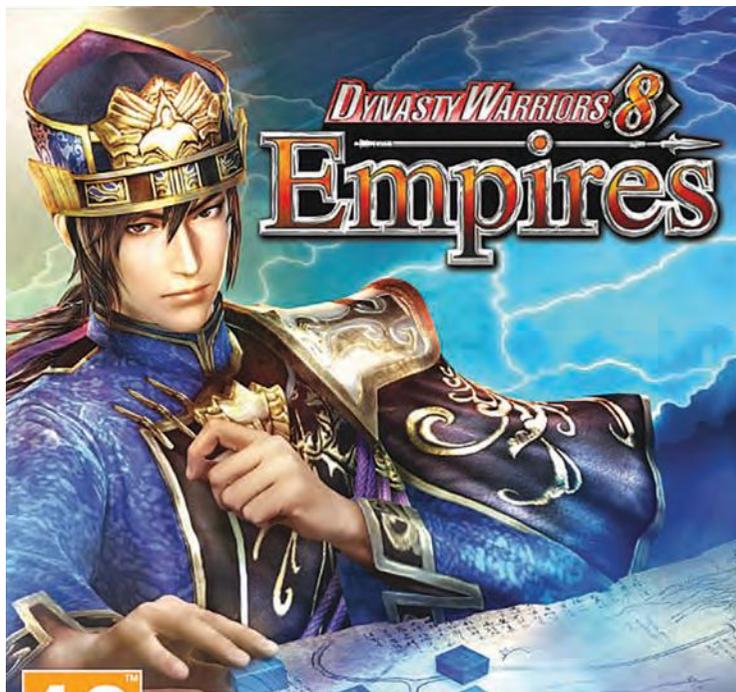
Graphically, it's not exactly a looker and has been seriously toned down compared with its console counterpart. Textures are very low resolution and environments feel very empty, though the character models are mostly okay. These technical cut-backs were likely done to achieve a smooth frame-rate on the handheld, which we're glad to report has worked. Even during the more tensely packed scenes, there didn't seem to be any noticeable slowdown.

It's worth noting that there are still storyline elements in the game, they're just greatly reduced. The game begins with you creating your character and choosing their move set, before giving the opportunity to customise your army. Everything from their clothing to the banner

and even the horses can be altered, giving plenty of opportunity for some unusual designs. Cross-save functionality also means you'll be able to use PS4 characters on the Vita and vice-versa.

When you've finally finished having fun with the incredibly deep army creation tool, it's time to jump into the actual gameplay. Empires follows Chinese history to provide context for the battles but from there it's up to you. Depending on the outcome, you're essentially free to re-write things as you see fit. Things are played out in a month-by-month scenario, with time between major battles to plan strategies and manage your empire. The whole thing can get quite menu heavy and at higher difficulties really becomes an integral part of your pre-fight planning. When the battle inevitably arrives, you'll be glad you made those alliances.

In terms of the actual fighting mechanics, this is Dynasty Warriors through and through. Generals are assigned to their posts and areas must be captured to advance the battle further. From there, you'll likely be running around solo cutting things up in your path and chaining combos. Stratagem cards are back and grant a series of single-use special abilities on the field. The implementation of them on the Vita is so much better than the console versions, with the cards only needing a touch-tap to activate. Once a battle has ended, you get various rewards and bonus points for your performance, plus resources for upgrades. Koei Tecmo is making good strides with the series and Dynasty Warriors 8 Empires is one of their best additions yet, such is the perfect pick-up-and-play gameplay.



WRC 5



Developer: Kylotonn Games **Publisher:** Bigben Interactive
Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £19.99

The WRC franchise is back with a new developer and a new lease of life. Unfortunately, the graphics have also been seriously downgraded and this is perhaps one of the ugliest looking PS Vita titles we've experienced in a long time. It would probably look more at home on the original PSP than its newer equivalent. Textures are horribly low resolution and everything just looks a bit bland and empty. The draw distance is equally laughable, with fine scenery popping into view just a few metres in front. Car models are a little better but still nothing to write home about. The same goes for the sound, which seems to have taken another beating. Engine noises are not only drab but incredibly boring; they don't sound like the cars they're supposed to portray.

Thankfully, the gameplay is improved and has several modes to choose from. Everything from the previous games is carried over, including the impressive career mode where you start as a lowly junior driver and build up to the highest tiers. Driving mechanics are solid and feel robust, with plenty of customisation for seasoned veterans. There's also noticeable terrain feedback that alters the handling depending on the surface you're speeding over.

So the glaring question is, should we pick this up over WRC 4? Our answer is no, as it doesn't really offer enough substantial improvements to warrant a fresh purchase. It's a solid effort from French developer Kylotonn Games but far from perfect. Let's see what next year's title brings.



Super Star Wars



Developer: Disney Interactive **Publisher:** Lucas Arts
Where to Buy: PlayStation Store **Price:** £7.99

The newest edition to the Star Wars franchise is releasing in cinemas before Christmas... in case you somehow forgot. To commemorate the film, SNES classic Super Star Wars has been re-released on the PlayStation 4 and PS Vita complete with some fresh additions. Trophies can now be obtained for completing certain achievements, while the additional controller and display options allow a bit of customisation.

The game loosely follows the story of the fourth film, *A New Hope*, altering things here and there to fit with the gameplay formula. It's understandable why Lucas Arts chose to do this, as the few scenes at the beginning of each level are only meant for filler anyway. If you've ever played the Metal Slug titles, you'll probably feel at home here. It's essentially a 2D side scrolling shooter complete with some infuriating platforming sequences guaranteed to make you tear large clumps of hair from your scalp. The gameplay is fast and addictive, with enemies dropping power weapons and health which need to be collected.

Much like Metal Slug, the action is broken up by various vehicular sequences, be it piloting an X-Wing along the surface of the Death Star or manoeuvring a Landspeeder through the deserts on Tatooine. With roughly 14 levels at 10 minutes each, it's perfect for gaming on the go. Sometimes it's quite hard to tell where one level ends and the other begins but who cares? This is a faithful port of an absolute classic.

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

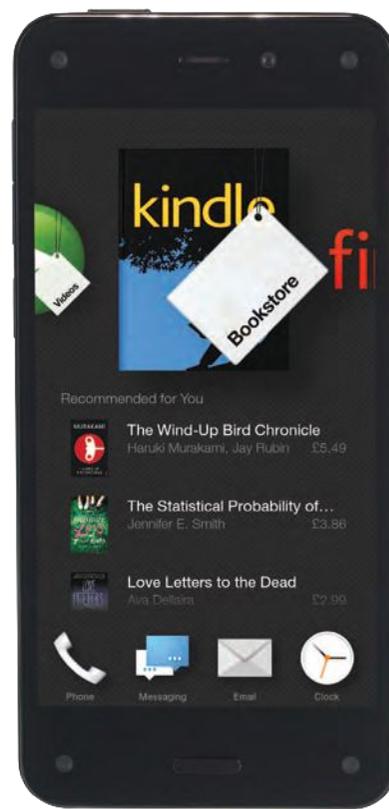
We usually greet lesser-known brands with open arms, but never has one disappointed as much as Alcatel with its One Touch Idol X+. Despite decent specs, it's the handset's flaws that hog the limelight. It's outperformed by other handsets in its price bracket in just about every respect. It's hard to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





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	★★★★★



HTC One M9

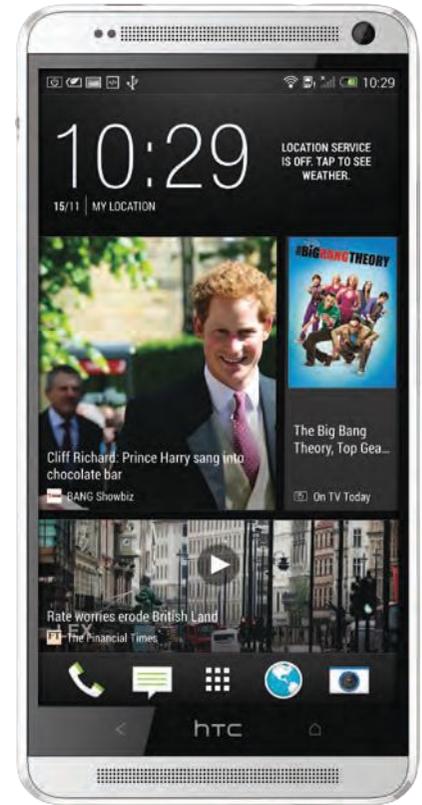
Reviewed: May 2015, price: £580
www.htc.com/uk

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

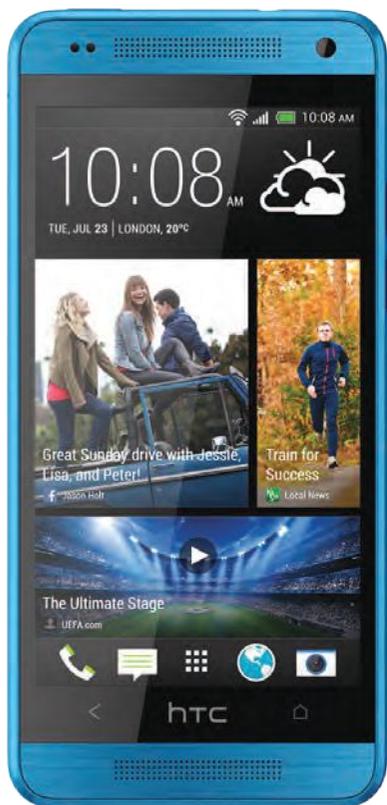
The HTC One Max piggybacks the reputation of the HTC One, although nothing much has improved. The high-quality display is present but HTC has failed to add processing power and the fingerprint sensor implementation is very disappointing.

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

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

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

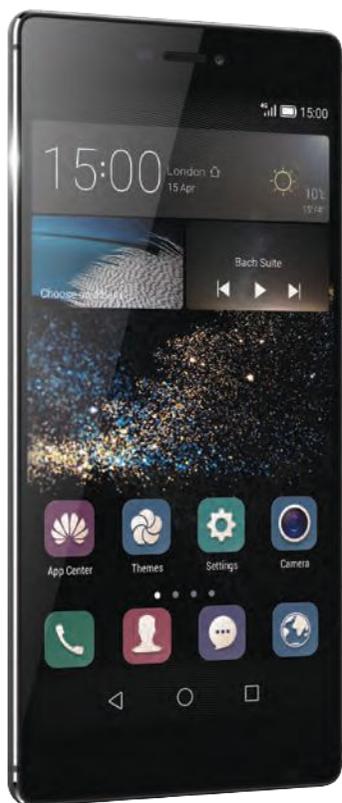
The Ascend P7 feels like a missed opportunity. Huawei should have put its full weight into creating a top-level flagship handset. However, its underpowered processor is its only real flaw. It looks premium and its front-facing camera is the best on the market. Its price could be a sticking point, but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

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

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

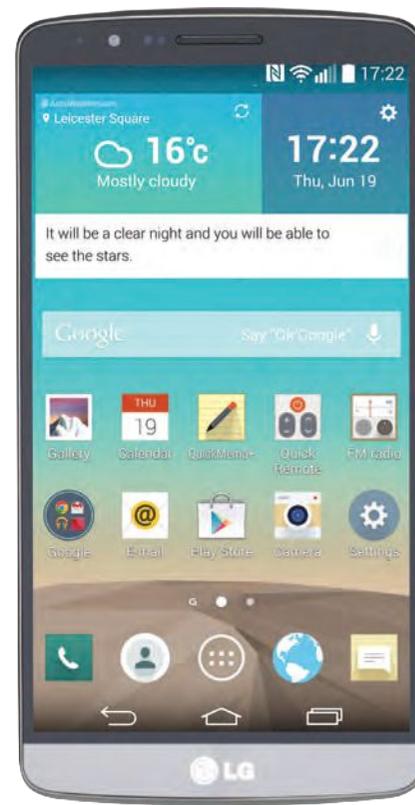
Reviewed: April 2014, price: £TBC
www.kazam.mobi

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

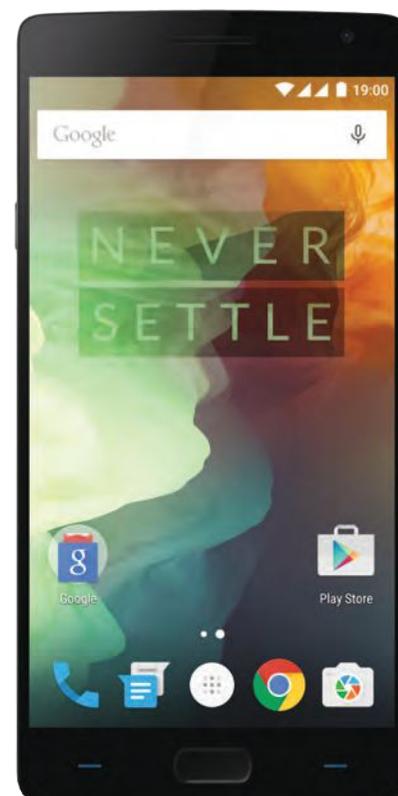
If you're not bothered about Samsung, Apple or any of the other big brand names, then we highly recommend the OnePlus One. It offers class-leading specs for half the price of an iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6. That attractive price is topped off by excellent build quality and unlimited customisation options.

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-CM1

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

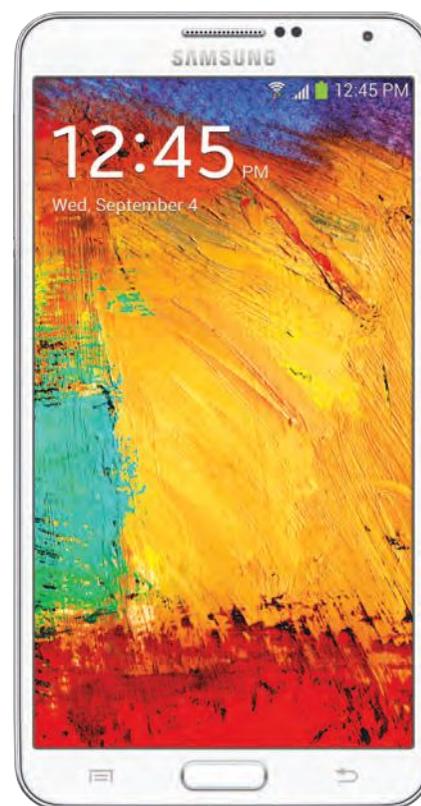
Reviewed: October 2014, price: £400
www.samsung.com/uk

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)	Connectivity Dual-SIM, 4G
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core	Dimensions 141.15mm x 71mm x 9.37mm
Screen 5.0 inches	Weight 135g
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels	Battery 2,500 mAh
Memory 2GB RAM	
Storage 16GB	
MicroSD compatible? Yes	
Camera 13MP rear-facing	
Video 1080p at 30fps	

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)	Weight 106g
Processor Quad-core 1.2GHz	Battery 2,000 mAh
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	

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	2.1MP front-facing
Processor Quad-core 2.3GHz Krait 400	Video 1080p
Screen 5 inches	Connectivity 4G
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels	Dimensions 144 x 69.5 x 8.9mm
Memory 2GB RAM	Weight 145g
Storage 32GB	Battery 2,500 mAh
MicroSD compatible? No	
Camera 8MP rear-facing,	

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"

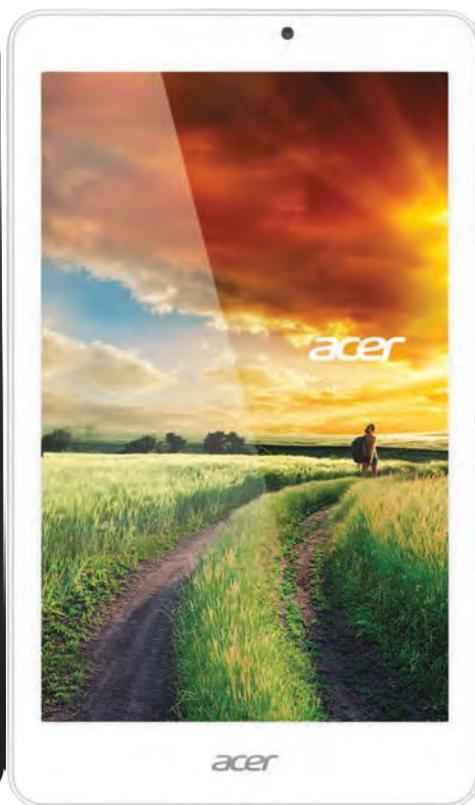
Reviewed: May 2013, price: £229/259
www.amazon.co.uk

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
OS Customized Android 4.0
Screen 8.9 inch IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen
Resolution 1920 x 1200, 254 ppi
Processor TI OMAP 4470 dual-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A9
GPU PowerVR SGX544
RAM 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
Cameras front facing 1.3MP with 720p video
Wireless 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band
Ports USB 2.0, 3.5mm audio jacks, Bluetooth A2DP
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
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing,
 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 215 x 130 x 8.5mm
Weight 360g
Battery 4,600 mAh

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
Processor Nvidia Tegra 4
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
Weight 320g
Battery 8 hours

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

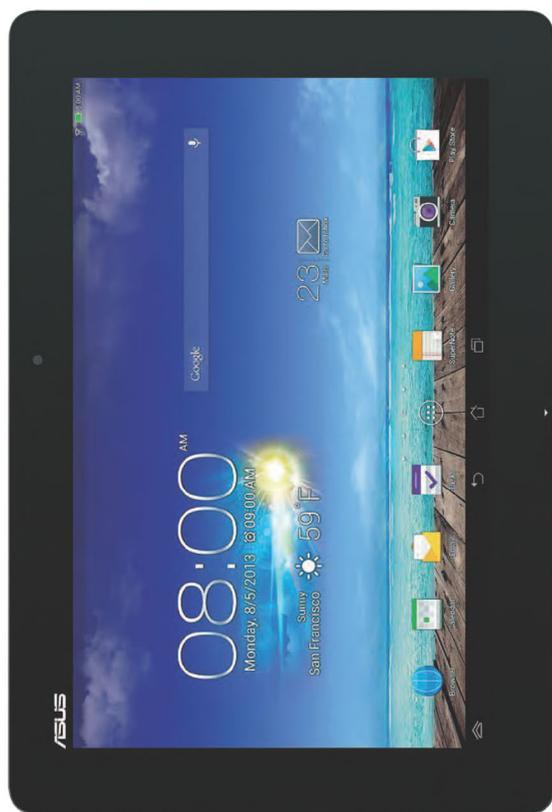
A couple of years ago, the 101 XS would have had us singing Archos' praises, but by today's standards its processing power and screen quality fall short. It might, though, find a home with users limited to spending £250 on a 10-inch tablet

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.

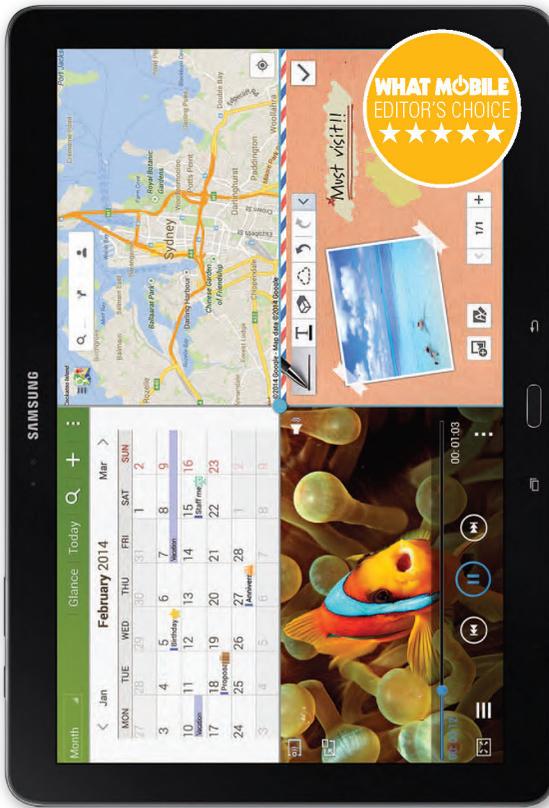
OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8.4 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

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 ★★★★★





WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE
★★★★★

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	Connectivity Wi-fi only
Processor Octa-core (1.9GHz + 1.3GHz quad)	Dimensions 295.6 x 204 x 7.95mm
Screen 12.2 inches	Weight 750g
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels	Battery 9,500 mAh
Memory 3GB RAM	
Storage 32GB/64GB	
Camera 8MP rear/2MP front-facing	
Video 1,080p Full HD	

VERDICT: Big, beautiful, functional and priced to match. Android's finest.

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



Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet

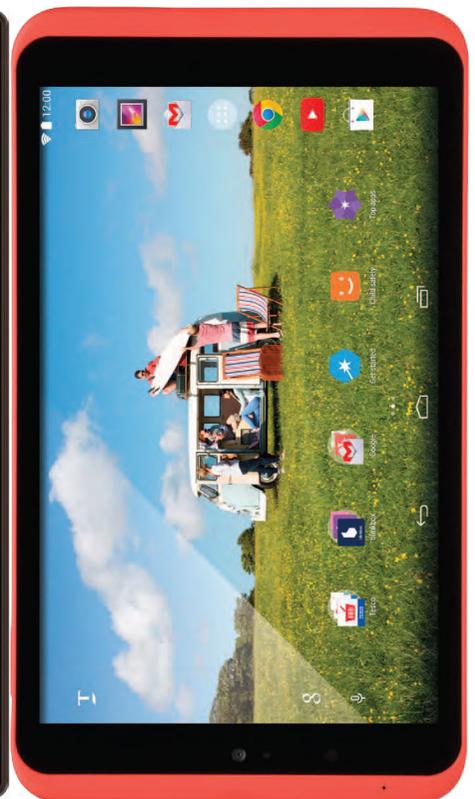
Reviewed: October 2015, price: £499
www.sony.co.uk

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)	up to 128GB
Processor Octa-core 2.0 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 810, 64 bit	Camera 8.1MP rear-facing, 5.1MP front-facing
Screen 10.1 inches	Video 1080p
Resolution 2560 x 1600-pixels	Connectivity 4G, Wi-Fi
Memory 3GB RAM	Dimensions 167 x 254 x 6.1 mm
Storage 32GB	Weight 393g
MicroSD compatible? Yes,	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	Connectivity Wi-fi
Processor 1.83GHz quad-core	Dimensions 224 x 128 x 9mm
Screen 8.3 inches	Weight 410g
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels	Battery 4,900 mAh
Memory 2GB RAM	
Storage 16GB	
MicroSD compatible? Yes	
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing	
Video 720p at 30fps	

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.

OS Android Wear
Processor Snapdragon 400 1.2GHz
Screen 1.63 inches
Resolution 320 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? No

Camera N/A
Video N/A
Connectivity Bluetooth 4.0
Dimensions 51 x 39.9 x 9.4mm
Weight 75g
Battery 369mAh

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



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 addict's 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.

OS N/A
Processor N/A
Screen N/A
Resolution N/A

Memory N/A
Storage N/A
Camera N/A

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



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.

OS Custom
Storage No
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera No
Video No

Connectivity Bluetooth LE
Dimensions 44 x 44 x 11mm
Weight 142g
Battery 30 days

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



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.

OS Android Wear
Processor Snapdragon 400 1.2GHz
Screen 1.3 inches
Resolution 320 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? No

Camera No
Video No
Connectivity Bluetooth 4.0
Dimensions 46.4 x 53.6 x 9.7mm
Weight 62g
Battery 410mAh

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



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

Display 1.63-inch Super AMOLED (320 x 320)

Dimensions 36.9 x 58.4 x 10.0mm, 68g

Processor 1GHz dual-core

Memory 512MB + 4GB storage

Battery 300mAh; 2 to 3 days'

average usage

Connectivity Bluetooth 4.0, IR

Water resistance Rated IP67

Camera 2MP, 720p, 30fps video

OS Tizen-based OS

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



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.

OS N/A
Processor N/A
Screen N/A
Resolution N/A
Memory N/A

Storage N/A
Camera N/A

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



Microsoft Band 2

Reviewed: January 2016, price: £199
http://www.microsoftstore.com/

Microsoft really believes that wearables are the future. It has banked quite heavily on fitness devices with lots of sensors and the Band 2 is its next iteration of this. Retailing at £199, it is by no means cheap but offers more sensors than any other device currently on the market. The main question is, has it solved the issues that plagued the original?

OS Custom Windows Phone OS
Number of sensors 11
Processor N/A
Screen 1.26 x 0.50 inches
Resolution 320 x 128 pixels
Memory N/A

Storage N/A
Connectivity Bluetooth
Dimensions 159 x 78 x 7.3 mm
Weight N/A
Battery 48 hours

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



Samsung Galaxy Gear S2

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £649
www.samsung.com/uk

The Gear S2 Classic is a device you'll definitely wear daily and won't be bored of any time soon. But Samsung needs to make due on its promise of apps to establish itself as king of the wearables. That said, Samsung has provided us with an excellent smartwatch that is arguably the best on the market.

OS Tizen
Processor Exynos 3250
Screen 1.2 inches
Resolution 360 x 360 pixels
Memory 512MB
Storage 4GB

MicroSD compatible? No
Connectivity Wi-Fi
Dimensions 43.6 x 39.9 x 11.4 mm
Weight 42g
Battery 250 mAh

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



Wearable compatibility guide



LG
G Watch R



Pebble
Watch



Samsung
Gear Live



Sony
Smartwatch 3



Garmin
Vivofit



Archos
Activity Tracker



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HTC
One M8



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Galaxy S5



Sony Xperia
Z3 / Z3 Compact



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