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HTC Shift - First Look

Is it a phone, is it a laptop?

by Stuart Miles published on 2 October 2007

HTC has ignored the UMPC market and created an ultra-portable phone-come-laptop that aims to turn the mobility market on its head. Can it succeed? We were given a chance to have a brief play at the launch event.

Weighing just 800g and measuring 207 x 129 x 25mm in size, the HTC Shift is similar in its approach to the company's advantage or Ameo offering. We say similar, because you get a large touchscreen, in this case 7-inches, and a QWERTY keyboard underneath to file and write -up emails double quick.

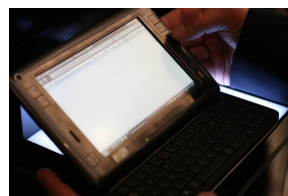
But that's where the similarities end to be honest. The keyboard, which is built in to a sliding design behind the screen isn't detachable - a good thing in our minds.

Furthermore, rather than running Windows Mobile 6 as you might expect from a PDA device, the HTC Shift runs a full blown copy of Windows Vista Business Professional.

A 3 megapixel camera will help with video conferencing, while the whole system when folded can act as one of those "snazzy" tablet PC things or just an incredibly large touchscreen PDA.

In our brief play the touchscreen wasn't the most intuitive thing to use and it would have been nice to have included an IBM style "nipple" on the keyboard to make navigating around the desktop with the mouse a little easier. There are click buttons on the side, but it's just not the same.

The move to Vista means that you'll be able to do anything you could do on a laptop (it will be interesting seeing what it's like playing games on it) albeit with a smaller screen and HTC promise the usual 3 to 4 hours when in Vista mode.



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When it comes to connectivity, HTC has included tri-band HSDPA as well as Wi-Fi, to get you working on the move, and very much like HP with its QuickPlay offering that allows you to play DVD's without booting up the operating system, there is SnapVUE to access the phone's functionality.

SnapVUE provides instant access to emails, calendar, SMS messages and contacts, without the need to fully boot-up the device and basically turns the Shift into a massive HTC Touch complete with the same Home screen, weather information and other factoids. Battery life for this side of the proceedings is 2 days on standby and it's a fully functional phone.

Switching between the two settings is as easy as pressing a button, and in our brief play was easy to do, whether Vista is running or not.

VERDICT

The HTC Shift is like your standard laptop, just a little smaller. For those that have got to be connected but need more than just a smartphone, this will be very appealing.

The only catch we can see so far on our first look is the lack of USB ports (there is one) and of course no CD drive in the box, meaning if you want to install any further software you'll have to invest more cash with someone else.

We weren't able to test overall performance or battery life.

The HTC shift will be available from late October in the UK.

At a glance

What is it?

7-inch laptop

Good

Small, QWERTY keyboard, HSDPA, 3 megapixel camera

Bad

Windows Vista

Verdict

The HTC Shift is like your standard laptop, just a little smaller

Price £800

Your score

?/10