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Sony Ericsson W890i mobile phone - First Look

Can this handset improve on the W880?

by Stuart Miles published on 7 November 2007

Sony Ericsson has announced the W890i, a Walkman phone that according to Sony Ericsson is aimed at an "older market" than its predecessor the W880. So are we old enough to enjoy it, and should you be interested? We have a quick play at the launch event to find out.

When we say "older market" don't panic, you aren't expected to have a Freedom Pass in London, be drawing a pension or need a Zimmer frame to get around. "Older market" according to Sony Ericsson means "25-40" - worrying isn't it?

That aside and what you get is a more rounded sleeker version of the company's popular W880 handset. Gone is the retro design with its prickly keys, in is three choices of colours (Espresso Black, Mocha Brown and Sparking Silver), rounded edges and a keypad that you can actually dial with, fingernails and all.

Although not admitting it, Sony Ericsson appears to have answered numerous complaints - that the keypad was hard to use and made it simple. Perhaps it's us being old (this reviewer is still in the younger half of the above demographic ... just) but the new keypad follows the likes of Nokia with its 6300 and new 6500 handsets in being easy and straightforward to use.

Keyboard aside, you get a super thin handset that now packs not 3G but HSDPA connectivity meaning you can surf the web, download music and basically enjoy fast internet speeds as long as you've got coverage.

Other tech specs include a 3.2 megapixel camera, which in our quick snapping test in dark press launch conditions worked well and a 2GB Memory Stick card in the box rather than opting



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for on-board memory. It's still not hot swappable, but then it's better than not having any memory at all.

New to the handset over the W880 is an improved software interface. Sporting the latest offering from Sony Ericsson you now get the same interface found in the W910. For those not sure what this means, it means you get a shortcut key to the multimedia functions with a scrolling menu offering quick access to music, images, video and TV if your operator supports it.

Beyond that, the phone features the latest version of Sony Ericsson music player software, version 3, as well as SensMe, the company's mood and tempo software that will pick tracks from your library that are of the same mood or tempo, great if you are feeling down or happy.

Additionally the software offers TrackID allowing you to find out what tracks are playing in the bar that you are in by recording a snippet of them on the phone and then sending the information to Sony Ericsson to check against the Gracenote library.

Trying to inject further new life into the service which has been running for almost 2 years, Sony Ericsson has launched the TrackID chart giving you a chance to hear "new and upcoming" (read "dull and not memorable") tracks being searched by users around the world.

VERDICT

Although our play was brief, the overriding feeling we get from playing with the W890 is that this is the W880 with a better keyboard, slightly improved software and HSDPA rather than 3G.

For us, sitting as we said in that older demographic we love it. Sony Ericsson has answered all the issues we had with the last version, namely the keypad, and brought improved connection speed to the mix at the same time.

At a glance

What is it?

Latest Walkman phone

Good

HSDPA, thin, improved keyboard, 3 megapixel camera, improved software

Bad

Admitting you fit into SE's older demographic

Verdict

Sony Ericsson has answered all the issues we had with the last version, namely the keypad, and brought improved connected speed to the mix at the same time

Price price dependant on contract

Your score

??/10

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The addition of just plus 10, i.e., 880 to 890 makes sense. This isn't a massive leap forward, but the "refined style" will make this a great contender for phone of the year 2008 if you are looking for a good music phone with fast connection speeds.

The W890 will be available in Q1 2008.