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HTC Diamond - First Look

Is this the iPhone challenger we've been waiting for?

by Stuart Miles published on 7 May 2008

HTC today announced the HTC Diamond an HSDPA handset that puts touch at the forefront of its interface. So can it be the iPhone killer it's promised to be? Pocket-lint grabbed one at the global launch to find out.

Small and compact (102 x 51 x 11.33mm) the new handset, which is considerably smaller than the iPhone, sports a gloss black design and large 2.8-inch VGA touchscreen on the front alongside a series of keys below for quick interaction. The back sports a 3.2 megapixel camera.

Inside and you get HSDPA 7.2 as well as HSUPA, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, GPS and 4GB of storage to store music and images on although no external storage option or 3.5mm jack.

The Diamond runs Windows Mobile 6.1 although from the customisation HTC has done to the operating system you wouldn't know it.

Sitting on top of Windows Mobile is HTC's 3D TouchFlo software, which is incredibly graphical. Using your finger you can quickly scroll through the available applications via a carousel at the bottom of the screen at all times and here you can access virtually all the phone's main features like the picture viewer, music player, contacts book or browser.

Promising to offer a fully functioning and easy to use browser experience, HTC has used the Opera Mobile browser instead of Microsoft's Internet Explorer. The move is a welcomed one and the browsing experience on both Wi-Fi and HSDPA is, to put it bluntly, beautiful. It is the first device we've seen that gets anywhere close to Apple's iPhone browsing experience.

Web pages are loaded and resized to fit the screen automatically, but still retain their design



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and ratio. A double tap allows you to zoom in and out, while a move of your finger across the screen shifts the web page around.

When it comes to viewing text, HTC has somehow magically made it possible for the text to re-position itself to display on the screen to save you scrolling, regardless of the CSS or style on the original site.

A quick rotate sideways and thanks to the inbuilt accelerometer you can view images and web pages in landscape mode with the on-screen keyboard also benefiting from the extra space.

Addressing the problems experienced on the iPhone and hoping to appeal to users who actually want to type on the device, HTC seems to have gone out of its way to help you get text into the unit. The on-screen keyboard can be displayed in full QWERTY, 20 key or even 12 key configurations with the 20 key emulating a two letters per key offering as found on the company's Touch Dual model. It's something that is likely to appeal to the BlackBerry Pearl users perhaps ready to switch.

Elsewhere the graphical interface doesn't stop. Weather, a popular feature on the company's Touch device is back once again, this time in glorious Technicolor. Everything from contacts that offer photos as if it was in a Rolodex to the image browser that sees photos cascading down the screen like the photo screensaver on the PS3 gives this phone a very, very consumer focus.

It's not all great news however, in our test, which we were informed was a prototype, the interface was at times sluggish to our requests. Then there was a lack of a 3.5mm jack for music fans as well as the lack of an external memory card slot for further expansion, although in fairness 4GB internal memory should suffice most people and HTC say that a 3.5mm dongle is included in the box. Then there is the worry of battery with HTC's President suggesting that compromises had been

At a glance

What is it?

HSDPA Smartphone

Good

HSDPA, Wi-Fi, GPS, interface, no sign of Mobile 6.1

Bad

No external storage, no 3.5mm jack, prototype we tested was sluggish

Verdict

If you aren't fussed about multimedia and just want to stay connected on the go, this is certainly one to watch

Price price dependant on contract

Your score

3/10

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made for the size.

VERDICT

Although we weren't able to test every facet of the HTC Diamond (GPS, camera quality) what we saw was very impressive.

HTC has somehow managed to take a Microsoft device and make it everything but - a good thing in our mind.

This is a consumer smartphone that packs more specs, and if HTC can sort out the lag issue, more punch than the iPhone in all areas. The only thing it appears to be lagging is the audio and video prowess of Apple's smartphone.

If you aren't fussed about multimedia and just want to stay connected on the go, this is certainly one to watch.

The HTC Diamond is out in June in the UK.