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LG KF700 mobile phone

Touchscreen dream or nightmare?

by Chris Hall published on 29 May 2008

Following the trend of pairing touchscreen functionality in a slider model, the KF700 takes a step further than the KF600 by making all of the top section into one touchable element. But does this step bring anything to your mobile experience? We find out.

The front of the phone is filled with a 3in, 262kpixel, screen which provides all the touchscreen functions - there are no touch sections, or divides like in the KF600. Again, you get the feeling that LG could have done more to get closer to the edge and avoid the 5mm border at the sides that is effectively wasted screen space.

Slide it up and you reveal the standard keypad including the green and red call buttons, and the all important "C", which in LG phones is used to delete characters in text messages and numbers and so on. In terms of build quality, the keypad feels slightly cheap, but otherwise, the slide and other hard buttons have a good positive feel to them.

Despite the touchscreen functionality, there are still a number of hard buttons scattered over the outside, and the control dial that we will come back to later. Down the right side you have a dedicated camera button and a lock button, that you'll need more often than you'd think.

That control dial is a central feature to the KF700 and works in cahoots with the "OK" button that sits beneath it. Hit the OK and a customisable dial menu opens, providing shortcuts to, well, whatever you like. The obvious options are the music player, album, FM radio and so on that you'd want to get to easily.

Select a shortcut and a press of the OK button will take you to that application. In the music player and normal voice calls the dial also acts as



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a volume control, which is pretty useful.

However, that dial can also be used to scroll up and down menus when they appear on-screen, but it is not accurate enough to always get the option you want. Also, because the wheel isn't clickable, you can highlight the option you want, and then you have to press the option on-screen (the OK button would launch the shortcuts again). Like other models, the wheel is in the wrong place, meaning you have to shift your grip to use the dial and then again to select what you want, so it is a system that becomes limited in use for the shortcuts and nothing else.

The main problem here is that the touchscreen functionality means the loss of a d-pad. Unless the touch control is well-refined, it becomes a pig to use, and unfortunately, the KF700 falls smack into that category, oink, oink.

The touch interface boasts haptics, i.e, you get feedback through your fingertips, however, this isn't always totally accurate, and you'll find you get a buzz when you haven't applied sufficient pressure to select the option you want, which is frustrating. We also found that during calls, the pressure of your ear could unlock the screen, meaning that you can cancel a call. Similarly in calls to the voicemail, we'd find that our ear presses would open up a menu, so when you try to delete the voicemail with a number key press, you'll find you're actually editing your address book. Not good eh?

Using a hash of buttons, dials, on-screen icons, navigation of the phone is not intuitive: icons come and go as you move around menus, sometimes you have a top shortcut bar, sometimes a side shortcut bar. It just doesn't seem to work very well, with one exception.

On the rear you'll find the defacto 3-megapixel camera, that can be accessed via the dedicated button, that you also use to take a picture. Here the full screen comes into its own allowing for

At a glance

What is it?

Touchscreen slider mobile phone

Good

Good screen for camera use, HSDPA, build quality

Bad

Poor control, no 3.5mm jack, touch problems, key lock vagaries

Verdict

The KF700 is something of an odd ball. It potentially offers a lot, but falls short on so many fronts

Price Dependent on contract

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10

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good steady alignment of photos without having to squint at a tiny image. It is a shame, in this regard, that the pixelage hasn't been boosted to 5 with a more comprehensive lens arrangement.

As the KF700 supports HSDPA, there is also a front-mounted camera for all those video calls you are sure to be making.

As far as texting goes, things are a standard LG affair, pretty good, except for some confusion that arises with T9 word selection, again faced with a dropdown menu you have to select the word you want, and it is too easy to hit the wrong one and ditto with exclamation marks and the like. The Send and Back options are adjacent so you'll be saving to draft and then resending on a regular basis.

There is however, an external microSD slot, which is great for storage for your music and images, and using the shortcut dial, the music player is actually pretty good. Unfortunately there is no 3.5mm jack so you have to use the LG supplied version.

The key lock is also something of an issue for us. Not only can you turn off the in-call lock with your ear, the lock button becomes essential all the time. You can elect to have the slider lock off the touch capabilities when it is down, but it doesn't always do it! In some menus, the screen will still be active. The lock only seems to work when you are back on the homepage, and closing the slider doesn't revert to the homepage so key locking is something of an enigma.

VERDICT

The KF700, therefore, is something of an odd ball. Like the KF600, it potentially offers a lot, but falls short on so many fronts. Ok, if you are mostly interested in text and the music player functions, then you might get on with the KF700. If you are going to be making lots of call, then be prepared for lots of haptic ear action.