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HTC Touch Pro mobile phone

Can adding a keyboard make the Diamond even better?

by Stuart Miles published on 3 September 2008

When the HTC Diamond came out in the June many saw it as an iPhone challenger for the Windows crowd.

To give you a heads-up. Here at Pocket-lint, we rate the Diamond. It's a good handset that, while fiddly at times, is the closest thing we've seen getting near the iPhone in terms of that touch interface.

It has its faults, but on the whole it's a good experience. However the biggest criticism of the Diamond and the iPhone even, is that if you're not in "touch", and many people aren't, it's not the easiest of handsets to use.

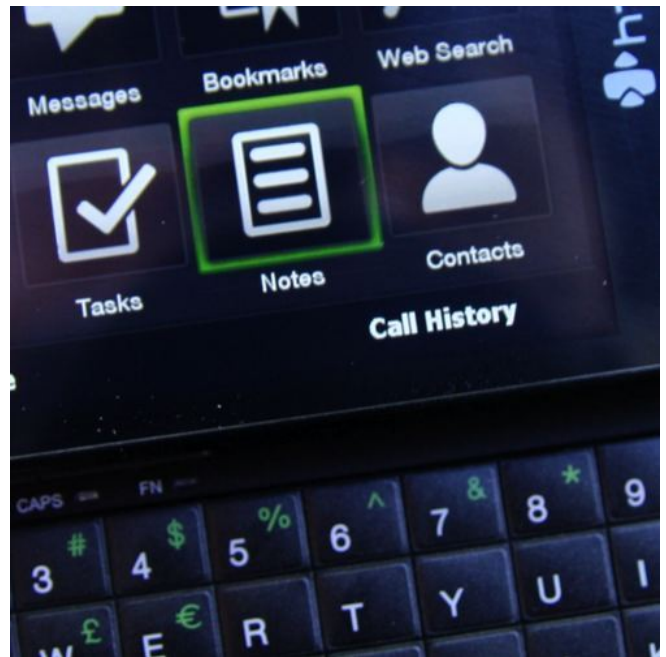
The masses therefore returned back to their BlackBerry/Nokia/Palm (delete where applicable) and life moved on. That is until now.

The HTC Touch Pro isn't a follow-on from the HTC Touch launched in 2007, but instead the follow-on from the HTC Diamond launched in 2008. The difference between the two is that the Touch Pro adds a QWERTY keyboard in the hopes of making typing easier.

Front on the two devices look identical: the display is the same 2.8-inch TFT-LCD flat touch-sensitive screen with VGA resolution and it's still just as impressive on this device as it was the first time.

The shortcut buttons are the same as well, although the casing is slightly rounder at the edges. The sides sport the same buttons although the power switch has shifted slightly - such small details aren't going to make a massive difference in your life.

However, what does make a massive difference is that slide out keyboard as it doubles the depth



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of the handset making this a big, and we mean big, device for your pocket. The difference in dimensions are an extra 6.7mm on the depth and an extra 55 grams on the weight.

It would appear that adding a keyboard makes this the equivalent of carrying two devices in pocket rather than just the one.

Slide that keyboard out and you are presented with a tight but usable keyboard as long as it's in your hands. Place it on a desk however, if that's your thing, and it is completely unusable as the uneven back means it will be rocking backwards and forwards like grandma knitting on the veranda.

There is plenty of space around the edge of the keys, perhaps suggesting there could have been a little more room given over to the keyboard, but on the whole, although spongy, it is easy to type with.

HTC has even managed to fit in a couple of shortcut buttons taking you directly to your email or SMS and it's all very easy and straight-forward to use.

Sliding out the keyboard automatically turns the screen view to landscape and there was no lag as the screen rotates to match your request.

Rather than be presented with the Home Screen found in portrait mode you are presented with eight icons that are a variant on the main icons displayed in portrait. There is a task button, for example, but no direct shortcut to weather.

The interaction between the keyboard and the interface isn't as symbiotic as we would have liked and you'll find that you'll still have to do a lot of touching especially when browsing the web.

Other differences are perhaps more subtle. The high black gloss finish on the back has been replaced with a matt finish, while the HTC Touch

At a glance

What is it?

HTC Diamond with keyboard

Good

Screen, pull out keyboard, HSDPA

Bad

BIG, battery life not great, no 3.5mm headphone jack

Verdict

Adding the keyboard to the HTC Diamond will appease those who liked the interface but didn't want to get all touchy-feely with it

Price dependent on contract

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

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Pro has lost the 4GB of internal storage found on the Diamond in place of a microSD card slot and just 288MB, and whilst not hot swappable, it will appeal to people looking to expand their memory allocation.

Perhaps HTC feel that business users aren't really into on-board memory?

Get past the changes, for the better or worse, and the handset offers a stack of good features that are sure to help it see off the competition.

Wi-Fi or HSDPA 7.2Mbps download speeds let the Internet whiz by, while all the other elements of Windows Mobile 6.1 mean you get a device that will offer you plenty of connectivity and keep your IT manager happy when you need support.

Web pages are loaded and resized to fit the screen automatically, but still retain their design 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. There is of course support for multiple pages like tabs and overall the experience is a pleasant one.

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 in-built accelerometer you can view images and web pages in landscape mode. Images also get a zoom feature although rather than using a pinch movement you swirl your finger in or out. It means you can do it one handed if you like and use your other hand for eating a burger or drinking lager.

Elsewhere the graphical interface doesn't stop. Weather, a popular feature on the company's original Touch device, is back once again this time in glorious Technicolor. Everything from contacts that offer photos as if it were 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.

As for battery life it's not great and the more you use the features the more you use up that juice, like the HTC Diamond, it will be a charge every day handset.

Other features include GPS and a 3.2-megapixel camera on the back, another on the front for video calling along with the usual array of Bluetooth built-in, FM radio and MP3 player, although, as before, no 3.5mm headphone jack.

VERDICT

Adding the keyboard to the HTC Diamond will appease those who liked the interface but didn't want to get all touchy-feely with it.

The keyboard is easy to use, but the cost of adding it has been all too obvious: a considerably bigger device. We also found the sliding mechanism to be a little noisy.

That, combined with a keyboard-handset relationship that is lacking at times, means that while this is probably what most people thought they wanted from the Diamond, the reality is that the grass isn't always greener on the other side.