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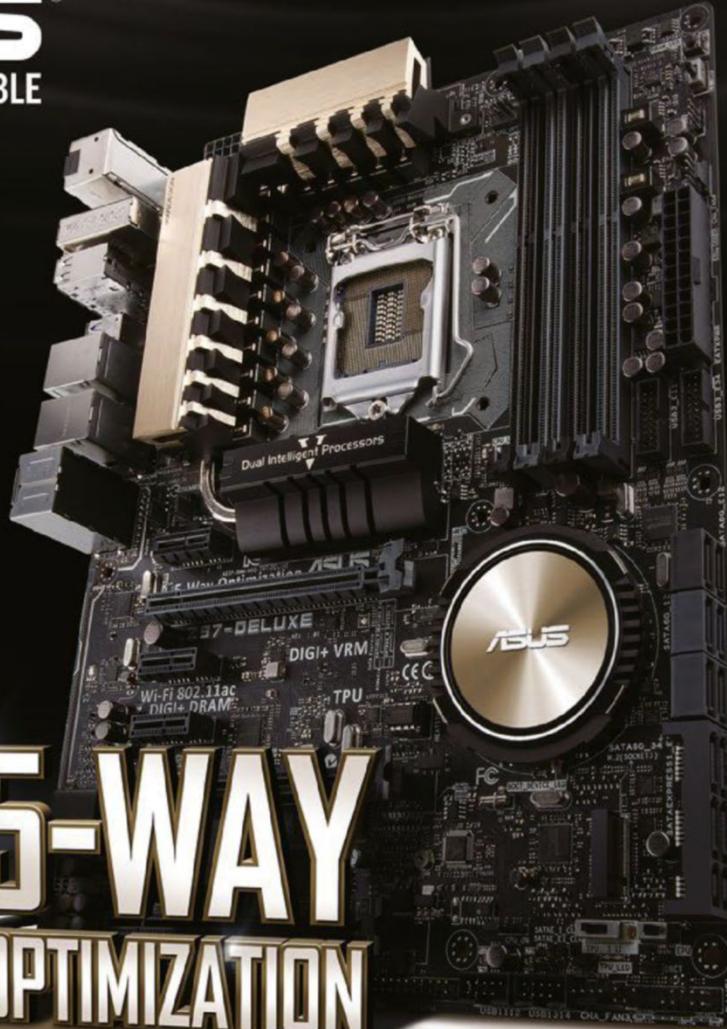
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THE GREAT GEFORCE GTX 750 Ti STORMX DUAL

STORMX DUAL GEFORCE® GTX™ 750Ti

Utilizing NVIDIA's Maxwell architecture, the GeForce GTX 750 Ti is capable of providing better performance without the need for more power. It doesn't require any extra power connectors, so you can upgrade your desktop PC without buying a new power supply. The Maxwell-based card is cooled by the StormX Dual cooler. This reliable cooler features two 80 fans that have the TurboFan Blade design for increased airflow while maintaining low operation noise.

The StormX Dual comes equipped with solid capacitors, ferrite core chokes, and an improved PWM design. Utilizing these, the card is able to run more efficiently and get an increase in its overclocking potential. As with all GeForce cards, this card also features NVIDIA technologies such as PhysX, GPU Boost 2.0, Adaptive Vsync, and ShadowPlay to name a few.

Without a doubt, this card makes for a perfect partner for gamers on a budget.

Key Specifications:

- CUDA Cores: 640
- Base Clock: 1202MHz
- Boost Clock: 1281MHz
- Memory Config: 2GB/128-bit GDDR5



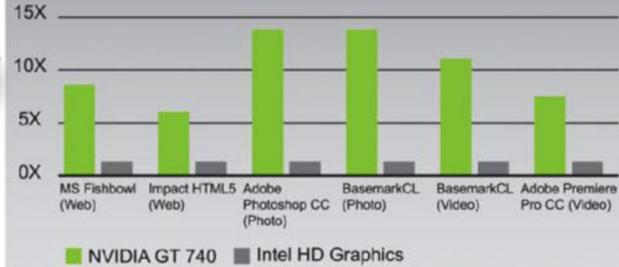
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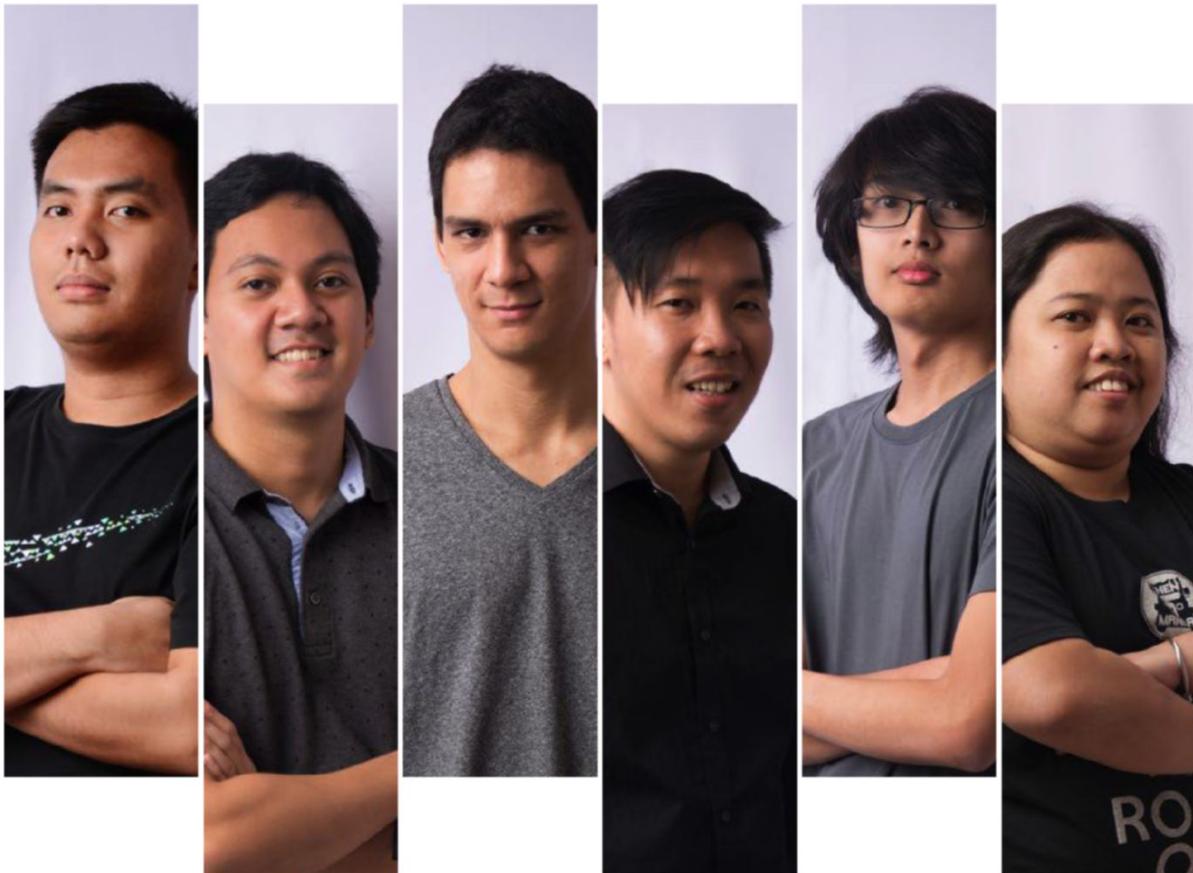
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IT'S AN APP WORLD AFTER ALL

If it isn't obvious yet: Yes, we did indeed revamp the magazine's look. It was a gradual process, started by our brothers at HWM Singapore, and sprinkled with a localized touch. We understand that the technological landscape is evolving, so we decided to follow suit, and we're glad we did. HWM now has a cleaner, more modern look to welcome its – wait for it – tenth anniversary this December! How's that for longevity?

But before we celebrate the future, let's focus on the present, which consists of valuable apps in the online market. Apps, after all, are the heart and soul of a smart device. Think about it: We got octa-core chips, 2K displays, and 41-megapixel camera sensors headlining spec sheets, yet it's the apps that make a handset truly "smart." Digging through the millions of usable software is quite the chore, though; that's why we're putting the best productivity and chat apps to the test in two unique shootouts this month. Are you an Evernote person, or the LifeTopix type? Viber or

WeChat? Let's find out on page 46.

Complementing the app shootouts are features about the dawn of mobile transactions and the rise of China-based phone manufacturer Xiaomi. After reading everything in this issue (and we hope you will!), you'd figure out that practically everything is shifting towards the portable and transportable.

To think, it was only around a decade ago when Internet access could only be done through a desktop computer; now, we have computers in our pockets throughout the day. The legendary Nokia N95's slogan way back in 2007 ("It's what computers have become") applies to practically every smartphone today. Let's just hope that our local network service providers can keep up with our powerful new toys and deliver the data speeds that we need!

The HWM Team

Comments about this issue? Suggestions? The HWM Team would love to hear from you!
Send us your thoughts at editor.ph@hwzcorp.com.

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Source: IDC Worldwide PC Tracker, Q4 2013.

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THINK

MASSIVE ATTACK, FUTURE WEAPONS, NOW

■ War has changed. As conflicts in Europe and the Middle East escalate, worldwide military expenditure has grown astronomically. In 2013, the world spent over US\$ 1.7 trillion on war. A vast amount of that money is spent in research and development labs that are tasked to engineer increasingly technologically advanced weapons. Last year, the US Government alone spent US\$ 178.8 billion just on military R&D. From laser weapons and death rays, to drones, robots, and railguns, these are just a few of the weapons that are already in active use today or in the final stages of development. If this arsenal of sci-fi weaponry keeps evolving, war may soon be unrecognizable.

by James Lu

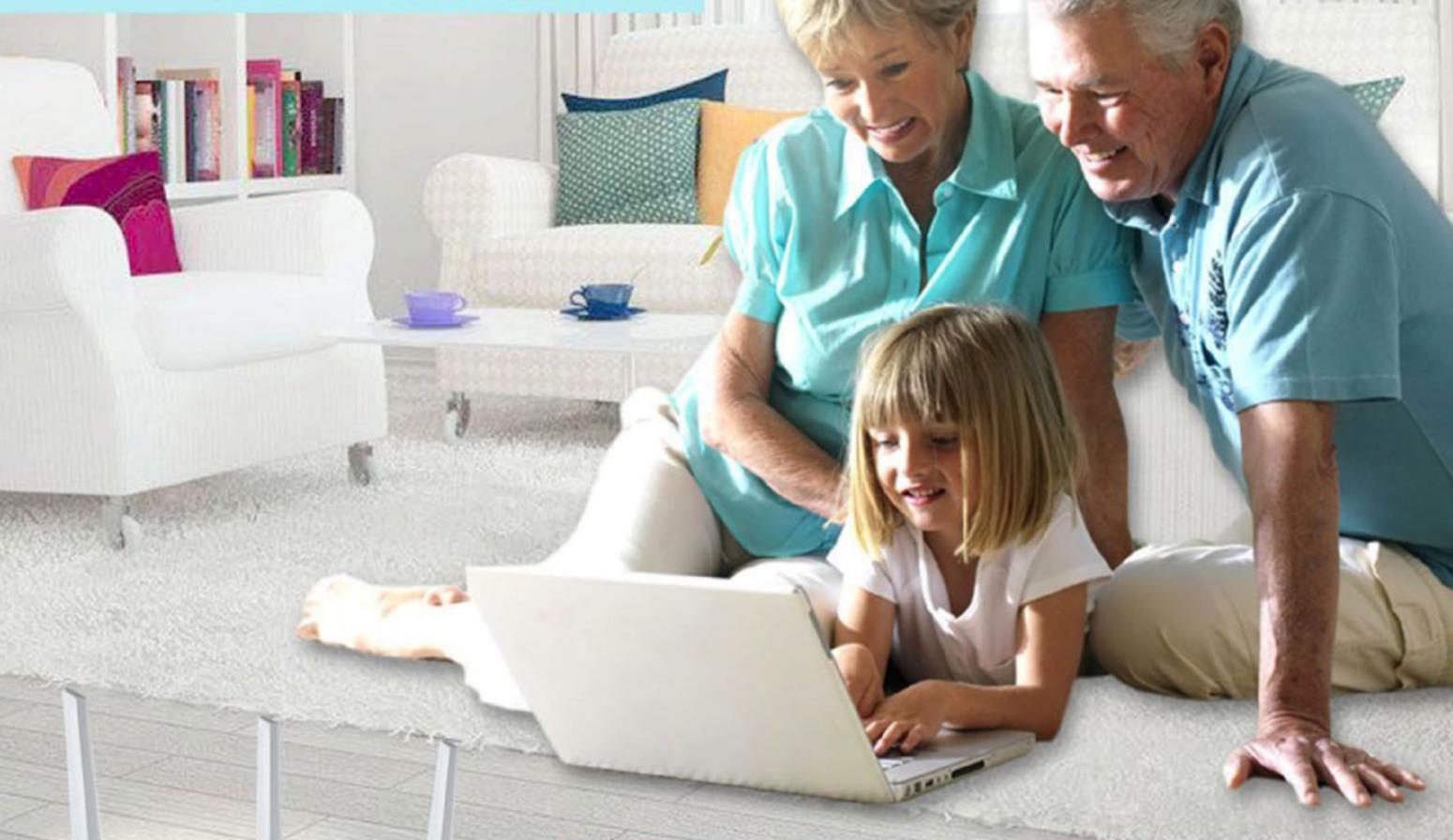


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ACTIVE DENIAL SYSTEM

Manufactured by: Raytheon

The Active Denial System is an energy weapon developed for the US military. It works on a similar principle as a microwave, firing a high-powered directed, electromagnetic beam at a target up to 450m away. The ADS beam is rated at 95GHz – for reference, a microwave emits beams of roughly 2.45GHz. Like a microwave, the beam agitates water and fat molecules, and in this case, in the top layers of the target's skin, quickly heating them up. Within seconds, the target will experience a burning sensation on their skin, which will rapidly heat up to 44°C. Remaining within the beam's effects will cause first-degree burns within minutes when the skin reaches 51°C, and second-degree burns afterwards when the skin heats up to 58°C. Due to the rapid and intense pain, the reaction to run from the beam is so overpowering, the US military calls the ADS its "Goodbye Weapon."

The ADS is already in service and was deployed to Afghanistan in 2010. The US military classifies ADS as a non-lethal weapons technology due to its short burst fire-rate and claims there are no permanent effects from exposure.



ELECTROMAGNETIC RAILGUN

Manufactured by: BAE Systems

The US Navy is currently in the final stages of testing an electromagnetic railgun weapon, built by BAE Systems. The technology and concept for a railgun had been proposed as early as 1919, but the amount of electricity required to power such a device has made it unfeasible until now. Instead of chemical propellants, a railgun uses a magnetic pulse generated by high electrical currents to launch a projectile along a sliding metal conductor between two rails.

In 2012, a test shot fired by the US Navy's electromagnetic railgun at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Dahlgren, Virginia, generated 33 megajoules of muzzle force, a world record and more than three times the previous record, firing a 9kg projectile at 9,000km/h, or roughly seven times the speed of sound. Rather than exploding on impact like a traditional warhead, the railgun's projectile obliterates its target through sheer power alone. The maximum distance of the railgun is estimated at 160km.

The biggest problem currently facing the railgun's operation is the vast amount of energy required to power it, especially onboard a ship. This may have been solved, however, with the introduction of the Navy's newest destroyer, the USS Zumwalt, which utilizes two gas turbine-powered generators capable of producing up to 78 megawatts of onboard power – enough electricity to power a medium-sized city.



MQ9 REAPER DRONE

Manufactured by: General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI)

The MQ9 Reaper Drone is an unmanned aerial vehicle used by the US Air Force. The drone has a 20m wingspan, and is powered by a 950-horsepower turboprop engine, with a maximum speed of 483km/h. It has a maximum payload of 1,700kg and is capable of 42 hours of continuous flight. The Reaper can be armed with up to 14 AGM-114 Hellfire air-to-ground missiles or four Hellfire missiles and two 230kg GBU-12 Paveway II laser-guided bombs. Alternatively, it can be equipped for air-to-air combat with an array of AIM-92 Stinger missiles. The Reaper is capable of climbing to an altitude of 15km and is equipped with imaging and thermal sensors able to read and target a vehicle license plate at over 3km away. While it is able to fly pre-programmed routes autonomously, the US Air Force prefers to monitor and manually pilot it through an on-ground aircrew via satellite uplink. It takes approximately 1.2 seconds for an operator's commands to reach the drone.

The US Air Force predicts that drones like the Reaper will eventually completely replace the need and risk to send human pilots into combat situations. As of March 2011 the US Air Force has 29 Reapers in active combat, with more personnel training to operate the Reaper as well as its little brother, the Predator drone, than any other weapon system in its arsenal.



PHASR

Manufactured by: ScorpWorks

The PhaSR (Personnel Halting and Stimulation Response Rifle) is a directed-energy laser weapon used by the US Army to temporarily blind and disorient anyone caught in its sights, colloquially referred to as a "Dazzler." The PhaSR incorporates two low-power diode-pumped lasers, one using the visible wavelength and one on the infrared wavelength.

The 1995 United Nations Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons bans weapons designed to cause blindness. Although, the US didn't actually agree to comply with the ruling until 2009; however, as the PhaSR is designed to cause only temporary blindness, it has so far escaped the ban.

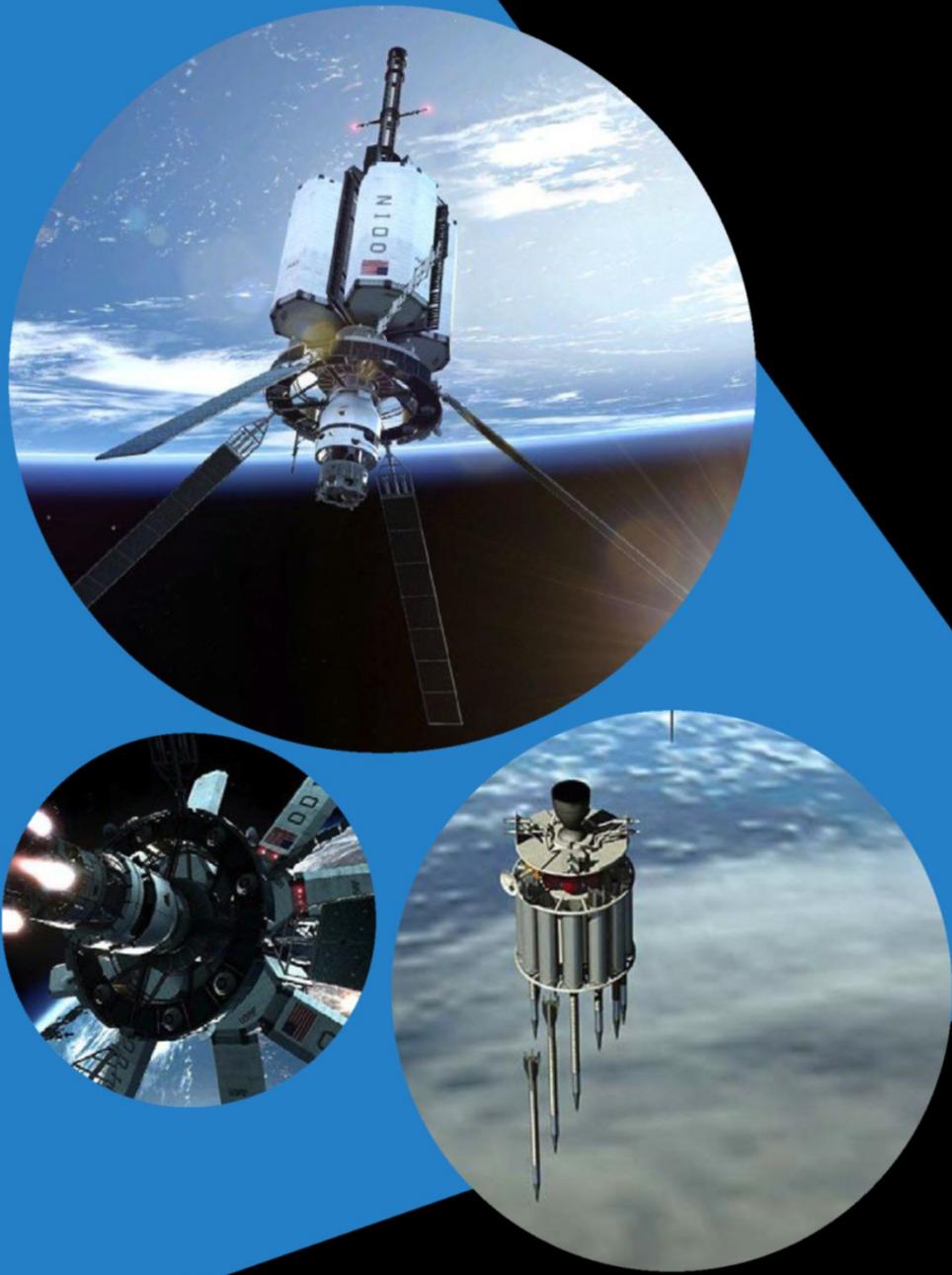
In the past, laser weapons similar to the PhaSR were unusable in combat situations due to them being too powerful at close range, which can permanently blind victims, and ineffective at long range. The PhaSR, however, incorporates an eye-safe laser range finder that calculates the distance between the gun and target, allowing for the maximum safe intensity to be used on a target at all ranges.

COMING SOON: PROJECT THOR

In 2003, the US quietly annulled and withdrew from any treaties that limited its "freedom of action" in space. Why? That same year, the US Air Force released a Future System Concepts report stating its desire for a weapon with the "capability to strike ground targets anywhere in the world from space." That weapon is Project Thor.

The concept behind Project Thor is kinetic bombardment from a low-orbit satellite that could be moved into position above any location on earth. In the US Air Force's report, it specified that the satellite would release a 6m, 8,000kg tungsten rod – chosen due to tungsten's high melting point of 3,422°C, which would let it survive atmospheric re-entry. The rod would fall towards the target, accelerating to approximately 11,000m/s, hitting the target in about 12 to 15 minutes with the kinetic energy equivalent of about 120 tons of TNT, or a small nuclear warhead. The system avoids issues with nuclear fallout, is undetectable as it does not leave a chemical trail, and is invisible to radar due to its small cross-section. Its position in low-orbit also lets it circumvent the 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty prohibiting weapons of mass destruction to be used from space.

If Project Thor came to fruition, it would be the most powerful weapon invented since the atomic bomb. Fortunately, for now, the US government's plans seem to have been put on hold as attention and resources were diverted to the more immediate war in Afghanistan. The current status of Project Thor is unknown.



read



Technology is a strange thing. What's new today is old tomorrow; what we think the future looks like is heavily tinted by the technological level we are at today.

Dan Simmons' epic duology *Ilium/Olympus* provides both classical and sci-fi buffs a jolt of adrenaline with a story that unfolds from three different theaters of play that is set on a collision path with one another. On Mars, powerful beings that

have taken on the appearance and roles of ancient Greek gods such as Zeus amuse themselves with an eternal reenactment of the Trojan wars from Homer's *Iliad*. On Earth, a controlled habitat of "old-style humans" live in apparent nirvana, provided for by the technology left behind by their post-human forefathers that have evolved beyond human beings. And on Jupiter, a sentient robot race is sent to investigate an alarming spike of

energy emissions emanating from Mars. The novels cover many areas of science including genetics, string theory, quantum theory, and nanotechnology, cleverly combining its sci-fi elements into classical and contemporary settings. If you've ever wanted to know what the future holds, *Ilium/Olympus* paints a very believable picture.

Paving the Way for Warp Speed

SKUNK WORKS SR-72

With top speeds exceeding Mach 3, the SR-71 Blackbird – one of the fastest planes in the world – has held speed records that have lasted nearly four decades, but there may soon be a new definition of “fast.”

Engineers at Lockheed Martin’s Skunk Works are working on building the SR-72, a hypersonic aircraft that is envisioned to achieve twice the speed of the SR-71. That’s six times the speed of sound, or 7,350km/h. How fast is that? Well, at that speed, the SR-72 would be able to cover any continent in just about an hour!

Designed as an unmanned aircraft, the SR-72 will be governed by millions of lines of software code, and powered by computer chips, but here’s the scary thing: Lockheed is expecting the SR-72 to be armed with hypersonic weapons when it is released. Being launched from a Mach 6 platform, the weapons would not require a booster, and there would almost literally not be any time for the target to react.

The SR-72 project is no pipe dream, and Skunk Works predicts that the hypersonic jet could be operational as early as 2030. Will it be enough to hope this never falls into the wrong hands?

PICTURE: LOCKHEED MARTIN

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PLDT HOME Bro launched its ultra-fast wireless Internet service with Ultera, which is a Time-Division Long-Term Evolution (TD-LTE) wireless Internet for one's home. It is considered to be the country's first to foray in TD-LTE technology, which is an innovation that uses a dedicated network with an allocated bandwidth, apart from the one used by mobile devices and pocket Wi-Fi modems.

It aims to give an improved Internet service to have better access to social media, movies, games, and music online. It is currently being rolled out in key areas across the country such as Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Bataan, Isabela, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Aurora, Cagayan, Abra, and Nueva Vizcaya in Northern and Central Luzon; Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon, Sorsogon, and Palawan in Southern Luzon; Aklan, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Bukidnon, and Leyte in Visayas; and Misamis Oriental, Zamboanga del Sur, Agusan del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, and Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao.



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Review: Norton 360 Multi-Device by Symantec
Contest: Win a Gigabyte G1.Sniper M5!
Price Lists: April 14, 2014 Update
Review: Samsung Galaxy S5
HWM: April 2014 Issue

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MyPhone Rio 5-inch Quad-core Dual-SIM Android Jelly Bean Smartphone Sells Below 5K (Updated)
NEWS / 17 Apr 2014 / 4 days ago

Launched last week, the MyPhone Rio is a new dual-SIM smartphone that comes with a 5-inch touchscreen, quad-core processor, and an 8-megapixel camera.

Norton 360 Multi-Device by Symantec - A Suite of Multiple Solutions for Multiple Devices
REVIEW / 15 Apr 2014

Symantec's Norton 360 Multi-Device is a software suite consisting of anti-malware tools, firewall, and personal backup. Recognizing the popularity of mobile devices, its protection is extended to Android and iOS devices as well.

Cherry Mobile Outs Quad-core Cosmos S with 5-inch HD Display and 16GB Memory (Updated)
NEWS / 14 Apr 2014 / 5 days ago

Cherry Mobile released the Cosmos series that are all heavy on features. The model before the flagship is the Cosmos S, also running on a quad-core processor. It has a 5-inch IPS HD screen, a 16GB internal memory, and an 18-megapixel shooter. Click through for more details!

Cherry Mobile Wants You to Get a LIFE, Announces Dual-core Smartphone for PhP 2,999 (Updated)
NEWS / 14 Apr 2014 / 5 days ago

For PhP 2,999, Cherry Mobile lets you get more out of your money. Cherry Mobile's LIFE features Android Jelly Bean, Mali 400 GPU, dual-core processor, 512MB RAM, 4GB internal storage, 4-inch display, 5-megapixel rear camera, and a 1500mAh battery.

Cherry Mobile Unveils Quad-core Cosmos X2 at PhP 11,699 (Update: New Color Available!)
NEWS / 14 Apr 2014 / 5 days ago

Cherry Mobile has unveiled the Cosmos X2, a quad-core smartphone with a 5.5-inch HD display, 1.3GHz MT6589T processor, Mali 400 GPU, 1.5GB RAM, 16GB internal storage, and a 13-megapixel rear camera.

HWZ TV

First Looks: Nokia X and XL Android-based Smartphones
Here's a quick preview of Nokia's new X and XL smartphones, which both run on the new Nokia X OS based on Android's Open Source Platform (AOSP). Due to this, these new mobile phones can run Android apps.

LG Launches OLED TVs That Double as Wall Paintings
04 Feb 2014 / By Kevin Bruce Francisco

LG has announced a new range of OLED televisions that feature a built-in projection system that allows them to project images onto a wall, effectively doubling their size.

Toshiba Brings in new L Series Pro Theatre and P Series TVs to the Philippines
10 Dec 2013 / By Martin James David

Toshiba has introduced its new L Series Pro Theatre and P Series TVs to the Philippines. The L Series features a 4K resolution and Dolby Atmos sound, while the P Series offers a sleek design and a range of connectivity options.

Bose VideoWave Entertainment System Hits PH Market, Sells for PhP 350,000
13 Dec 2013 / By Lionell Go Mecahilig

Bose has launched its VideoWave entertainment system in the Philippines, which includes a 4K UHD TV, a soundbar, and a subwoofer.

MyPhone Rio 5-inch Quad-core Dual-SIM Android Jelly Bean
NEWS / 17 Apr 2014 / 4 days ago

The MyPhone Rio is a budget-friendly smartphone with a 5-inch HD display, a quad-core processor, and a 16GB internal memory.

The Third LG Series

LG has brought its new LG Series III smartphones to the Philippines. These include the L80, L70, and L40 handsets. The three smartphones are touted as the first mid-priced units to feature Android

KitKat in the country. Another major feature is the inclusion of LG's Knock Code function, which enables users to wake the phone up and unlock it using a knock pattern. All three phones vary in screen size; the L80 has a 5-inch IPS display, while the L70 and L40 have screen sizes of 4.5 inches and 3.5 inches, respectively.



Perfect Storage Companion

WD recently held an event that was facilitated by travel and art photographer Arnel Murillo and Nino Carandang, the founding Editor-In-Chief of Digital Photography Magazine. Introduced during the event was the new WD My Passport Pro as an ideal storage for photographers and creative professionals. Equipped with two large-capacity hard drives paired in RAID configuration, the My Passport Pro also features a Thunderbolt interface for extremely fast transfers. This new portable drive is available in 2TB and 4TB variants.



Unveiling the Jupiter Plus

DTC further solidified its position in the local market, as it unveiled its first five brand ambassadors. The company also unveiled the new GT17A Jupiter Plus smartphone. The Jupiter Plus presents the perfect on-the-go style, performance, and functionality all rolled into one. At 4.7 inches, this smartphone runs Android 4.2.1, and boasts a powerful quad-core processor, 1GB RAM, 8GB storage, and a 2200mAh battery. There's also a 13MP rear camera and a 3.2MP front one for vibrant selfie shots and fun videos with friends.



Listen to the Sound of Life

Combining audio and lifestyle together, Sol Republic has entered the local market as it launched its plethora of headphones that mixes both fashion and high-definition sound. The company's lineup is made up of on-ear earphones (Tracks, Tracks HD, Master Tracks, and Master Tracks Studio XC) and in-ear earphones (Jax, Amps, and Amps HD). If headphones and earphones aren't your thing, Sol Republic also has the Deck wireless Bluetooth speaker.

Coloring Things Up

Logitech is putting its plans of widening its product portfolio into motion with the local launch of the new 2014 Color Collection and announcements of its new products. Logitech's Color Collection adds a touch of fashion and style with the company's most popular mouse, the M235 wireless mouse. During the event, other wireless products were showcased in the form of the M165 mouse, MK240 keyboard and mouse combo, and the Bluetooth Audio Adapter.



The Rise of the New Lumia

Microsoft Devices has locally introduced the dual-SIM Lumia 630. This smartphone will reach Philippine shores, running on Windows Phone 8.1 OS out of the box. This game-changing Lumia has a ClearBlack 4.5-inch LCD screen and a quad-core processor under the hood. It also supports storage expansion via microSD and comes with the new Microsoft Enterprise feature pack: Microsoft Office, OneDrive, Camera, and HERE Maps with Drive+ apps.

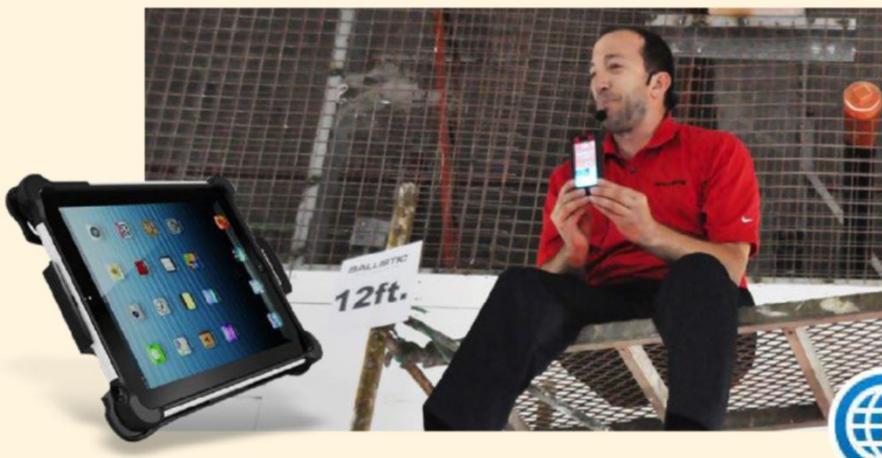
Expanding the LTE Portfolio

Smart is expanding its product portfolio with the announcement of the exclusive availability of the LG G2 mini LTE. Available with Smart Postpaid All-In Plan 1200, the LG G2 mini LTE is one of the most affordable offerings that comes with unlimited LTE surfing. This LG smartphone packs a more compact form factor with the same well-loved features of the original flagship, the LG G2: Knock Code, Rear Key, Guest Mode, and Plug and Pop.



HexTec Protection

Ballistic Cases, the pioneer behind the amazing HexTec technology that provides protective solutions for smartphones and tablets, has finally arrived in the Philippines. With its whole range of protective cases, which includes the Jewel, Tough Jacket, Tough Jacket Maxx, Hydra, Hard Core, and Every1 cases, these smart device accessories provide protection for your gadgets, be it from dust, scratches, drops, and even water.





Sound Fidelity

Sony Holds First-Ever Silent Concert

SONY

As the main highlight of the

"Music Deserves Respect" (MDR) campaign, Sony brought together brand ambassadors Ely Buendia and Bamboo at the Rockwell Tent to celebrate and show what it truly means to give justice to sound, and inspire people to appreciate true sound quality.

The silent concert showcased the new range of headphones featuring Sony's cutting-edge design and High Resolution Audio, through the MDR-1RBTMK2, MDR-1RMK2, and MDR-10RC.

The wireless MDR-1RBTMK2 combines High Resolution Audio with instant connectivity, comfort, and style. This NFC Bluetooth headset allows one-touch listening so you can enjoy music from any NFC-enabled Bluetooth music device with just a tap.

The MDR-1RMK2 continues to provide exceptional quality and clarity with maximum

comfort and a sophisticated design. This model supports High Resolution Audio formats and enhances compressed music files using Sony's proprietary sound technologies. Other features include beat response control for improved bass and pressure-relieving cushions that provide a wrap-around feel and acoustic sealing for powerful low-range sound.

The MDR-10RC is the most compact model in the MDR-10 range, and comes with a unique folding mechanism for easy storage that integrates curvature into the configuration of the headphones to ensure optimum fit. Coupled with lightweight and super-soft cushions, it allows for comfortable wearing over long periods of time. Combining rich, deep bass with beat response control and High Resolution Audio, the MDR-10RC delivers pure music enjoyment.

Read more about Sony's audio products by visiting www.sony.com.ph.



Faster Response

Google Introduces Tools for Crisis Solutions

■ Government leaders and representatives from different industries exchanged notes on effective crisis response in a whole-day summit facilitated by Google Philippines. The goal was to empower Filipino collaboration and find solutions using technology that will provide updated information during an emergency or calamity.

Google has built engineering tools for better communication between crisis responders and victims. They also organized information such as emergency alerts, news updates, and donation opportunities.

With Google Map Engine Lite, one of the tools highlighted, crisis responders can create custom Google Maps for public information in times of crisis. Google Map Maker is another tool that will allow users to add and update geographical information in Google Maps and Google Earth. Furthermore, the Google Person Finder app allows individuals to post and search for the status of relatives and friends affected by a disaster.

Meryl Stone, from the Google Social Impact Team, mentioned that Google's commitment is to work with local authorities and volunteers to build up a more advanced crisis response platform to make information more accessible during disasters. Google wants to help them in bringing people a safer and more convenient lifestyle by using Internet-based innovation.

Get to know more at www.google.org/crisisresponse.

Google™

Better Data Protection

EMC Redefines Software Data Protection



EMC² EMC has recently announced its suite of protection that aims to help customers adapt to a software-defined world, and enable their data protection requirements.

The EMC Data Protection Suite is composed of Avamar, NetWorker, Data Protection Advisor, Mozy, and SourceOne software. This suite allows integration of products in both on-premise and cloud-based backup and archive environments.

It spans the full continuum of data protection, as it has added new integration with primary and protection storage platforms. It also extends support for cloud environments such as data protection as a service, thus enabling smoother

migration to software-defined data centers (SDDCs).

With the introduction of a new Data Domain OS, new capabilities were added to enhance enterprise applications, even the support for Oracle, SAP solutions, the SAP HANA platform, IBM DB2, and Microsoft SQL Server.

The new software releases from the VPLEX and RecoverPoint product lines now combine to deliver MetroPoint topology, which fuses VPLEX Metro continuous availability with RecoverPoint remote replication and continuous data protection for recovery over any distance.

Find out the latest news about EMC at philippines.emc.com.



LG

Life's Good



The Age of Ultra

Electronics giant LG is set to bring a new viewing experience standard and all-around excellence once again with its game-changing Ultra HD TV lineup for 2014. It's being led by the LG UB9800T, which is available in 65-inch, 79-inch, and 84-inch variants. Get ready to be amazed!

LG ULTRA HDTV **Real 4K**

Advanced Resolution

The LG Ultra HD TVs boast of a sophisticated upscaling technology that converts SD (Standard Definition), HD (High Definition), or Full HD content into crisp, near Ultra HD quality. They also have built-in 4K HEVC 60p decoders for future-proofing. These TVs can display Ultra HD content from nearly any input source, including HDMI 2.0, USB, and LAN.

LG's True 4K Engine Pro virtually eliminates almost all visual errors, ensuring a truly enjoyable viewing experience. The True 4K Engine Pro also supports 4K Motion Estimation Motion Compensation (MEMC), which guarantees the most flawless 4K Ultra HD images and minimal motion blur.

Return of 3D

LG's 2014 lineup of Ultra HD TVs is set to give a renewed and more immersive 3D experience. With four times the pixel density of Full HD TVs, LG's 4K or Ultra HD TVs provide an unmatched level of visual precision. They boast more pixels and vivid details, resulting in more realism both in 2D and 3D.

The latest LG Ultra HD TVs offer 4K 3D+, giving consumers a whole new experience with the most captivating 3D image quality available. LG's 4K 3D uses Film Patterned Retarder technology to render 3D images with virtually no flicker. With these technologies, LG's Ultra HD TVs provide exceptional 3D viewing experience.

Smarter Viewing Experience

An integral part of LG's Smart+ TV, the simple and intuitive webOS Smart TV platform will be featured in most LG Ultra HD TVs this year. Its ease of use makes searching and viewing content, connecting with other devices, and the initial TV setup process incredibly smooth and seamless, bringing back the simplicity of controlling your TV.

Introduced during CES 2014, LG's webOS platform has garnered a number of positive feedback. The unique architecture of the webOS enhances the compatibility between LG's advanced TVs and other devices and also makes it easier for developers to create applications.

NOT YOUR USUAL REFRESH

MAINSTREAM ON THE RISE

ASUS® ASUS, in its quest to bring better feature-packed products to

consumers, held a technical seminar in Bangkok that showcased its upcoming mainstream The Ultimate Force (TUF) and Republic of Gamers (ROG) motherboards.

Donning Intel's latest Z97 chipset, this new lineup makes sure that DIY PC builders are not only getting tons of features, but also incredible reliability and performance.



MAINSTREAM ON THE RISE

This year, ASUS is focused on improving the performance, gaming experience, and interaction of its new mainstream motherboard lineup, headed by the Z97-Deluxe motherboard.

To achieve this, ASUS is bringing in 5-Way Optimization (TPU, EPU, Fan Xpert 3, DIGI+ Power, and Turbo App), an improved UEFI BIOS, the latest storage interfaces (M.2 and SATA Express), better onboard audio (Crystal Sound 2) and control over your network connection (TurboLAN), ASUS HomeCloud, a taste of the future with its NFC Express 2 and wireless charging, and a new design.

A BRAND-NEW EXTERIOR

Upcoming TUF boards will feature the TUF ICe, a dedicated chip that manages your system without eating up resources. The two small board fans are now bi-directional to allow them to push out dust to prevent buildup. Thermal Radar 2 is now capable of better fan control and thermal monitoring. The TUF Fortifier is also present this generation. Lastly, onboard components (new alloy chokes, Japan-made TUF 10K Ti-Caps, and military-grade MOSFETs) and the addition of the TUF ESD guards ensure better stability, higher durability, and greater power efficiency.

THE LEGACY CONTINUES

The ROG legacy continues with the Maximus VII series. The Maximus line is getting a new member called the "Ranger." These new boards feature a sleeker look and overall improvements.

KeyBot and TrueVolt USB are being introduced this generation. KeyBot allows you to create your own macro keys and shortcuts on any keyboard, while TrueVolt USB makes sure that you get a stable 5V on your USB ports. SupremeFX audio now provides better sound quality and control. Other apps such as Game First and Sonic Radar are also getting updates.

THE HEAT IS ON IN SAIGON

MSI OUTS INTEL Z79 MOTHERBOARDS

msi At the recent MSI Media Tour held in Saigon,

Vietnam, MSI showcased in front of media delegates from Southeast Asia, India, and the United Arab Emirates its latest array of motherboards based on the latest Intel Z97 chipset. MSI's new motherboard models are divided into three key categories: OC, Gaming, and Classic. With Intel's Z97 chipset, MSI's new board models make use of the LGA1150 CPU socket and are designed to support 4th- and 5th-generation Core, Pentium, and Celeron CPUs, including Haswell Refresh, which is launching this month. MSI also launched the Nightblade B85 and Z97 barebone systems during the event.



Gracing this year's MSI Media Tour are delegates from Southeast Asia, India, and the United Arab Emirates. Executives and representatives of MSI presented their new products at the event.



Left: Austin Yang of MSI Barebone Systems Product Marketing demonstrates the strength of the Nightblade Z97 barebone system by letting a model stand on it. Right: Models with MSI's Z97 boards.



MSI OC SERIES



Notable for the black and yellow color scheme, MSI's OC series motherboards are targeted towards overclockers and power

users. During the launch, MSI showcased three OC series board models: the Z97 MPOWER, Z97 MPOWER Max AC, and the Z97 XPOWER AC. For advanced users, the last two boards support liquid cooling with a specialized heatsink assembly. Additionally, all models in the OC series support the PCIe M.2 standard.



MSI GAMING SERIES



Targeted towards gamers, the Gaming series consists of Z97-based motherboards that flaunt a black and red color scheme. The smallest member of the series is the Z97I Gaming AC, a mini-ITX board that comes with two DIMM slots with up to 16GB DDR3 support at 3200MHz. Other notable members of MSI's Gaming series include the Z97M Gaming, Z97 Gaming 3, Z97 Gaming 5, and the Z97 Gaming 7. All models in the Gaming series support PCIe M.2 standard.



MSI CLASSIC SERIES



Aimed at average and budget-minded users, motherboards in this series sport MSI's traditional black and blue color scheme. Some Classic board models that were showcased during the event include the Z97 Guard-Pro, Z97 PC Mate, Z97-G55 SLI, and the Z97S SLI Plus. Like the boards from the OC series and the Gaming series, MSI's Classic motherboards also employ Military Class 4 components for durability and stable performance.

IT'S IN THE DETAILS

Philips 55PFL8008S

www.philips.com.ph

Beauty is in the details, as evident by the new Philips 8000 Series Ultra Slim Smart LED TV. A 55-inch panel with Ambilight 3-sided XL, Perfect Pixel HD picture quality engine, and 3D Max technologies bring the viewing experience to greater heights. It also has an integrated TV camera for Skype video calls, integrated Wi-Fi for instant web access, and Smart TV functionality that grants you a rich selection of online apps plus the ability to flawlessly stream content to your television.





Philips Fidelio SoundBar Speaker

(HTB9150)

Delivering truly immersive surround sound without the constraint of your position, room size or shape, this Philips Fidelio Ambisound home theater system has six precisely angled drivers to create a more embracing surround sound effect.

Ultimate listening experience

- Ambisound technology for surround sound from fewer speakers
- 600W RMS power delivers great sound for movies and music
- Voice Clarity enhancer for true-to-life voices

Designed to enhance your living space

- Super slim design of 87mm depth ideal for wall mounting
- SoundBar design best fitting a 102cm (40") flat TV or larger
- Sophisticated design with high quality aluminum finishing

Connect and enjoy all your entertainment

- Full HD 3D Blu-ray for a truly immersive 3D movie experience
- Smart TV Plus to enjoy online services & multimedia on TV
- SimplyShare to connect & stream all entertainment wirelessly
- Internet radio to enjoy the world of online radio channels
- Built-in Wi-Fi to enjoy your connected media wirelessly
- Instant 2D to 3D conversion for a lifelike movie experience



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PHILIPS

BE AMAZED

Philips Edge G-line

www.mmd-p.com

MMD, a leading display technology company and brand licensing partner of Philips Monitors, proudly ushers in a new era of visual entertainment with the Edge G-line – a 3D display with outstanding picture quality and a chic, minimalist design. Expect brilliant pictures on the all-new Edge G-line, with a Full HD resolution ensuring superb image definition. Available in a screen size of 27 inches, easy 3D technology provides long hours of viewing comfort with flicker-free performance.





PHILIPS

Monitors



242G5DJEB

- Panel Size: 24 inch / 61 cm
- Effective viewing area: 531.36 (H) x 298.89 (V) mm
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1920x1080 @ 120Hz (Dual-link DVI/DP)
- SmartResponse (typical): 1 ms (Gray to Gray)*
- SmartContrast: 80,000,000:1



PHILIPS



233V5LSB

- Panel Size: 23 inch / 58.4 cm
- Effective viewing area: 509.18 (H) x 286.42 (V)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1920 x 1080 @ 60 Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



163V5LSB23

- Panel Size: 15.6 inch / 39.6 cm
- Effective viewing area: 344.2 (H) x 193.5 (V)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1366 x 768 @ 60 Hz
- Response time (typical): 11 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



193V5LSB2

- Panel Size: 18.5 inch / 47 cm
- Effective viewing area: 409.8 (H) x 230.4 (V)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1366 x 768 @ 60 Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



203V5LSB26

- Panel Size: 19.5 inch / 49.5 cm
- Effective viewing area: 433.9 (H) x 236.3 (V)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1600 x 900 @ 60 Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



223V5LSB2

- Panel Size: 21.5 inch / 54.6 cm
- Effective viewing area: 476.64 (H) x 268.11 (V)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- Optimum resolution: 1920 x 1080 @ 60 Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



225B2CB

- Panel Size: 22 inch / 55.9 cm
- Aspect ratio: 16:10
- Optimum resolution: 1680 x 1050 @ 60Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 500,000:1



17S4SB

- Panel Size: 17 inch / 43.2 cm
- Effective viewing area: 337.92 x 270.33 mm
- Aspect ratio: 5:4
- Optimum resolution: 1280 x 1024 @ 60Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 10,000,000:1



17S4LSB

- Panel Size: 17 inch / 43.2 cm
- Effective viewing area: 337.92 x 270.33 mm
- Aspect ratio: 5:4
- Optimum resolution: 1280 x 1024 @ 60Hz
- Response time (typical): 5 ms
- SmartContrast: 20,000,000:1



EVOLUTIONARY

Samsung HU9000

www.samsung.com/ph

Discover an immersive cinematic experience with the newest curved design and 4K resolution picture quality of Samsung's HU9000 UHD TV. Touting hardware-based local dimming with multi-link screen and an innovative Ultra Clear Panel that absorbs ambient light and reduces reflections in a picture, this evolutionary curved television can perform four times the resolution of Full HD equivalents. It's available in 55- and 65-inch variants.





SURREAL IMAGES

Sony SLT-A77 II

www.sony.com.ph

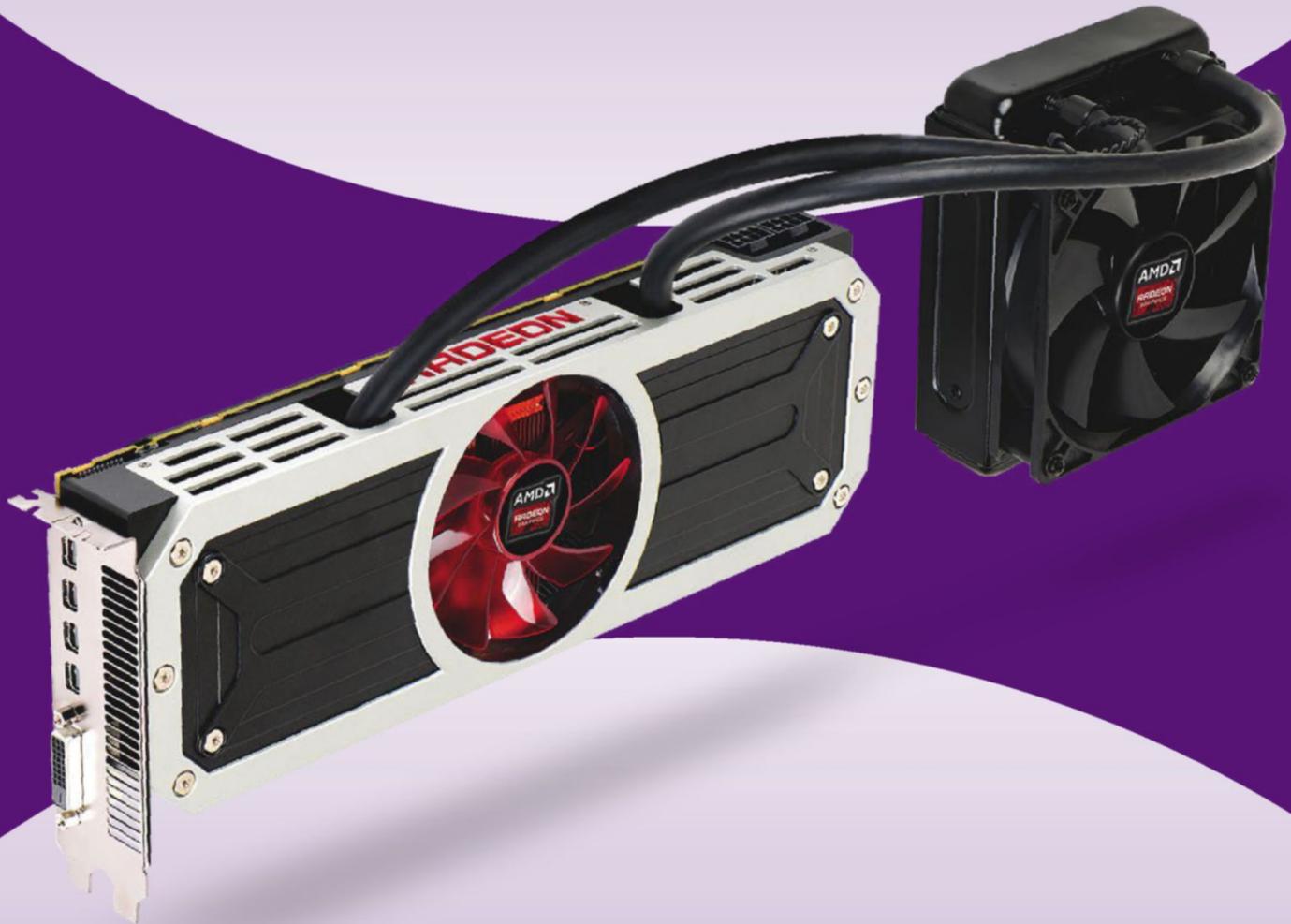
There's nothing like capturing precious moments and watching your pictures come alive – Sony's SLT-A77 II will show you why. This midrange camera from Sony uses translucent mirror technology and allows the camera to shoot a continuous burst of 12fps. Equipped with a 24.3-megapixel CMOS sensor and phase-detection autofocus, this beauty is built to be tough; perfect for serious outdoor photographers. Wireless connectivity is possible with its built-in Wi-Fi and NFC.

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

AMD Radeon R9 295X2

www.amd.com

Designed for ultra-enthusiasts, the AMD Radeon R9 295X2 joins two Radeon R9 Series GPUs in a one-card design, and comes equipped with an advanced closed-loop, pre-assembled, and maintenance-free liquid cooling system. Incorporating AMD's TrueAudio technology, the R9 295X2 comes with a dedicated audio processor on the GPUs, delivering an immersive soundscape. It kicks visual experiences up a notch, handling high-resolution, multi-monitor configurations with AMD Eyefinity.





RIGHT BALANCE

Toyota Yaris (2014)

www.toyota.com.ph

Experience utmost comfort with every ride, as the brand-new Toyota Yaris is styled to move with the right balance of performance and design. The second-generation Toyota Yaris hatchback comes in the same reliable 4-cylinder in-line 16-valve DOHC with VVT-I engine. It exceeds comfort standards with its spacious interior design made for those with a busy and active lifestyle. It's available in 1.5G and 1.3E models, both of which offer great fuel economy.

BIOSTAR HI-FI Z97WE

// INQUIRE

BioStar's Hi-Fi Z97WE is Intel's next-generation Z97-based motherboard using the ATX form factor. Not only does it offer premium Hi-Fi audio, it also features dual Gigabit LAN ports and supports the new PCIe M.2 storage devices for better system performance. www.biostar.com.tw

**SAMSUNG GALAXY CAMERA 2**

// US\$ 449

Capture high-quality images and 1080p videos with the Samsung Galaxy camera 2. This smart camera, runs on Android 4.3 Jelly Bean, and boasts a 16.3MP sensor with 2GB of RAM and memory storage of 8GB that's expandable up to 64GB. www.samsung.com/ph/

**GADGET
BRIEF****KINGMAX
SME32 XVALUE**

The SME32 Xvalue is Kingmax's new SSD model that supports the SATA 3.0 standard and makes use of MLC NAND flash memory. This combination allows read/write speeds of up to 540MB/s and 300MB/s, respectively. It's available in 60GB, 120GB, and 240GB.

**STRONTIUM
NITRO 433X**

Store tons of music, high-resolution photos, HD videos, or even your work files using the Strontium Nitro 433X. This microSD card is a certified Class 10 memory card that is capable of delivering transfer speeds of up to 65MB/s.

**STRONTIUM
NITRO OTG**

Strontium is also introducing its own OTG USB in the form of the Nitro OTG. This drive is capable of storing up to 8GB worth of data, which can act as an extension of your smartphone's storage or as a means to keep your files safe.

www.eaglobal.com.ph

**LENOVO S660**

// US\$ 229

This stylish Lenovo S660 is a 4.7-inch smartphone with a quad-core processor and runs on Android 4.2 Jelly Bean. For a midrange device, it boasts 1GB of RAM, 8GB of internal storage, and an 8-megapixel autofocus camera with LED flash. www.lenovo.com/ph

**JABRA MINI**

// US\$ 360

Built for individuals who are always on the go, the Jabra Mini is a mono Bluetooth headset that functions as a speakerphone, and allows hassle-free answering of calls and streaming of your favorite tunes, podcasts, or even GPS directions. www.jabra.com

MSI Z97 GAMING 7

// US\$ 189.99

The Z97 GAMING 7 from MSI is its new flagship Gaming series motherboard. This board brings out a better gaming experience thanks to its strong features, such as Audio Boost 2, Killer Network, Military Class IV components, OC Genie 4, and PCIe M.2 support. www.msi.com



LG L40 DUAL

// PhP 4,790

The LG L40 Dual is one of LG's new L series phones that supports the Knock Code feature. This sleek smartphone sports a 3.5-inch display and runs on Android 4.4 KitKat. Its 1.2GHz dual-core processor is paired with 512MB of RAM, and has a 3MP shooter. www.lg.com/ph



MYPHONE OCEAN PRO

// PhP 6,999

Local brand MyPhone is furthering its phablet line with the new MyPhone Ocean Pro. It comes equipped with a large 5.5-inch display, a quad-core processor, and runs on Android 4.2 Jelly Bean. It also supports OTG and has dual-SIM capabilities. www.myphone.com.ph



COOLER MASTER V1200

// US\$ 129

Cooler Master has introduced the V1200, which features an 80 Plus Platinum efficiency. This new V unit offers a fully modular cable design, uses only high-quality Japanese capacitors, and has a 135mm fan that can operate in auto or hybrid mode. www.coolermaster.com



GIGABYTE GA-Z97X-UD7 TH

// US\$ 219.99

The Gigabyte GA-Z97X-UD7 TH features the next-generation Intel Z97 chipset and the new Dual Thunderbolt 2 controller. SATA Express connectors, Dual BIOS, digital power design, and better onboard components make this a formidable Z97 board. www.gigabyte.ph

LAB RESULTS

Every month, behind the doors of our super secret gadget testing facility, the latest tech products are put through their paces using industry-recognized benchmarks and our own blend of real-world usage scenarios. Here are our findings.



THE AWARDS



10



9/9.5



8/8.5



Best Performance



Best Value

Review scores of 8/8.5 are awarded the Silver Award. 9/9.5 get the Gold. ONLY a perfect 10 wins our Platinum Award.

PHILIPPINES
HARDWARE
ZONE.com

For more comprehensive takes on the features and performance of the products reviewed here, visit HardwareZone.com.ph.

Sony Xperia Z2

A SMALL STEP FORWARD

The Xperia Z2 is Sony's latest flagship smartphone. Looking much the same as its predecessor, the Z2 utilizes a rectangular OmniBalance design with a one-piece aluminum frame and front and back tempered glass panels. Also, the tightly sealed port covers help the Z2 survive full submersion in up to 1.5m of water for an hour.

The Z2 is slightly thinner and lighter than the Z1, but has a larger 5.2-inch display. The Full HD display is one of the first IPS panels in the Xperia Z range, which gives the Z2 better viewing angles than the Z1. It is also the first device to utilize Sony's new Live Color LED technology, which uses red and green phosphor with blue LEDs, resulting in more vibrant colors.

Audio has also been given a boost on the Z2, as Sony has fitted it with two front-facing stereo speakers, neatly positioned as narrow slits at

the top and bottom of the screen. Sound on the Z2 was noticeably louder and clearer, and we also found the Z2 much better for watching content in landscape, as the dual-speaker positioning no longer results in one-directional sound.

The Z2 runs on Android KitKat 4.4, with a few extra enhancements from Sony. New features include Smart Backlight, which will keep the backlight on as long as you're looking at the phone, and a double-tap to wake up the handset. The Z2 also includes a motion gesture call answer/reject feature, which lets you answer a call by bringing the phone to your ear, or shake it to reject.

The Xperia Z2 is armed with a 2.3GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 processor. For benchmarks, running Quadrant on the Z2 yielded a score of 21,249, which is lower than that of the Samsung S5 (23,169) and

the HTC One M8 (25,945).

For camera performance Sony has stuck to the same 20.7MP camera and 1/2.3" Exmor RS CMOS sensor for the Z2. A few software upgrades have been packed in, and the Z2 is now capable of recording 4K videos and slow motion at 120fps from the get-go. Our one major complaint with the camera is how laggy everything is, since each camera mode opens a new app individually.

Despite boasting a larger 3200mAh capacity, battery performance was also a bit underwhelming on the Z2, as it lasted just six hours and 39 minutes on our standard video loop test.

Compared to the Z1, the Z2 has many things going for it. It has a much improved display, great front-facing stereo speakers, improved battery life. However, the laggy camera app was very frustrating.

by James Lu



AT A GLANCE

OS

Android 4.4 KitKat

Display

5.2-inch Full HD IPS (1920 x 1080)

Processor

Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 (Quad-core, 2.3GHz)

Main Camera

20.7MP

Price

PhP 33,990



The Z2 is the first Xperia smartphone to sport stereo front-facing speakers.

CONCLUSION

All things considered, the Xperia Z2 feels like the phone the Xperia Z1 should have been, but not the next big thing.

TESTED & RATED

8.0 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



HTC One (M8)

REDEFINING PREMIUM ONE MORE TIME

The One (M8) replaces last year's M7 counterpart, the original One, with several hardware and software updates under the hood.

When it comes to design and build quality, we dare say that there is hardly any equal to the M8 in the Android space. It offers great handling thanks to its curved back and rounded metal edges.

The M8 is 17g heavier than its predecessor, as the chassis is 90% metal. The weight gain is not noticeable, as it is spread out over a larger area. For those interested, do note that the M8 uses the nano-SIM standard.

Similar to the Galaxy S5 and Xperia Z2, the M8 sports a Full HD display. Its 5-inch Super LCD 3 display is reinforced with Corning Gorilla Glass 3 for better resistance against scratches. The screen looks crisp with punchy colors and has great viewing angles.

On the rear of the M8 are

two cameras, officially known as the Duo Lens Camera, which is made up of a dual lens and sensor configuration to capture depth of field information, while offering new editing tools and picture enhancements. Features include UFocus, which lets users refocus the shot on a subject in the photo, and Dimension Plus, which lets you see the sides of the subject that are typically not visible by tilting the phone.

The M8 features Sense 6, the latest iteration of HTC's customized interface, which has a simpler and flattened design. The philosophy behind Sense 6 is to make things easier and simpler for users. One of the new features is Motion Launch Gestures, where you execute a series of swipe gestures on the lock screen to access certain functions. For example, a double-tap on the lock screen will turn the display on or off. A left swipe brings you to the

widget screen, while a right swipe brings you to BlinkFeed.

Powered by a Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 quad-core 2.5GHz processor and 2GB RAM, the M8 clinched the top spots in our benchmarks. Actual user experience was extremely positive, thanks to the now streamlined Sense 6 interface and newer processor. We also saw a huge improvement in battery mileage on the M8, as it lasted over eight hours in our video loop test. This means that the M8 could actually last a day of heavy usage. As for imaging, photos from the M8 looked slightly overexposed and artificial. Low-light shots looked worse and less sharp.

While its imaging performance leaves much to be desired, we are sure the rest of what the M8 has to offer is sufficient to keep most consumers content.

by Sidney Wong

AT A GLANCE

OS

Android 4.4 KitKat with HTC Sense 6

Display

5-inch Super LCD 3 (1920 x 1080)

Processor

Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 (Quad-core, 2.3GHz)

Battery

2600mAh

Price

US\$ 699



HTC's Duo Lens Camera captures depth of field information and offers a set of editing tools.

CONCLUSION

The new HTC One (M8) could have easily been the best Android smartphone this year, if not for its subpar camera image quality.

TESTED & RATED

8.5 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



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Skyworth 42E69

ANDROID ON A BIG-SCREEN 3D TV

Skyworth is a Chinese household name when it comes to televisions and other audio-visual products. It's one of the top TV manufacturers in China, and now, it's in the Philippines to provide smart TV sets. The Skyworth 42E69 is a 42-inch Android 3D TV that is designed with a fashionable appearance and built with a handful of smart features for convenient use.

This TV has an ultra-narrow bezel design that is ideal for a limitless and enjoyable viewing experience. It comes with a sturdy base for standalone installation and wall brackets if you prefer to mount it on a wall.

It has a powerful stream of media ports at the back, which allows reading of audio and video files from your portable devices, and flashing them on the screen when possible. It permits multitasking such as browsing photos while listening to music.

The Skyworth 42E69 runs on the Android 4.2 platform, which gives a personalized experience on a big screen. On top of watching TV shows, it provides other powerful functions such as surfing the Internet, downloading content, and gaming. Unfortunately, this TV doesn't have access to the Google Play Store, and its in-house store is still being populated. So, if you want to install available Android apps, you have to sideload the APK files.

The Skyworth 42E69 has flicker-free 3D and produces low radiation to prevent eye strain. It has 3D intelligence engine technology that supports conversion from 2D to 3D. Using its portable 3D glasses, we were able to watch 2D films in 3D. However, we sometimes experienced ghosting or motion blur when we watched 2D films converted to 3D.

The color and detail

reproduction on this TV is consistent and lively. The colors are just right and not oversaturated. Good contrasts and balanced shadows were also observed when watching on this TV.

This TV uses matrix backlight technology that adjusts brightness automatically based on the input signal. This improves display quality and relieves visual fatigue when watching for long periods of time.

For audio, it carries the 2.1 Channel Digital System and Dolby Pro Logic Surround for a cinematic sound effect. Audio quality and intensity were good on this television.

The Skyworth 42E69 is a beautiful television that is loaded with features and delivers performance to an extent. It's a handy 3D TV and its Android platform is a major plus point.

by Katrina D. Canlas

AT A GLANCE

Panel size

42"

Maximum Resolution

1920 x 1080

Aspect Ratio

16:9

Viewing Angle

178° / 178°

Price

PhP 39,990



It has a remote control with a full QWERTY keyboard for easy navigation and web browsing.

CONCLUSION

Running on the Android platform, the Skyworth 42E69 is a handy smart TV that lets you do more than just watch 3D movies.

TESTED & RATED

8.0 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES

Bose SoundTouch 20

BOUNDLESS STREAMING

Bose, a well-known producer of speaker systems and equipment, is back with its SoundTouch 20, offering its own breath of Wi-Fi convenience in a fully portable version compatible with AirPlay and Pandora. We were lucky to test the SoundTouch 20 from Bose, which revealed a rather attractive speaker, accented in a glossy silver color.

This compact speaker is finished in a sleek minimalist design that measures 7.4 inches high and 12.4 inches wide, with the front face of the speaker having a full digital display in a black OLED speaker screen cut through the center of the console.

The top of the unit features six preset buttons that function for your music categories. It also has volume up/down, auxiliary input, and power buttons, while the back panel contains the different ports for USB and AUX inputs. In addition,

it comes with an infrared remote and a free SoundTouch login-based app ready for download on your phones or PC for more controlled music access to your system.

Setting up the system requires a USB connection, although users can connect through wired Ethernet or a Wi-Fi network. Nevertheless, setting up was painless and definitely worth it for the audio experience.

One thing that we really liked about the Bose SoundTouch 20 was the functionality of the six configuration buttons installed, which allow program presets for one-touch launching of your music library. Unfortunately, it lacks Bluetooth connectivity, but to balance this out, it does have Apple's AirPlay for your native applications.

It's good that it has a succinct method of following commands in the console to effectively sync your full music

library. We found the limited selection of music services to its application and the lack of options to directly connect to an iPhone/iPad to be a bit of a letdown; however, you can always venture out to new music through its wide range of global and local Internet radio choices.

In terms of performance and sound quality, the Bose SoundTouch 20 has excellent audio considering its size. The SoundTouch app and presets are incredibly convenient and easy to use; the speaker itself can brilliantly perform regardless what type of music you play, while transition to streaming is also smooth with well-defined sounds.

Having been able to perform with clear and full sound quality, the SoundTouch 20 is a recommendable device, especially for a multi-room listening experience.

by Sheila Macaspac

AT A GLANCE

Type

Portable Wireless Speaker

Connectivity

Ethernet, Wi-Fi

Audio Formats

MP3, WMA, AAC

Weight

Approx. 1.44kg (3.2lbs)

Price

PhP 29,500



Physical buttons can be found on top of the SoundTouch 20 to control basic functions.

CONCLUSION

The Bose SoundTouch 20 didn't disappoint in terms of audio performance and features, but it fell short on music services.



TESTED & RATED

8.5
/10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



Kingston HyperX Cloud

GAME ON WITH GREAT SOUND

Kingston is furthering its product lineup with the addition of its HyperX Cloud headset. Yes, you read that right: a headset that's geared for gaming.

The HyperX Cloud headset features a matte black finish with red accents. It has an aluminum frame, making it sturdy and flexible at the same time. Each ear cup features a soft-touch finish, a brushed aluminum plate with the HyperX logo, and a 53mm driver. When it comes to ear cup padding, this headset uses memory foam with a faux-leather cover. Its ear cups also swivel, which add additional room for adjustment. The left ear cup is where the audio cable is pre-attached, and it also houses the removable plastic cap for its boom mic.

As for the headband, it uses soft foam and has a stitched leather cover with an embroidered HyperX logo. On both sides of the headband are

seven notches for adjustment.

Overall build quality is amazing; it felt like the headset could survive more than the average beating. The combination of leather, soft touch material, an aluminum frame, and braided cables adds a premium feel.

As for accessories, the HyperX Cloud package included a detachable boom mic, velour ear cup replacement, cable extension and splitter, inline volume and mic controller, and a carrying bag.

After playing through different music genres, such as classical, rock, jazz, and pop, all we can say is that the headset delivered great sound reproduction. Its midrange sounded natural, which melded quite well with its full-sounding bass. The highs weren't too shabby either. Overall, its soundstage was great; we were able to discern if the sound was

coming from the left or right.

While gaming with the HyperX Cloud, specifically for FPS games, we were able to differentiate if the gunshot or脚步声 was coming from afar, and the finer details of game soundtracks were also conveyed. Its boom mic was clear enough and sounded natural.

As for comfort, we were able to wear this thing for more than eight hours without any complaints. The thick and soft foam used on both the headband and ear cups really cushioned the pressure off the side of our head.

For a US\$ 100 headset, the HyperX Cloud is a great piece of gaming peripheral. It produces great sound and is extremely comfortable.

by Martin James David

AT A GLANCE

Type

Closed-back,
Circumaural

Design

Headband

Impedance

60 ohms

Frequency Range

15Hz - 25kHz

Price

US\$ 99.99



It might have been better if the cap was part of the ear cup to lessen the chances of it being lost.

CONCLUSION

For a US\$ 100 headset, the HyperX Cloud is a great piece of gaming peripheral. It produces great sound and is extremely comfortable.

TESTED & RATED

9.0 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES

Powerbeats by Dr. Dre

KEEP YOU ON YOUR FEET

Music has always been essential in times when a boost of sound is needed. There are many ways to supplement the need, but few do it like the Powerbeats by Dr. Dre earphones, especially during a workout.

Earphones that don't fit well can be problematic for sports-minded people. This is why LeBron James, the NBA superstar we all love to hate, teamed up with Dr. Dre to create these earphones, designed to deliver premium sound on the court, in the gym, or on the streets.

With Powerbeats' flexible earclips, you can adjust the clips behind your ear to keep them in place, so you can move freely no matter how rigorous the workout is. You can easily listen to your favourite songs when running on the road or treadmill, or even while stealing the ball from an opponent. It helps that the earphones come

with an extended cord to give you space to move and keep you connected to your music. It's the next best thing to having wireless Bluetooth headphones.

If a smartphone happens to be your music player of choice, the built-in remote and mic of the Powerbeats let you answer calls, go to the next track, and adjust the volume, so you don't have to fumble around with your phone or music player. This is essential for any sports-oriented earphones, so we're glad this pair has it.

Of course, if you're working out, your body releases sweat that can damage the internal parts of a device. But with its sweat- and water-resistant earbuds, you can continuously listen for long hours without worrying about your sweat damaging the sound quality.

The earphones are comfortable to wear, not leaving any pain in your ear when you're done or while

listening to your favorite music genres. It works flawlessly with any device you may have, maintaining the same level of audio quality throughout.

The dual-driver design of the earbuds separates the bass and treble frequencies to deliver high-definition, crystal-clear audio. The subwoofer gives deep bass, and the sound is clear at any volume. It also keeps ambient noise in so you can still be aware of what's going on with your surroundings.

The price isn't cheap for simple earphones, but it will surely give you sound quality befitting of the renowned Beats brand. It also does a good job at staying put during workouts, so you can focus better on what's at hand. It's simply a good investment, and it'll help you release some adrenaline while listening to your favorite gym tunes.

by Kriezl Manalastas

AT A GLANCE

Type
In-ear Sport Earphones

Driver Size
15mm

Frequency Range
20Hz - 20kHz

Colors
Orange and White

Price
PhP 9,200



The diamond-shaped built-in cord remote made it easier to switch songs without looking.

CONCLUSION

The price isn't cheap for simple earphones, but it will surely give you sound quality befitting of the renowned Beats brand.



TESTED & RATED

8.0/10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



ASUS Maximus VII Hero

THE GAMING LEGACY CONTINUES

Targeted at mainstream gamers, the Maximus Hero line gets an update with the new ASUS Maximus VII Hero.

Following the standard ATX form factor, the new Hero comes equipped with the latest Intel Z97 chipset and has the LGA 1150 socket, which provides support for Haswell, Haswell-refresh, and Broadwell CPUs.

The new Hero board features a very similar layout compared to the previous Hero, but has a much cleaner look.

Surrounding the CPU socket is the Hero's Extreme Engine DIGI+ III VRM system. To the right of the socket are four DIMM slots that support up to 32GB RAM and frequencies of up to 3200MHz.

When it comes to its rear I/O ports, the Maximus VII Hero gets DVI and VGA ports added to the slew of ports that were present on the previous Hero iteration, which included a

PS/2 Combo port, HDMI, LAN, USB 3.0 and 2.0 ports, Optical S/PDIF Out, six audio jacks, and a USB BIOS Flashback button.

On the lower half of the board are its eight SATA 6Gbps ports, PCIe M.2 slot, three PCIe 2.0 x1 slots, two PCI 3.0 x16 slots, one PCIe 2.0 x16 slot, and SupremeFX audio. Its x16 slots support both SLI and CrossFire.

Now on to the board's features. New features, namely KeyBot and TrueVolt USB, are being introduced. KeyBot lets you assign macros and functions, or launch apps on ordinary keys thanks to the onboard microprocessor. TrueVolt USB ensures that your USB ports output a stable 5V supply. The new Hero also ushers in a new UEFI BIOS that's been tailored to let users easily tweak their system. The updates to the SupremeFX onboard audio include better isolation, automatic amp adjustment, and hardware

and software adjustments.

Other features include Mem TweakIt!, Secure Erase, ROG RAMDisk, AI Suite 3, USB BIOS Flashback, ASUS Webstorage, Game First III, Gamer's Guardian, and 5-Way Optimization.

We used an Intel Core i7-4770K, a GeForce GTX 670, 8GB of RAM, and a 1TB WD Blue Slim, then ran Cinebench R15 and 3DMark (2014) to measure its performance. On Cinebench, it garnered 799 points on the CPU test, and on 3DMark (Fire Strike Extreme), it got 3178 marks.

The ASUS Maximus VII Hero differentiates itself from the competition with its overflowing feature set on both the hardware and software level. The PhP 13,990 price tag is well worth it in our opinion, as its features definitely provide a better PC and gaming experience.

by Martin James David

AT A GLANCE

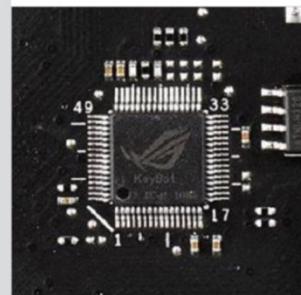
CPU Socket
Intel LGA 1150

Chipset
Intel Z97

Memory Support
4x DIMMs,
up to 32GB DDR3

Form Factor
ATX

Price
PhP 13,990



Found at the back of the PCB is the KeyBot processor, which nets you a free keyboard upgrade.

CONCLUSION

The Maximus VII Hero easily stands out with its new look and great features. Its price tag is well worth it, as it brings a better PC experience.

TESTED & RATED

9.0 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES

Biostar H81MG

FOR THOSE ON A BUDGET

If you are the type of person who wants a PC running a Haswell processor, but doesn't want to shell out a ton of money for a motherboard, Biostar's H81MG might be the answer to your wish.

The Biostar H81MG is marketed as a microATX (mATX) motherboard, but when measured, is smaller than your usual mATX board with its 226 x 174mm dimensions. It sports Intel's H81 chipset and LGA 1150 socket, which can run any Haswell processor.

Due to it being an entry-level board, there isn't anything fancy about the H81MG. For heat sinks, only the chipset has a tiny slab of metal on top.

As a smaller mATX board, it only has two memory slots that can support up to 16GB of RAM, which is good enough, since most memory kits are usually sold in sets of two. The 24-pin power connector and four SATA ports (2x

6Gbps, 2x 3Gbps) are located beside the memory slots.

Moving on to its back I/O ports, it doesn't have anything showy, but it does have two PS/2 ports, DVI and VGA ports for display, two USB 3.0 and two USB 2.0, a Gigabit Ethernet port, and three audio jacks.

In terms of expansion slots, you'll be treated to a lone PCIe 2.0 x16 slot and two PCIe 2.0 x1 slots. A PCIe 3.0 x16 slot might have been better here, but you really can't ask for more at the H81MG's price point.

There might not be anything grand when it comes to the board's layout and design, yet Biostar did include some extra features on the H81MG. It has support for Blu-ray audio, SmartSpeedLAN software for network monitoring, and Charger Booster technology for faster charging. Biostar adopted a moisture-proof PCB, low-resistance MOSFETs,

and eXtreme Durable Capacitors. The H81MG also has overvoltage, overcurrent, and overheating protection.

When it came to performance, we used an Intel Core i7-4770K, a GeForce GTX 670, a 1TB WD Blue Slim, and 8GB RAM. We ran PCMark 7 to measure overall performance, Cinebench R15 for CPU performance, and 3DMark (Fire Strike Extreme) for GPU performance. Our setup using the H81MG garnered 3794 marks on PCMark 7, 739cb on Cinebench, and 3179 marks on 3DMark (Fire Strike Extreme). These numbers aren't far off from Z87-based boards, so when it comes to numbers, the H81MG isn't that left out.

At its price point, you can't really ask for a lot, but the Biostar H81MG still delivered when it came to benchmarks, and it also has a few bonus features.

by Martin James David

AT A GLANCE

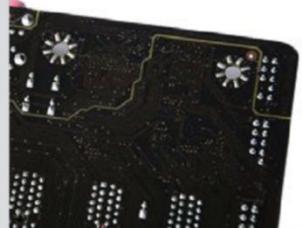
CPU Socket
Intel LGA 1150

Chipset
Intel H81

Memory Support
2x DIMMs,
up to 16GB DDR3

Form Factor
Micro ATX

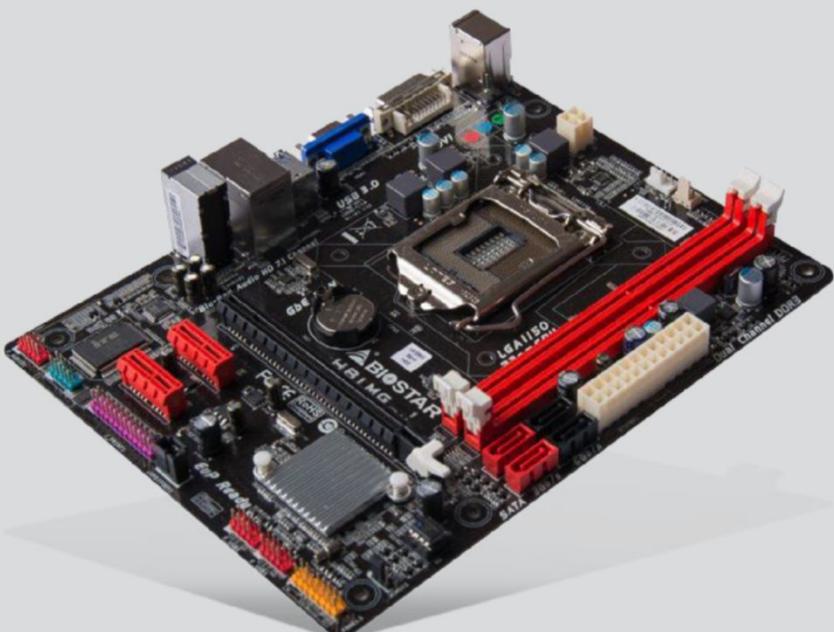
Price
PhP 2,050



The H81MG has its audio channel separated, which minimizes noise from other components.

CONCLUSION

At its price point, you can't really ask for a lot, but the Biostar H81MG still delivered when it came to benchmarks, and it also had a few bonuses.



TESTED & RATED

7.5/10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



AOC G2460PQU

FAST AND FLUID GAMING

With the gaming scene getting larger every year, AOC has come out with the G2460PQU gaming monitor. Does this display have what it takes to bring in a better gaming experience?

The AOC G2460PQU is a 24-inch display with an arm support on its back that is connected to its rotateable circular stand. It weighs in at 6.5kg, so be careful when setting this thing up. Assembly was pretty easy; you just have to line up the arm to the stand and tighten the built-in screw underneath it. There's also an included cable management clip so you can neatly run down all your cables at the back of the arm.

The arm and stand combination adds a ton of flexibility, since the display can be used in portrait or landscape mode. It also provides great stability even when tilting the display.

Based on a TN panel,

this display offers a 1000:1 contrast ratio (typical) and a maximum brightness of 350cd/m². To top things off, it boasts up to a 144Hz refresh rate and a 1ms response time, which is great for gaming, as it makes frame transitions smoother.

When it comes to display connectivity, this monitor has an HDMI, dual-link DVI-D, VGA, and DisplayPort. Do note that only the DisplayPort and DVI-D connections can support the 144Hz refresh rate. It also has a total of four USB 2.0 ports, which are activated when you connect the USB upstream cable that's provided in the package to one of your PC's USB ports. Lastly, the display also has a pair of built-in speakers.

For performance, the 144Hz refresh rate really gave us a much smoother experience not only for gaming and watching, but also during scrolling on the desktop. This makes it

perfect for action-packed games and movies with tons of quick-paced movements. If you plan on using the 144Hz mode of this display, make sure that your PC can run your games at 144fps, or else you'll run into tearing problems.

Going to the finer details, the monitor has the drawback of weak viewing angles and color reproduction, as expected of a TN panel. But the G2460PQU does have very acceptable levels of brightness and contrast. Overall, the display produced satisfactory images and brought in fluidity during image movement.

So what's the verdict for the AOC G2460PQU? We certainly recommend this gaming monitor, but for those looking for better picture quality, you might want to invest in a display with a more capable and better-performing IPS panel.

by Martin James David

AT A GLANCE

Panel Type
LED-backlit TN LCD

Display Size
24"

Resolution
1920 x 1080

Response Time
1ms

Price
US\$ 399.99



The red USB 2.0 port on the side of the G2460PQU allows for faster charging of USB devices.

CONCLUSION

AOC's G2460PQU is a great gaming monitor thanks to its high refresh rate, but its TN panel offers only average color reproduction.

TESTED & RATED

8.0 /10

HWM
PHILIPPINES

WD My Passport Pro

MADE FOR MAC USERS

Announced in April, the WD My Passport Pro is one of the portable hard drives out there that is available in 2TB and 4TB storage capacities. WD achieved such mind-boggling capacities by combining two 2.5-inch hard drives inside an aluminum casing. With two drives within and a fan for cooling, the My Passport Pro is undeniably thicker and heavier when compared to regular portable HDDs and its closest rival, the Seagate Backup Plus Fast. Like the My Passport Pro, Seagate's offering also comes with two HDDs and a 4TB capacity.

Instead of employing USB 3.0, the My Passport Pro has an integrated Thunderbolt cable which can be wrapped around it. Much faster than FireWire 800 and USB 3.0, Thunderbolt promises to deliver a theoretical throughput of 20Gbps. Sadly, it is let down by the fact that the My Passport Pro only has a

single Thunderbolt connector, which means it cannot be daisy-chained. This could prove to be problematic for certain MacBook systems, which rely on Thunderbolt for video output and only have a single Thunderbolt port. Another key feature is the option to configure the drive in either RAID 0 (data striping for high performance) or RAID 1 (mirroring for data redundancy).

The integration of Thunderbolt clearly suggests that the My Passport Pro is targeted towards Mac users; thus, we used a late-2013 15-inch MacBook Pro as our test system. We compared the results of the My Passport Pro to those of Seagate's Backup Plus Fast. Based on the results that we got using AJA System Test and Blackmagic Disk Speed Test, the Backup Plus Fast is faster than the My Passport Pro by around 10% to 15% overall. In the file transfer

timing test, the Backup Plus Fast is 20% quicker than the My Passport Pro. Do note that Seagate's drive relies on USB 3.0. So what makes it faster? We found out that the drives in the My Passport Pro actually spun slower at 5200rpm instead of the more common 5400rpm. This could explain why it was consistently slower than the Backup Plus Fast. (To view the test results, visit <http://gohwz.ws/1ncTG20>.)

Recommending the WD My Passport Pro 4TB is a bit tough considering it's slower and significantly more costly at PhP 21,990. The Seagate Backup Plus Fast 4TB, in comparison, costs only PhP 16,490. At the end of the day, which drive is right for you depends very much on your personal needs. If you are after flexibility and redundancy, then the My Passport Pro is an option, but for a higher price.

by Kenny Yeo

AT A GLANCE

Storage Capacities
2TB, 4TB

Connectivity
Thunderbolt

Dimensions
143.4 x 88.5 x 44.2mm

Weight
720g (4TB)

Price
PhP 21,990



Making use of a Thunderbolt connector, the WD My Passport Pro is targeted towards Mac users.

CONCLUSION

Which drive is right for you depends on your needs. If you are after flexibility and redundancy, then the My Passport Pro is an option.



TESTED & RATED

7.5/10

HWM
PHILIPPINES



VS
EVERNOTE
•
LIFETOPIX
•
OMNIFOCUS
•
TODO CLOUD
•
UNSTUCK
•
30/30



GETTING PRODUCTIVE

Having the right apps is sometimes enough to justify your tablet purchase. However, there are so many productivity apps on the market that it can get hard to choose. Here are a few that we think will make your day.

Text by Hafeez Sim

Photography by Vernon

Art Direction by Ken Koh + Ian Chong

EVERNOTE

Evernote is a mainstay of most “best of productivity apps” lists. It’s not hard to see why, since Evernote is really easy to get into, and has lasted longer than most of its competitors.

Moleskine even has an Evernote notebook, ensuring that your digital leanings don’t mean you have to give up on pricey hipster notebooks.

The premise of Evernote is simple: Create an Evernote account, and once logged in, you will then be able to create virtual “notebooks” to store your notes.

It’s a very simple premise that makes one wonder just why the application has become so popular. Was it just because the app has been around so long that people just gravitated towards something familiar? Why should an app that doesn’t do anything particularly groundbreaking be so recommended?

Evernote is popular because it works. The interface is easy to navigate, with clearly marked icons that let you know just what you can or cannot do. No shiny bells and whistles, and no difficult-to-decipher commands.

Besides text, you can add pictures, or as the killer feature of the app, clippings from the

Internet. What makes Evernote an easy addition to your life is how easily it integrates into things you do on a regular basis.

See a webpage you like? Use a browser extension and send it to Evernote. Add pictures, and make Evernote reminder notes, or send your notes to Evernote via email. The last feature is especially useful considering how the average working stiff is always stuck checking email anyhow.

The only shortcoming of Evernote is the 60MB usage limit, at least for free accounts. If the most you do with it is jot down notes or keep records, then you can probably stick to the free version. But using Evernote as a daily journal will soon see you exceeding this quota.

Being able to sync Evernote to the web and your devices, its cross-platform nature, and being able to share notebooks with other people make it an app that is pretty easy to recommend.

Evernote’s primary strengths are its ease of use and its seamless usage across various platforms. With Premium, you get additional benefits, including text-to-speech, unlimited business card scanning, and PDF annotation.



Perfect for those who work on the go, thanks to cross-platform syncing.



Only 60MB usage limit for free accounts, which can be filled up quickly.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/
PC/Mac

Developer

Evernote

Version

7.0.9

Price

Free
(with 60MB monthly usage cap)

Premium

US\$ 5 per month or US\$ 45 yearly



The slick and well-designed UI is one of Evernote’s strongest selling points.



Capturing details from your to-do lists and web surfing is easy and intuitive.

LIFETOPIX

LifeTopix is an interesting application that purports to be much more than just a to-do list, which helps you become more productive. Think of it as the digital equivalent of a daily planner, the type with five to six different inserts: one for your calendar, another for your contacts, and different sections separated by colored tabs.

The app is particularly recommended by followers of the cult status organizing system GTD (or Getting Things Done), created by David Allen.

What the app tries to do is give you a top-down view of all the things that need organizing in your life. It does this by separating them under 12 topics, namely tasks and projects, shopping, events, travel and places, people and services, health and activity, finances, home and assets, education, notes and files, media, and bookmarks. Now that sounds like a lot of work, having to tediously enter tasks or items into each topic folder, right? Not at all! What the app does is allow you to input the various things you need to sort out just once, and then categorize them later. It follows the principles of GTD, where you first write down everything that needs doing or

preoccupies your mind into one inbox, and then sorting them all out later.

LifeTopix then allows you to cross-reference items in various topics without fear of duplication.

One-time entry, no annoying copying and pasting, and you can see them all in one place.

The app might likely appeal more to people already following the GTD way of doing things, but if you are content not to subscribe to the GTD philosophy, you could just consider LifeTopix as a virtual portable organizer.

With its online component, LifeTopix easily syncs to your Calendar app, Dropbox, and Evernote. You can also link your Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter accounts, as well as the Safari browser. One thing that might put off PC users is that LifeTopix

only has a desktop app for Macs. But if you're content to do all your task organization on an iPad and back them up online, then LifeTopix will fit the bill.

Interface-wise, the app does need a bit of polishing, but the good news is that the app is due for an update very soon. Expect minor design tweaks and better contact handling, as well as a raft of other updates from developer LightArrow.



Allows you to input various things once, and then categorize them later.



The user interface needs to be updated for greater usability.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Mac

Developer

LightArrow

Version

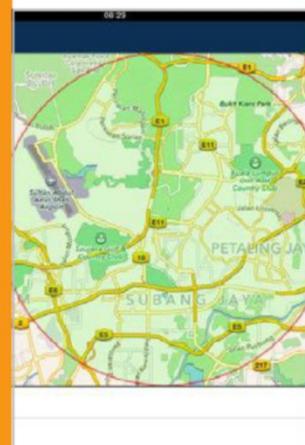
7.0.9

Price

US\$ 4.99



The one-time entry, easy cataloging makes LifeTopix stand out in the crowd.



When it comes to its interface, LifeTopix is due for a much-needed overhaul.

OMNIFOCUS

With the price tag of the OmniFocus app, you would think it would make you coffee, sing you arias to sleep, and redecorate your house for you. But scary price tag aside, OmniFocus for iPad has even been called superior to the desktop version, which costs US\$ 99.99.

The app is pretty much a GTD follower's wet dream. It is incredibly polished and was created with the GTD methodology in mind. Like LifeTopix, OmniFocus helps you create a dumping pad for all your items, or what GTD users call the "inbox."

From the inbox, you then decide whether the items need to be sorted out into projects, assigned specific contacts, or highlighted for special emphasis. The app has different

"views" or windows where you can see your items sorted by project and context, or have a broad overview of what is due for the week with its Forecast view. Especially useful for GTD users is the Review screen, as it is an important part of the GTD methodology. A weekly review helps check if everything is in order, retooling priorities, checking up on project statuses, and moving items from "someday/maybe" to "do it right now

or your mother-in-law will murder you." As far as syncing goes, what might irk some people is that the app does not exactly play nice with others. Omni has its own sync server called the – wait

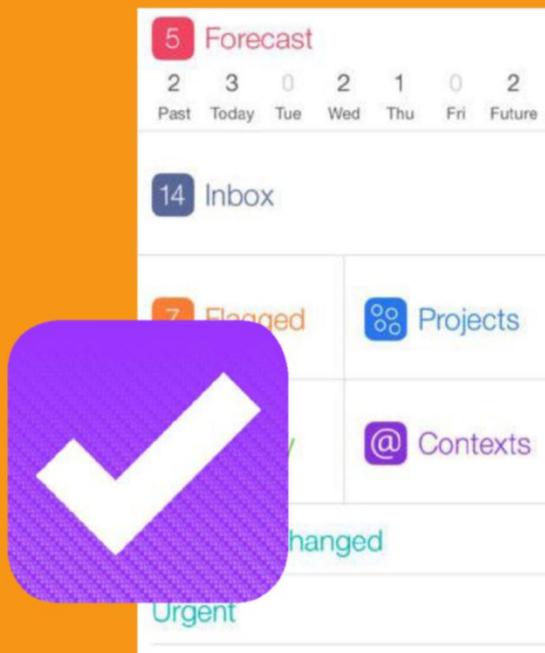
for it – Omni Sync Server, which is free of charge. You can also sync it to the desktop version via Wi-Fi or create custom sync settings with the WebDAV protocol. So, if you're hoping for Dropbox integration, tough luck.

You can send sync settings via email, allowing you to open a message and tap it to start syncing. OmniFocus, like LifeTopix, is Mac-centric, so no PC client for you! While OmniFocus is admittedly very polished, US\$ 39.99 seems a bit steep to pay, especially considering LifeTopix only costs US\$ 4.99 in comparison, and the

popular Evernote is free.

But if you're already using the OmniFocus app on Mac or are a diehard GTD follower, there are few apps that do GTD better. Omni also has a treasure trove of helpful white papers and tutorials to help you get started with the GTD way.

Minimalist yet functional, polished without being overwhelming, OmniFocus is a classy but pricey option for getting your life sorted.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Mac

Developer

Omni

Version

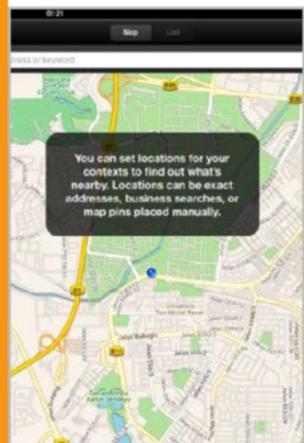
1.6.5

Price

US\$ 39.99



Very slick UI and design, but OmniFocus' pricing is murder on the wallet.



It's a fine standalone app without the need to buy the desktop version.

TODO CLOUD

Here is another GTD-inspired app, which is especially optimized for people who are keen on saving stuff to the cloud. ToDo Cloud is free of fancy bells and whistles and tends to keep things simple, which makes it ideal for people who don't want to spend a ton of time trying this and that, or going around the app's interface to learn to use it.

ToDo Cloud starts out with a fresh interface and three views. The first view, "All Tasks," will show you all the tasks you have put down. Then you have the "Focus List" and the "Starred Tasks," as well as the GTD mainstay "Inbox."

After that, you can set up your own customized lists, which makes it pretty simple and basic if managing a variety of lists is all you need to do to stay on top of things and be reminded of your priorities. But if you are willing to shell out for a subscription, you get a lot more features, such as being able to share and collaborate on lists with other ToDo Cloud users.

Other premium features include email notifications when collaborators update projects, checklists, and tasks. Appigo gives you a 14-day trial by default when you install the app, which

means that you could spend two weeks getting used to the fancier premium features, then suddenly have to figure out how to live without them or pay up to continue using them.

ToDo Cloud synchronises your data to its server, and you can also access your ToDo lists on a web account. There seems to be no support for backups to say, Dropbox, or exporting your data into different formats. The app primarily appeals to people whose lives revolve around lists for the most part and might appreciate a little GTD support. GTD purists might find it a bit light for their tastes, though, when compared to either LifeTopix or OmniFocus.

One extra feature that the app has going for it is being able to purchase a variety of icons to customize your lists. If you're the type who likes color-coded charts, this might appeal to you. Otherwise, it is a nice but ultimately nonessential, which is why it makes sense, as it's an in-app purchase.

As an alternative to keeping scraps of paper and post-it notes with various lists to tick off, ToDo Cloud is appealing with its simplicity. With an Android version also available, this would make collaborative lists possible too.

Simple and easy-to-use input style. Available on several platforms.

Can't back up to other cloud accounts or export to different formats.

AT A GLANCE

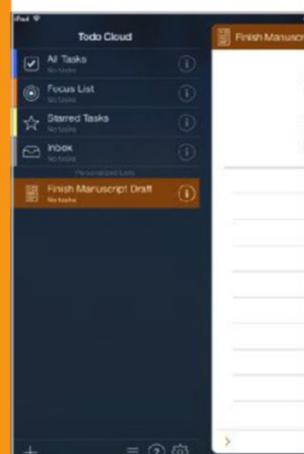
Platform
iOS/Web/
Mac/Android

Developer
Appigo

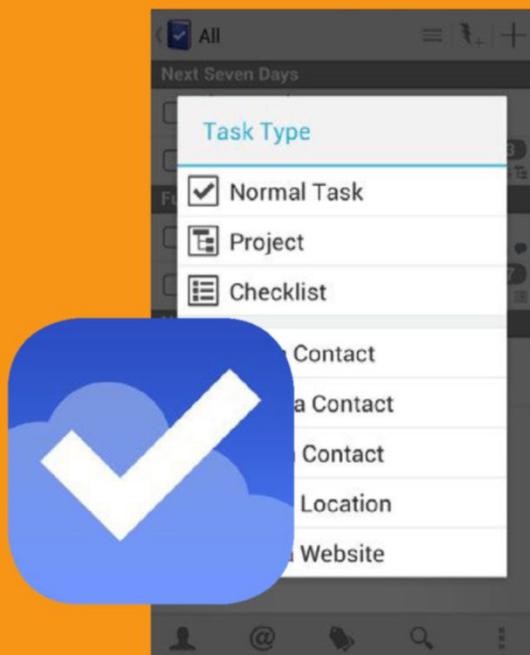
Version
7.0.3

Price
Free

Premium
US\$ 1.99 monthly,
US\$ 19.99 yearly



Cross-platform support for sharing lists with Android/web users is a plus for this app.



The UI is rather Spartan, but the easy customization of lists may appeal to some.

UNSTUCK

Unstuck is not your run-of-the-mill organizer. If you have been stuck in a rut and need to figure out a "why" instead of just a "what" to do, then this app is all about getting you "unstuck" by acting something like a virtual therapist.

The app starts out by asking you various questions such as "How are you feeling?", "Who does this situation involve?", or "What are the things that you associate or not associate with the situation?" With just a swipe of your hand, you choose boxes, shuffle cards, and then type in your responses to the various questions Unstuck asks you about your sticky situation.

Seeing how popular those little web quizzes are, Unstuck is a genius answer that might appeal to those who would get bored with a run-of-the-mill productivity application. If you're looking for a to-do list, Unstuck isn't it. But depending on who you are, this might be the better solution if you're either a serial procrastinator or have been stuck in a rut for a long time. Maybe you're a bored creative trying to figure out where you're supposed to get your next inspiration kick.

After figuring out what kind of situation or

approach you are currently taking, Unstuck then helpfully suggests a few of its tools to get you back. These include getting you to map out the situation and other interactive tools that help

you feel as though you're really doing something instead of just slacking off.

While it's fun the first few times, Unstuck might not be an app you want to be reaching out for every day. It is the kind of app that works on a need-to-use basis. You might check in on it once in a while to get that extra push to do things, but it would get boring really fast as what might seem novel will soon end up being repetitive.

Still, it's hard not to recommend this app, especially as it comes at the very good

price of "free." The amount of polish that has gone into this app shows, seeing as how it has won two Webby awards as well as an Appy.

It also has possibly the best website of the lot too; unstuck.com has many fun videos as well as very clear explanations about what the app does and what it can do for you. You can also peruse the blog and get other suggestions on getting your life on track. Though, if you're not keen on positivity mantras, you might want to steer clear.

AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS

Developer

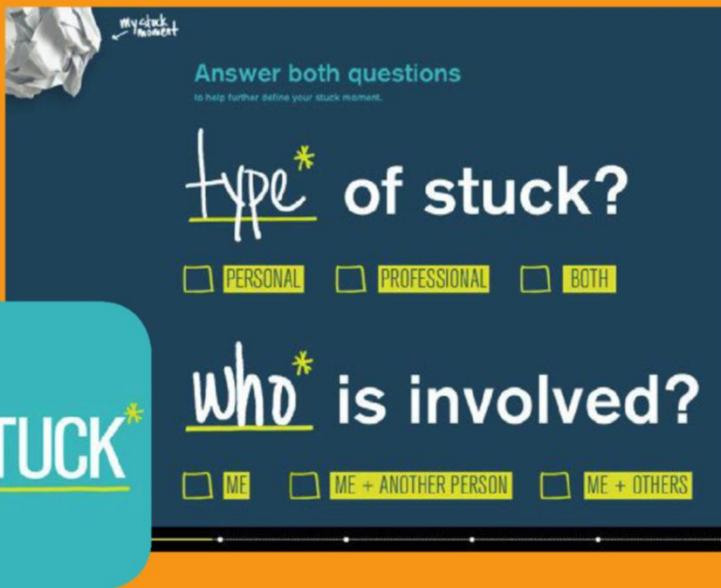
SyPartners

Version

2.0.0

Price

Free



Possibly the most polished app of the bunch, it's amazing that Unstuck is free.



The questions and activities might soon lose their shine when used too often.

30/30

So you're the type who makes a lot of lists but finds it hard to actually get started or focused on something? Then perhaps you need the motivation of a clock ticking. Enter 30/30, a timed app for iOS users that makes you list down what you need to get done and then starts a countdown.

For the app's interface, you'll get a nice big virtual timer that will mark how much time you have left to do something. You start off first with adding all the tasks that need doing to a list. Using touch gestures, you can deftly add tasks until you have your list sorted.

You can also assign a time to each task from one minute to up to 180 minutes. After each task is eliminated, the clock will then chime, which is your cue to then move on to the next task. Either swipe away the finished task or you can just reorder the tasks with a hold and drag. Sudden interruptions? Touch the clock to pause.

Think of 30/30 as a to-do list with an additional motivational kick. For people who like the Pomodoro technique, which forces you to be in the zone and work to the end of a timer, 30/30 is pretty useful. While you can download it

for free, you can also purchase a variety of icons just so you can customize how the interface looks to somewhat alleviate the tedium of adding tasks. But you don't have to pay extra for added

features, because, well, there aren't really any to speak of.

It does include amusing gestures, such as shaking your iDevice to undo an action and syncing to iCloud, but apart from that, the app is pretty bare and has no frills.

Like Unstuck, 30/30 is a situational app that works fine on occasions when you need it, like timed deadlines. But the lack of sound customizations, like amusing voice packs, which would notify you how long you have left for a specific task, is a sore point with the app. If you

work better with time constraints or need more structure in your life, then maybe take 30/30 for a spin and see if it will give you that added kick in the rear to help you do what you have to do in your life.

30/30 is easy enough to use, but whether it has the ability to keep you using it for the long-term might be another. As with any type of alarm, if you end up getting used to blocking out the alarm, then 30/30's chimes will lose their charm.

Makes use of touch gestures and countdowns to motivate you.

Time constraints and deadlines may not be for everyone.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS

Developer

Binary Hammer

Version

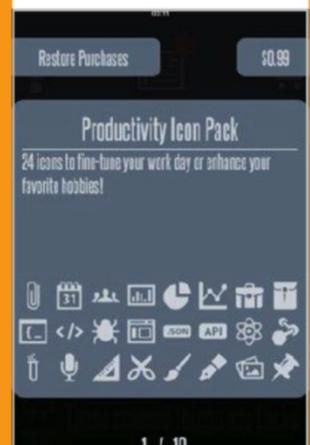
2.1.4

Price

Free (with in-app purchases)



Adding, removing, and editing tasks are a breeze with simple swipe gestures.



Having a timer to motivate you to finish your tasks is both genius and a pain.

AND THE BEST PRODUCTIVITY APPS ARE



The Evernote app icon is a green square with a white elephant logo. Below it are two screenshots of the iPad interface. The top screenshot shows the "Announcements" screen with a large green checkmark icon. The bottom screenshot shows the main dashboard with sections like "TIPS & FEATURES", "What's Evernote Sync Anyway?", and "5 Ways to Plan a Great Event".



The LifeTopix app interface features a large green checkmark icon at the top. Below it is a sidebar with icons for "My Topics", "My Calendar", "Recent", "My Inboxes", "My Contexts", "Near Me", "My Apps", "Engage", "Settings", and "Help Center". To the right are several cards categorized under "Objects", "Shopping", "Travel + Places", "People + Services", "Finances", "Home + Assets", "Notes + Files", and "Media". Each card displays a small icon and some statistics.



EVERNOTE

This might be the best bet for people who just want to keep it simple. And unlike all the other productivity apps, Evernote is cross-platform-friendly, so if you trade in your iPad or iPhone, you can still access it on your Android, Mac, or PC.

LIFETOPIX

For what you're getting and being able to sync to external apps like Dropbox and Evernote, this app is pretty good value for money. With new features and a design refresh coming very soon, you'll at least be assured of frequent updates.



We Do *Events!*

* Driven by a team of passionate technology professionals, Hardware Zone Events Services offers comprehensive event management solutions which leave lasting impressions. We have the expertise, talent, and experience to conceptualize and execute any customized on-ground activation project to meet your business objectives.

Our Proposition

- Total service orientation
- Sound strategies that stem from strong consumer insight
- Creative and out-of-the box executions
- Cost efficient programs
- Clear measures of project effectivity

Our Service Menu

Events Marketing

- Product Launches
- Road Shows
- Business Conferences/Seminars
- Corporate Events
- Trade Activations

Promotions

- Consumer, Trade, And Internal Promotions
- Sales Promos
- Sponsorship Tie-ins
- Manpower Management

Relationship Marketing

- Direct Mail
- Efforts
- Loyalty Programs
- Team-Building Activities
- Customer Relation Mgt.

WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO WHATSAPP

Facebook bought WhatsApp... and the next thing that happens is the app stops working (at least for a short while). Let's get real; we've gotten so used to the app, complacent in its always being available to save us money. But now that its popularity just might bite it in the behind, perhaps it would be wise to think of alternatives so we can keep sending each other ridiculous pictures on group chats or take days "discussing" where to eat.

Text by Erna Mahyuni
Photography by Vee Chin
Art Direction by Ian Chong

- VS
- KAKAOTALK
- KIK MESSENGER
- LINE
- TELEGRAM
- VIBER
- WECHAT



KAKAO TALK

KakaoTalk probably wins the award for weirdest chat app name. Kakao what? Color us confused. Well, this quirky little app was made in Korea and is the most popular chat app there, with over 130 million users. The app supposedly handles an impressive three billion messages a day.

At first glance, it's not quite clear what makes this app stand out. It's certainly Spartan in design, where you're greeted with four tabs. One tab displays your KakaoTalk contacts, which the app automatically adds if your settings allow. The next tab lets you start a chat, while the third recommends and helps you add friends via QR Codes, using a "shake" gesture and good old app invites.

The fourth tab is where the fun begins. KakaoTalk allows you to buy extras to jazz up your conversation, which means a plethora of cutesy emoticons, not to mention backgrounds for your chat apps. Nice window dressing certainly, though probably targeted towards people who like customizing their chat windows.

KakaoTalk does have an interesting Plus Friends option where you can follow K-Pop celebrities such as the Wonder Girls, Girls'

Generation, and receive status updates on what they're doing, video snippets, and the odd discount coupon. It is an interesting branding maneuver, which basically is the equivalent of a

Facebook page, but within a phone. As for its usefulness and appeal, it is rather limited in scope, as most Plus Friends are Korean pop stars.

Another feature KakaoTalk promotes is its games. Namely, you have the choice of ten simple casual games such as Funky Racer and Tap Tap Blitz. The games are not anything you would lose sleep over. More like you would start a game out of boredom and then get a friend to join you; this explains why Funky Racer is listed on top of the gaming list.

Aside from all the extras, how does KakaoTalk function as messaging goes? It is easy enough to use, and simple to add friends already on the app. You can even set a passcode lock for added security, and a major bonus has to be the ability to send messages from the PC desktop client. It also has a built-in network status tester.

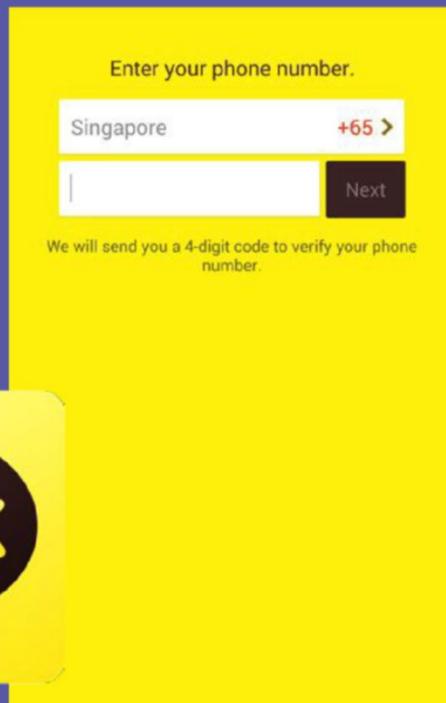
If you look past the frills, KakaoTalk has a solid feature set that could entice you away from WhatsApp. Bottom line: A very solid alternative.



Functional and easy to use. Passcode locking for security.
Desktop client intermessaging.



Plus Friends limited to K-Pop stars. Games not as polished as other apps.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/BlackBerry

Developer

Kakao Inc.

In-app purchases

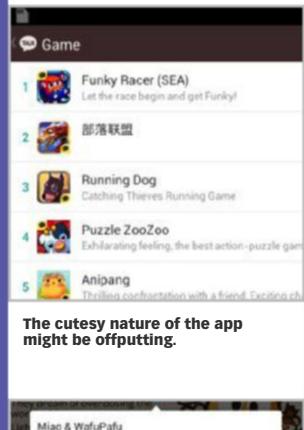
Yes

Free calls

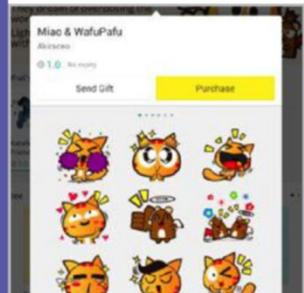
Yes

Price

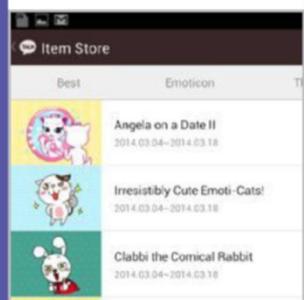
Free



The cutesy nature of the app might be offputting.



In-app purchases are front-and-center here.



The interface is clean and easy to navigate.

KIK MESSENGER

Kik Messenger has actually been around for some time and boasts over 50 million users. In contrast to more cutesy apps like Line or KakaoTalk, Kik keeps it simple and pared down. The app calls itself the fastest of the messaging apps, though likely it bases that on the small app size and memory footprint.

Unlike the other apps that autodetect who on your phone contact list are on Kik, you need to manually upload your contact list to Kik's server to figure out whom you can contact. This is a great privacy feature, but likely to annoy people who like the simplicity of autodetection.

What Kik pushes most is what it calls its Cards. These are apps built on HTML5 that allow you to play games, share videos, or socialize with other users. Currently, Kik's top cards are its Video Kik for sharing videos of any length, socializing/matchmaking app HeyHey!, similar app Chat Now, Image Search, and YouTube. To Kik's credit, its developer's platform has created quite a list of apps to mess with in comparison to KakaoTalk's rather paltry few games in comparison.

Some of the Cards are already included within

Kik's messaging framework. You can attach pictures, stickers, YouTube videos, sketches via the Sketch app, search for images to add to your convo, choose from popular memes, or add jazzed-up images via the Photobomb app. That is certainly an interesting way to spice up conversations.



Secure private messaging. Rich HTML5 app platform.



Adding contacts can be a hassle. HTML5 apps can eat up storage and memory.

So though KakaoTalk likes billing itself as a social network on its own, the apps within Kik effectively let you expand on your own contacts, which is great if you're the type who does want to get to know people from within the safe bubble of your phone app.

But if you're mostly into just using Kik for basic conversation, then the app can work just as well for that. It is not too complex to figure out besides

the need to manually add contacts, so it's a great app for those who want to keep things simple and control who can add them to their contacts.

The app can be a little sluggish when loading the Cards if your phone is of an older generation and has limited onboard storage space or memory. This won't be a problem if you stick to messages. Conclusion: This is an app for those sick of being auto-added to contact lists.

AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/BlackBerry/Symbian

Developer

Kik Interactive

In-app purchases

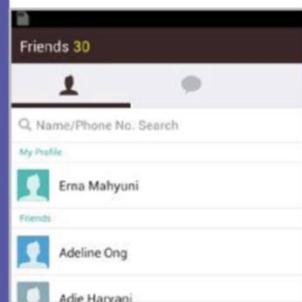
No

Free calls

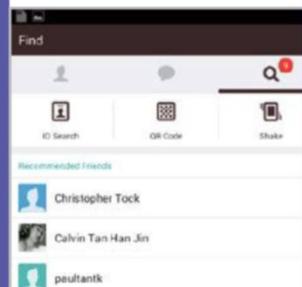
Yes

Price

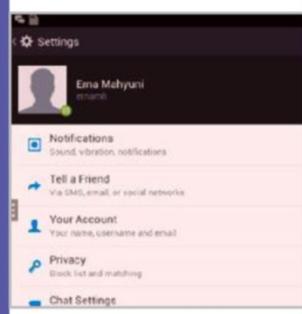
Free



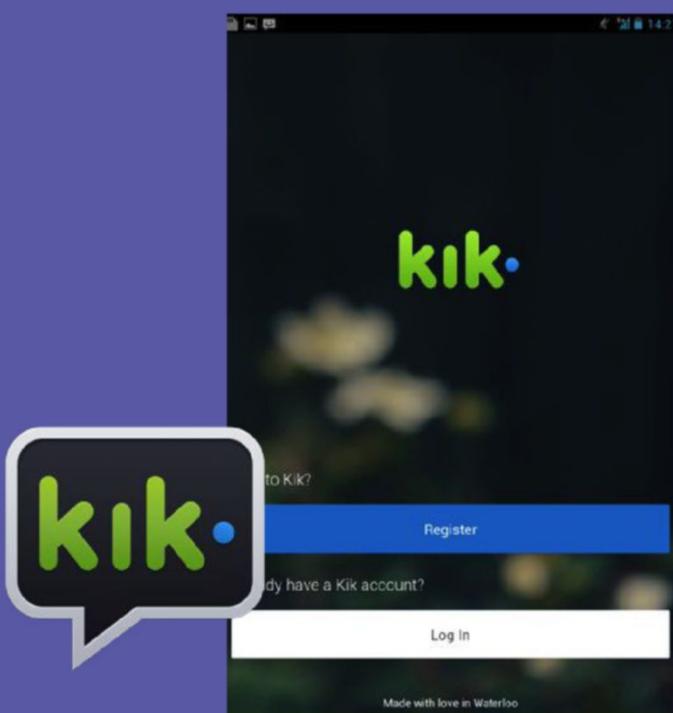
Kik keeps things light during basic messaging.



The app relies a lot on HTML5 for its features.



Kik settings are laid out simple enough to understand.



LINE

Another app saturated by cute, and also one you'd likely be familiar with thanks to Line's YouTube advertising blitz a while back. Line's rabbit mascot Cony and its bear mascot Brown are frequent sights on social media and, like KakaoTalk, banks a lot on the cuteness factor.

Line, you can say, is a slightly more mature version of what KakaoTalk brings to the table, as it goes for a more global audience. This is what you can say from its usage of Official Accounts, which are pretty much localized to a specific country. Official Line accounts are like KakaoTalk's Plus Friends, but go beyond just K-Pop stars. Brands, media outlets and, yes, singers have public Line accounts including names like Ayumi Hamasaki and Katy Perry.

It also has its own Timeline page for users that mimics Facebook's own timeline. On the other hand, it's also something users can choose not to opt into. Apart from that, Line has plenty of in-app things to sell, including stickers and themes. Line also has its separate Line apps, Line Play, Line Camera, Line Band, Line Brush, Line Antivirus, and Line Card, which all require separate downloads.

To encourage users to get things from the store, Line also offers that tantalizing Free Coins bait where you download apps to get coins to buy things; all very much like the free-to-play model we're used to with mobile games.

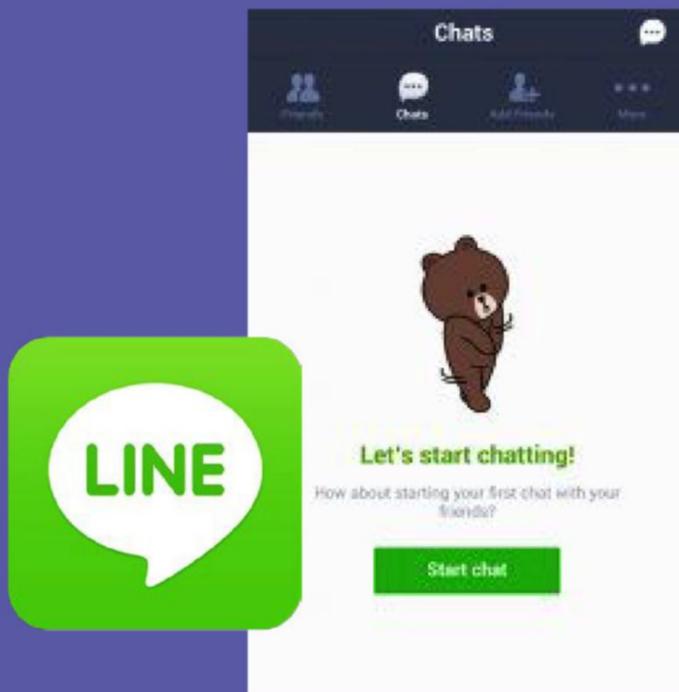
But how does it fare as a simple chat app? Line does add and seek contacts the way WhatsApp does, but you can disable the option to auto-add friends if that bothers you. The best thing is being able to disallow others from adding you without approval. But the annoying thing is that it's turned on by default, so when you install the app, it's best to muck around in the settings first.

As far as the chat interface goes, it is as simple to get into as WhatsApp is. Starting a chat and adding attachments is not difficult, and its clean design is pretty easy on the eyes. But what might annoy some is logging in to the app to be greeted by a constant barrage of in-house ads, exhorting you to buy the latest stickers.

If you can put up with the unending cuteness and unabashed commercialism of the app, then Line is not a bad alternative. Its large userbase will at least keep it going a while.

**+
Familiar chat interface. Localized content. Lots of apps. Stickers.**

**-
Contact management could be better. Blatant in-app purchase marketing. Stickers.**



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/BlackBerry/Symbian/PC/Mac

Developer

Line Corporation

In-app purchases

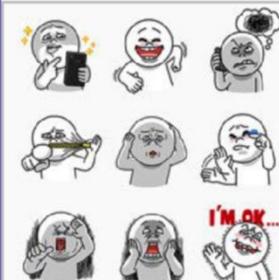
Yes

Free calls

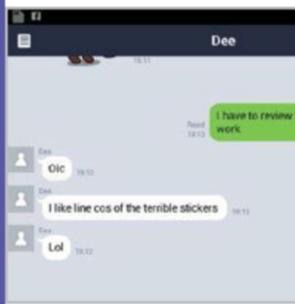
Yes

Price

Free



Line's mascots might appeal to some, or not.



The messaging interface is clean and easy to understand.



The Facebook Timeline copying is rather obvious.

TELEGRAM

If you want a back-to-basics app with a high priority for security, then Telegram is the grownup alternative to WhatsApp. Thanks to people being worried about Facebook's acquisition of WhatsApp, Telegram has seen a spike of over a million downloads every day.

It's funded and developed by two brothers, Pavel and Nikolai Durov, adamant about keeping the app free and not seeking advertising or other revenue. If, say, they run out of money to keep the app going, they will merely ask for donations from users.

Why take the risk with this app, then? If you're looking for something that is stripped down without a barrage of ads in your face, then Telegram

might just be it. Telegram has, as its developers claim, a unique encryption protocol, MTProto, that makes it safe enough to message other users no matter what client they use.

Speaking of clients, Telegram can be used on desktop computers (PC, Mac, and Linux) as well as from Android and iOS phones. There is also currently an unofficial alpha build for Windows Phone should you be keen on one. Telegram has also made the code for its Android, Linux, and iOS

clients open source to help other developers use the API.

A key feature of Telegram is its "secret chats" that are separate from normal chats. Secret chats have end-to-end encryption, can be set to self-destruct, and cannot be forwarded. The secret chats are also stored only locally and not in the cloud.

For the average non-paranoid Joe, what else does Telegram have to offer? Well, you can apparently add up to 100 people to a conversation. Sounds great for coordinating one of those massive family get-togethers. You can also attach photos and videos with a size of up to one gigabyte. That makes sense for communicating PC-to-PC, but perhaps not for phones.

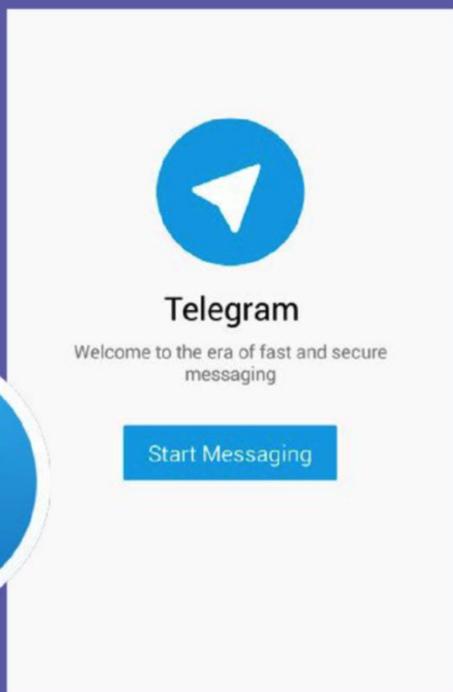
It isn't completely boring; Telegram does allow minor customizations like chat backgrounds with either templates or your own images. As far as usage is concerned, Telegram is slick, speedy, and stable. Who knows, Telegram could be another alternative to people who want a chat service that – as it works on PC – could also be an IM alternative. The only thing it doesn't support at the moment is voice messages or calls, which, for some, could be a deal breaker.



Secure encryption protocol. Self-destruct messages. Clean, basic messaging.



No built-in apps or games. No voice messaging or calls.



AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/PC/Mac/Linux

Developer

Digital Fortress

In-app purchases

No

Free calls

No

Price

Free

Notifications and Sounds

MESSAGE NOTIFICATIONS

Alert

Message Preview

Vibrate

Sound Default

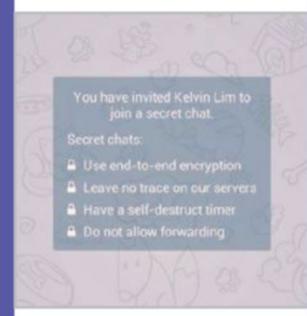
GROUP NOTIFICATIONS

Alert

Void of cute, Telegram gives you more app settings.



Feel free to customise your chat background.



Program your messages to self-destruct on a timer.

VIBER

Viber's been successful enough popularity-wise that big Web company Rakuten has snapped it up for the cool price of US\$ 900M. But at present, it is not making money; instead, making the news in all the wrong ways. Since its backers are Israeli, Viber's gotten flack for apparently being a spying risk. Of course, the founders have denied that. The more important question is, how does it work as an app?

The app has a slightly more interesting design as compared to the bland minimalism of Telegram. Viber quickly displays your Viber-ready contact list in one space so you can see them and has the most interesting contact display page, which fits in both your contacts and settings, allowing you to see who has Viber or Viber Out. The latter allows for calling both landline and mobile numbers.

The interesting thing is, rather than push its Sticker Market into your face, Viber slots in conveniently into the settings/profile page, and Viber has gone past just cutesy original stickers. You get stickers from franchises like Kung Fu Panda, Adventure Time, and the Powerpuff Girls.

Privacy-wise though, you wish they would be better at not showing you have Viber to

other users. But you can at least choose to hide your online status and your "seen" status. You can also choose to connect to Facebook and Twitter or, interestingly, deactivate your account altogether. Still, not being able to opt out from people knowing you have the app installed is an annoyance.

As to the actual chat testing, the app does let you know whether a chat is sent; though, fortunately, it does not reveal whether it was seen. The app is, despite its more substantial memory footprint, pretty stable in use and sends messages fast enough.

The desktop client is also handy, putting it in the same league as other apps that also have desktop apps. As to the better experience, Viber is more fun on mobile than PC. The cleaner, compact interface seems to translate better to handsets than the desktop.

As to why use Viber compared to other apps, it is a return to the argument that there are more people you know are on it or using it. With Viber having recently had a page defaced by online vigilantes, its security is a big question mark. Bottom line: Viber is a good-looking app, but needs more privacy and security tweaks.

AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/BlackBerry/Symbian/PC

Developer

Viber Media

In-app purchases

Yes

Free calls

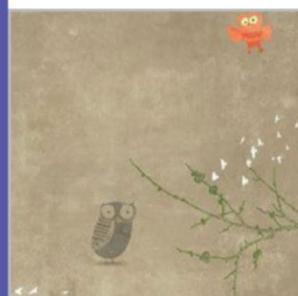
Yes

Price

Free



Viber integrates well into your phone interface.



What's with the decorative wallpaper, Viber?



Attack of the branded in-app sticker purchases!

WECHAT

Another app that suffers from the "how is this different from Line or Kik again?" Yes, it's cute, and it has a sticker shop, but having a desktop client and multiple platforms does help WeChat in differentiating versus the more-spartan Telegram.

More importantly though, this app gets the vote for "why are complete strangers messaging me?" Within the first few minutes after installing, complete strangers had added me. One even had the audacity to ask, "Who is this?" Seriously surreal, WeChat. This is perhaps partly due to the friend confirmation setting in WeChat being set to "off" by default.

WeChat's privacy settings could be user-friendlier. The more important settings are set to "on" by default when they shouldn't be; though, at the same time, it does not add your friends by default.

The interface is also slightly confusing to navigate. The WeChat team is automatically added to your contact list, but it took some fiddling around to see just how we were supposed to message the team. The confusion stemmed mostly from how the app integrates updates into the messages, while the rather bland

design did not have enough contrast to be able to see the requisite buttons clearly.

WeChat also tries to get in on the gaming bandwagon, but at present time, has only three game apps available to users in our location. Worse, the games aren't that exciting to boot.

Using the Moments tab to create a Facebook-like timeline is also not intuitive, with no notifications or proper explanation about how it is supposed to work. Basically, WeChat is trying to be a social network, but as far as it is concerned, doesn't do a very good job at it. The other annoying bit is the WeChat account signup is also more of a hassle than the other apps, with account signup feeling so intrusive to the point you just might give up on it early.

The problem with WeChat is that it tries to do the same things similar apps like it does, but without standing out either with design or accessibility. With paltry incentives to use the app like the social network it tries to be, you would be better off using the other more fun alternatives. In conclusion, WeChat suffers from trying to do too much, but not excelling at any one function.



Social network in a chat app. Growing in-app marketplace.



Complicated sign-up process. Unintuitive navigation. Privacy options.

AT A GLANCE

Platform

iOS/Android/Windows Phone/BlackBerry/Symbian/PC/Mac

Developer

Tencent Holdings

In-app purchases

Yes

Free calls

Yes

Price

Free



It can get hard telling KakaoTalk, Kik, and WeChat apart.

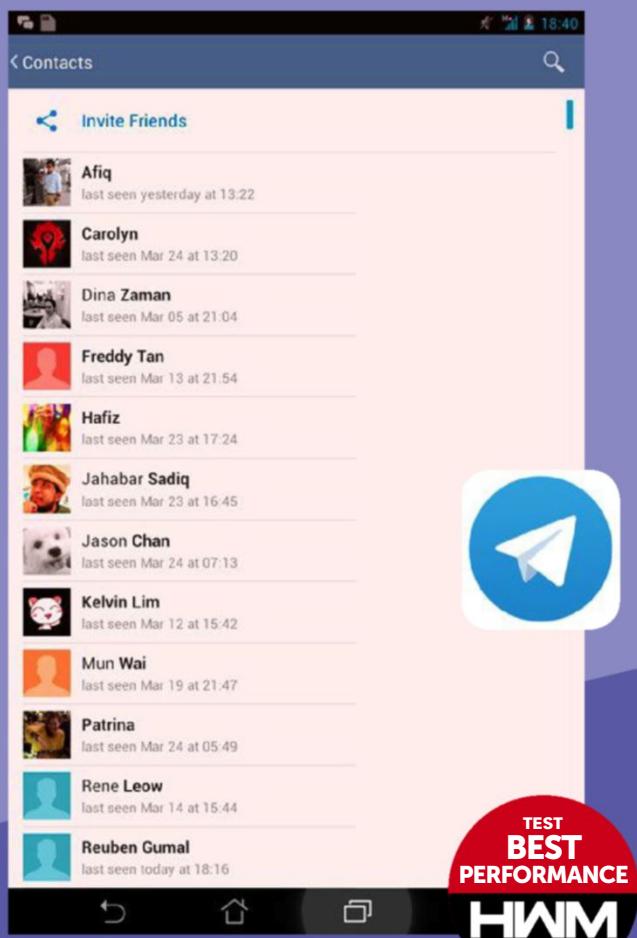


The login process can be annoying at times.



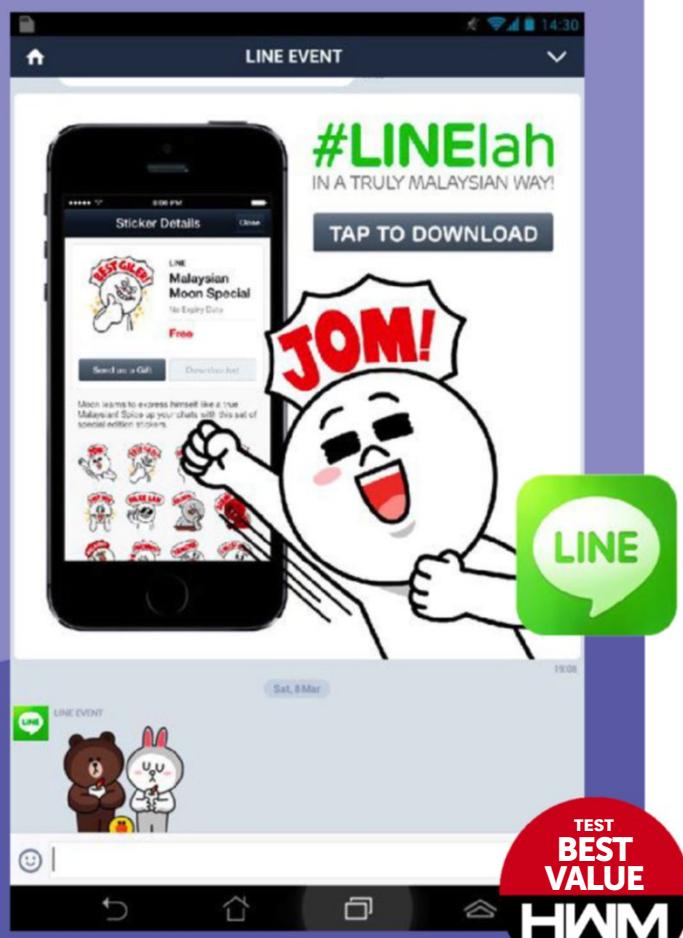
There's no shortage of in-app purchases here either.

THE BEST MESSAGING APPS ARE



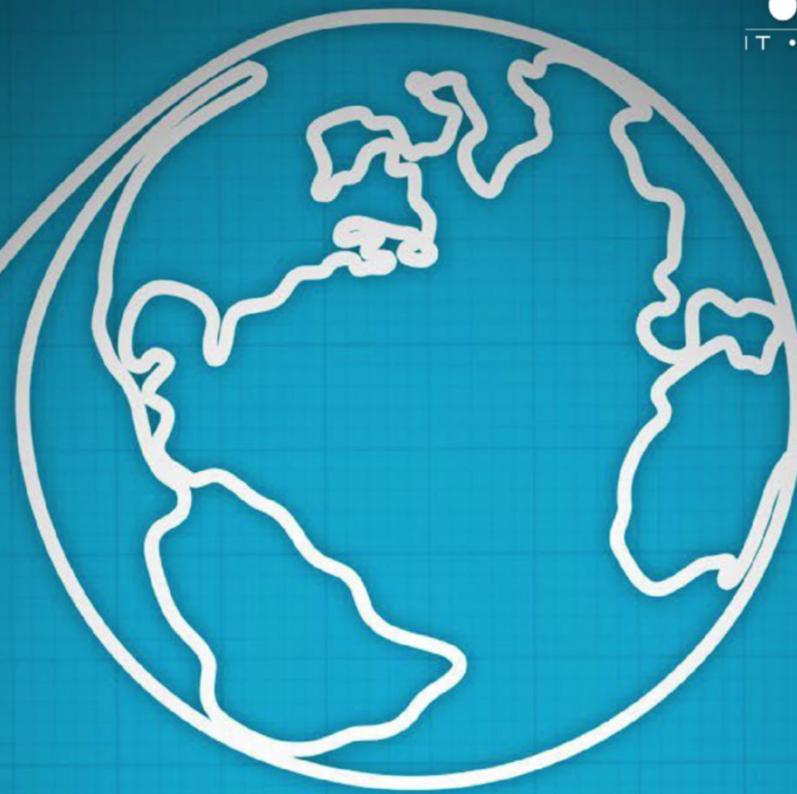
TELEGRAM

Secure, simple, and stable. This app just might make it the replacement for BBM for the more security-conscious or those who don't want to be faced with ads or annoying in-app purchases. Great if chat and the odd picture attachments are all you need.



LINE

If you can get past the cutesy factor, Line is a pretty robust app that has a wide enough userbase to ensure that it won't suddenly disappear on you. With adequate security and privacy controls, Line is a decent alternative to WhatsApp.



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VS

ASUS GEFORCE
GTX 750 Ti OC

GIGABYTE GEFORCE
GTX 750 Ti WINDFORCE OC

PALIT GEFORCE GTX 750 Ti
STORMX DUAL

OVER-CLOCKING BUDGET GAMING

The new NVIDIA GeForce GTX 750 Ti GPU features next-generation Maxwell architecture and its much-touted improvement to power efficiency and performance-per-watt gains.

We round up three custom GeForce GTX 750 Ti cards, all factory-overclocked for extra juice to find out which budget gaming card will give you the most bang for your buck.

Text by Wong Chung Wee
Photography by Zaphs Zhang + Vee Chin
Art Direction by Ken Koh + Ian Chong

ASUS GEFORCE GTX 750 TI OC

Out of the box, the ASUS GeForce GTX 750 Ti OC has a slightly overclocked core, rated at 1072MHz, which is 52MHz higher than the default base clock of 1020MHz. With GPU Boost 2.0 technology, the GPU can go up to 1150MHz. Despite this, the card's memory modules are kept at the default operating clock speed of 5400MHz. If you want to tweak things on your own, it does come with its own monitoring and overclocking software utility, ASUS GPUtweak.

Another cool feature of this software utility is the streaming tool. It allows you to stream your game to your buddies. At the same time, comments, images, and pictures from webcams can also be shared by the streaming tool.

Cooling is handled by a standard fin-stacked heat sink with a pair of 80mm cooling fans. According to ASUS, the fans are touted to keep dust particles out from the hub of the fan, thus extending their operational lifespan. The fan shroud of the card has a triplet of thin red stripes that run across its entire length. This is the only design element which breaks its plain black tone.

+
Comparatively low power consumption levels despite its overclocked graphics core.

-
Inclusion of an out-of-date D-Sub video connector. An all-digital selection for connectivity options would have been more ideal.

The ASUS card further deviates from the reference GTX 750 Ti design by featuring a 6-pin PCIe power connector. We presume it is meant to provide more power to its overclocked graphics

core. We noticed the printed circuit board (PCB) measures 174mm, 30mm longer than the reference card, too. The customized PCB of ASUS plays host to its voltage regulation module (VRM) components, found under the company's Super Alloy Power brand name. In particular, the alloy components are touted to deliver stable power and achieve cooler operations. Its concrete core chokes are supposedly able to reduce noise levels under load. Its capacitors are claimed to have longer operating lifespans. The dual-slot card is 213mm long, when measured from the edge of its fan shroud to the edge of the rear bracket.

For video connectivity, the card features a pair of dual-link DVI-D connectors, one HDMI port, and one VGA port. We'd question the relevance of the VGA port, though, as we'd expect most users today to have digital monitors, or have already upgraded to one.

AT A GLANCE

GPU Transistor Count

1.87 billion

Core Clock

1072MHz

Memory

2GB GDDR5

Memory Clock

5400MHz

Price

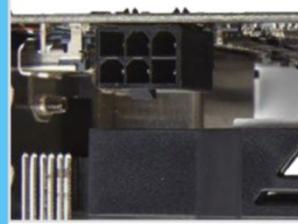
PhP 10,390



Cooling fans feature dust-proof technology that prevents dust particles from entering the fan.



Video outputs include two DVI-D connectors, one HDMI port, and one VGA connector.



A 6-pin PCIe power connector provides additional power for the graphics card.



GIGABYTE GEFORCE GTX 750 TI WINDFORCE OC

The Gigabyte GeForce GTX 750 Ti WindForce OC has the most elaborate cooling out of the three, as it is the only one with an 8mm-thick copper heat pipe that protrudes beyond its reed-thin fan shroud. Due to its skeletal build, it is also the most unadored fan shroud of the lot. The heat pipe dissipates heat from the card's graphics core to an aluminum fin-stack, which, in turn, is cooled by a pair of 80mm fans.

The Gigabyte card features the company's proprietary WindForce 2x cooler, which has a pair of fans that are angled to reduce air turbulence. With less turbulence, air is able to flow quicker over the aluminum fin-stack to ensure more efficient cooling. The 8mm copper heat pipe conducts heat from the GM107 core to the fin-stack. Therefore, we do expect this card to do well for our temperature test. The hubs of the cooling fans have iridescent decals with the Gigabyte brand name for embellishments.

In terms of its product specifications, the GPU of the card is rated to operate at 1033MHz, with a boost clock speed of 1111MHz. Like the ASUS card, its 2GB of GDDR5 RAM operates at the

+
Extremely low operating temperatures due to its efficient WindForce 2x cooling system.

-
Overclocking headspace is too modest for its graphics core.

default clock speed of 5400MHz. The PCB length is 144mm, which follows the reference GTX 750 Ti design. The length of the card, though, is 188mm, measured from its rear bracket to the edge of

the fan shroud. The card has a dual-slot profile, but do note that the GeForce GTX 750 Ti has no support for NVIDIA SLI.

The card's Ultra Durable 2 VRM components are responsible for power delivery. In the past, such components were exclusively found on Gigabyte motherboards. Now, they have found their way to graphics cards that are targeted at the masses. Speaking of power, the card also requires a 6-pin PCIe power connector for additional power draw, essential for stability.

This Gigabyte GTX 750 Ti card features all digital video connectivity options, comprising of two dual-link DVI connectors (one DVI-D and the other DVI-I) and a pair of HDMI ports. To assist owners in monitoring and overclocking the card, the OC Guru II software utility is made available for free, and it is only supported on systems running Windows operating systems. In addition, this tool is useful for keeping the drivers and BIOS of the card up to date.

AT A GLANCE

GPU Transistor Count

1.87 billion

Core Clock

1033MHz

Memory

2GB GDDR5

Memory Clock

5400MHz

Price

US\$ 149.99



The WindForce 2x cooling system is one of the most effective ones in the market.



The HDMI interfaces are gold-plated for optimum signal transmission.



It is the only card to feature an 8mm-thick copper heat pipe as part of its cooling solution.



PALIT GEFORCE GTX 750 TI STORMX DUAL

The Palit card storms out of its box with a core operating at the highest factory overclocked state among all the cards tested. It is rated with a base clock speed of 1202MHz, and can be boosted up to 1281MHz. Even its 2GB of GDDR5 RAM has been rated to operate at an overclocked speed of 6008MHz.

According to Palit, the card features an improved PWM (pulse-width modulation) design, coupled with solid capacitors and ferrite core chokes. This has enabled Palit to overclock its GPU aggressively, due to the collective ability of the entire VRM (voltage regulation module) system to deliver stable power.

Despite its highly overclocked state, the card doesn't sport any extra power connectors or heat pipe cooling features. However, the card's aluminum fin-stack is cooled by a pair of 80mm fans based on Palit's TurboFan Blade design for greater air flow and cooling than traditional fans.

Like the rest of the cards, the Palit 750 Ti card has a utility tool called Thundermaster OC. This piece of overclocking and monitoring software operates exclusively on Windows, and is useful

for power users and overclockers alike. One unique feature is it enables you to back up the BIOS of the Palit card; this is a good practice before you proceed with updating the card's BIOS in the future.

The PCB of the card has a length of 144mm, just like the reference GTX 750 Ti. However, Palit has added an extension with rear vents to the PCB, allowing hot air to be expelled from the vents. As a result, the total length of the card measures 217mm, from the edge of its fan shroud to its rear bracket. It makes the Palit card the longest in our roundup. Its side profile, like the rest of the GTX 750 Ti cards, is that of a dual-slot card.

In terms of video connectors, the Palit card is the least favorable, as it features three connectors, a mini-HDMI, DVI-D, and VGA. If you're looking to create a multi-display setup, you are limited to using the mini-HDMI and DVI-D, but there's still a mismatch of maximum resolution supported by each port. For a single display system, however, it is sufficient. It makes use of its dual slot design to create a dedicated exhaust port; this makes sense since both the GPU and memory clocks are highly overclocked.

+ Excellent out-of-the-box performance, reducing the need for further overclocking.

- Limited choices of video ports, in comparison with the other cards.



AT A GLANCE

GPU Transistor Count

1.87 billion

Core Clock

1202MHz

Memory

2GB GDDR5

Memory Clock

6008MHz

Price

PhP 7,700



The extension to the PCB has rear vents to allow for expulsion of hot air.

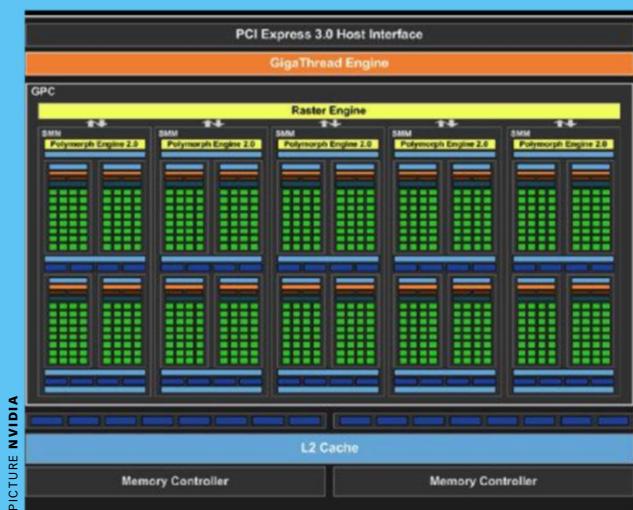


Video connectivity options include a mini-HDMI port, a DVI-D connector, and a VGA port.



There are rear vents to allow for the expulsion of hot air through the back.

MODEL	ASUS GEFORCE GTX 750 TI OC	GIGABYTE GEFORCE GTX 750 TI WINDFORCE OC	PALIT GEFORCE GTX 750 TI STORMX DUAL
CORE CODE	GM107 (28nm)	GM107 (28nm)	GM107 (28nm)
GPU TRANSISTOR COUNT	1.87 billion	1.87 billion	1.87 billion
CORE CLOCK SPEED	1072MHz (Boost Clock: 1150MHz)	1033MHz (Boost Clock: 1111MHz)	1202MHz (Boost Clock: 1281MHz)
STREAM PROCESSING UNITS	640	640	640
TEXTURE MAPPING UNITS (TMU)	40	40	40
RASTER OPERATOR UNITS (ROP)	16	16	16
MEMORY	2GB GDDR5	2GB GDDR5	2GB GDDR5
MEMORY CLOCK SPEED (GDDRS)	5400MHz	5400MHz	6008MHz
MEMORY BUS WIDTH	128-bit	128-bit	128-bit
MEMORY BANDWIDTH	86.4GB/s	86.4GB/s	96.1GB/s
PCI EXPRESS INTERFACE	PCIe v3.0 x16	PCIe v3.0 x16	PCIe v3.0 x16
VIDEO PORTS	2x dual-link DVI-D, 1x HDMI, 1x VGA	2x HDMI, 2x dual-link DVI (DVI-I and DVI-D)	1x mini-HDMI, 1x DVI-D, 1x VGA
HDCP OUTPUT SUPPORT	Yes	Yes	Yes
PRICE	PhP 10,390	US\$ 149.99	PhP 7,700



Introducing the Maxwell GPU Architecture

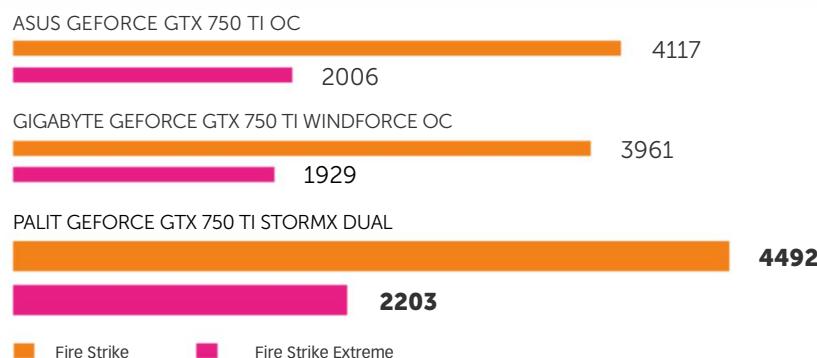
Like the previous-generation Kepler, NVIDIA has focused on the power efficiency and performance with the new Maxwell architecture. At its heart is a redesigned Stream Multiprocessor that is now known as the SMM (Streaming Multiprocessor of Maxwell). It has enabled Maxwell to deliver 35% more performance per core, and up to twice the performance per watt. Despite this, Maxwell is based on the same 28nm fabrication as Kepler. Therefore, the power and performance improvements made were based purely on the innovations achieved by the new Maxwell architecture.

First, the scheduler architecture and algorithms have been reworked to be more intelligent and adept at avoiding stalls. Each SMM is now partitioned into four processing blocks, with each block having its own control logic comprising an instruction buffer and scheduler, and 32 CUDA cores with which to carry out the operations. The scheduling logic is simplified and translates to less idle time. Also, it allows more processing blocks for each SMM per GPU; therefore, the new GM107 GPU packs a total of 5 SMMS, with a total of 640 CUDA cores.

3DMark (2013)

(3DMarks, higher is better)

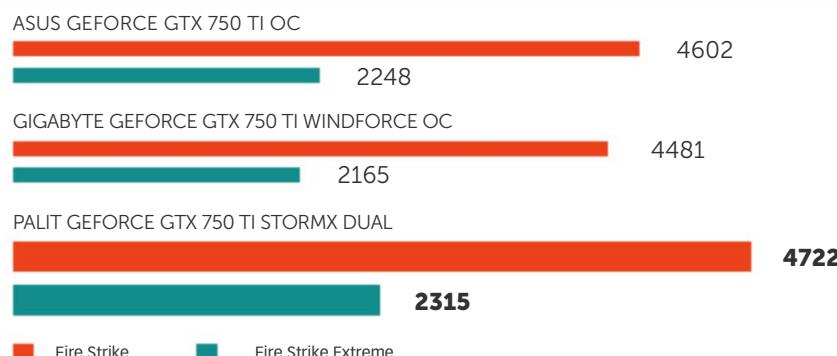
The Palit card turned in the best performance, due to its overclocked graphics core and memory modules. Against the other two, it outperformed them by a margin that ranged from 9 to 14%. The Gigabyte card was the weakest, as it had the lowest-clocked GTX 750 Ti GPU.



Overclocking

(3DMarks, higher is better)

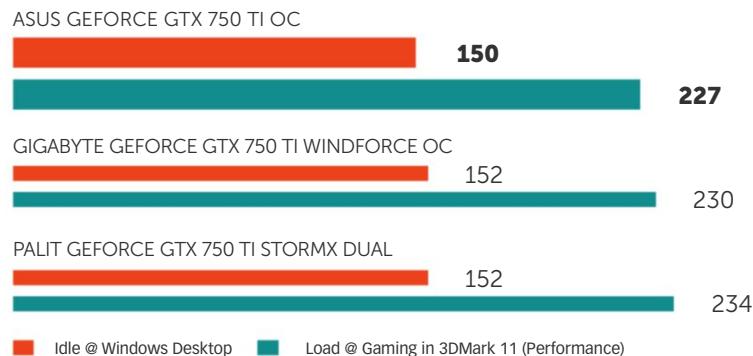
Overclocking was hindered by dated software utility that capped the maximum offset at 135MHz, which all three cards reached without problem. The slowest card, Gigabyte, had the most to gain from being overclocked, as its 3DMark 2013 scores improved by a margin of up to 13%. However, Palit still led the pack in terms of pure performance.



Power Consumption

(Watts, lower is better)

It appears the 6-pin PCIe connector, present on both the ASUS and Gigabyte cards, didn't provide any additional gains through GPU Boost. The Palit card was the only one that eschewed the need for additional power draw. While the ASUS had the lowest consumption, the heavily overclocked Palit, surprisingly, wasn't too far off from its peers with its recorded high of 234W.



Operating Temperatures

(Degrees Celsius, lower is better)

The Gigabyte had the lowest temperature of 46 degrees Celsius under load, underscoring the efficiency of its WindForce cooling system. But, it is good to remember that it is also the least overclocked of the three cards.



THE MOST OUTSTANDING GEFORCE GTX 750 TI CARD IS



PALIT GEFORCE GTX 750 TI STORMX DUAL

The Palit GeForce GTX 750 Ti StormX Dual has, without reservation, the best overall performance in this roundup. With the highest factory overclock, its performance right out of the box is outstanding. Its cooling may not be elaborate, but evidently does a brilliant job with power consumption levels and operating temperatures within expectations. Despite the slight limitations in terms of output options, this would be our choice gaming card on a budget.

From Micro Transactions to E-Commerce

Instant messaging apps have come a long way since ICQ and MSN Messenger as an excuse to send cute emoticons. It's a lucrative growth market that's proving its ability to move millions of dollars worth of products a day, and many are looking to carve their niche. As mobile commerce and instant messaging cross paths, will Line or WeChat become the next Amazon?

Text by *Hafeez Sim*
Art Direction by *Ian Chong*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SKULLBASE.BLOGSPOT.COM





Buying on the Move Is on the Up and Up

Barely a decade ago, the only way to access the Internet was through a PC. Today, personal mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets are used to access the web instead. Statistics from the Pew Research Center reveal that 63% of American mobile phone users use their phones to access the Internet, twice the figure of 2009. And what's surprising (or not) is that one-third of these users preferred going online using their smartphone instead of their PC.

With mobile devices becoming the standard screen for web consumption, it's inevitable that more people are doing their online shopping through their mobile devices. In fact, a survey in early 2013 by MasterCard showed that 54.5% of respondents in Indonesia shopped online using their smartphones in early 2013, and in China it was 54.1%.

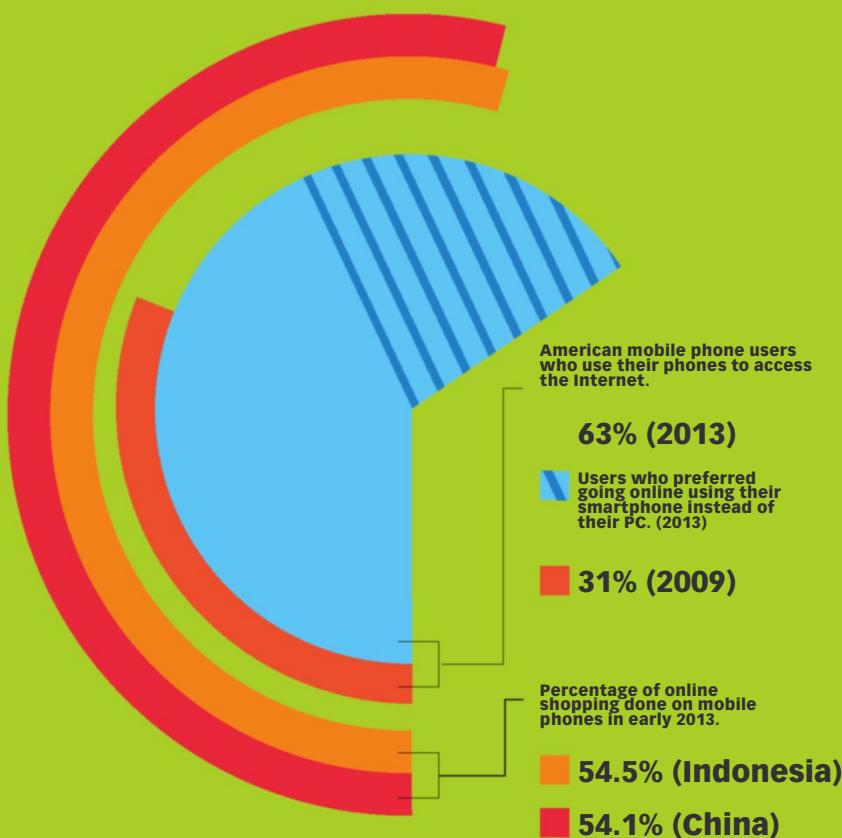
Online shopping is big business, with the original e-commerce juggernaut Amazon reporting sales of US\$ 25.59 billion for the fourth quarter of 2013. Doing business online provides certain advantages over running a brick and mortar store; there are no geographical limitations, and the store's open

24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing business to be conducted anytime, anywhere.

While shopping online isn't new, using a smartphone to do so is definitely on the rise. Online retailers have been quick to recognize this trend, creating mobile app stores designed to

extend their reach into this new platform and stimulate on-demand spending. But mobile e-commerce has recently found a new bedfellow with ready access to a huge and diversified audience pool: mobile messaging apps.

"ONLINE SHOPPING IS BIG BUSINESS, WITH THE ORIGINAL E-COMMERCE JUGGERNAUT AMAZON REPORTING SALES OF US\$ 25.59 BILLION..."



How Messaging Apps Are Making Millions

Call it an innate need to communicate, but no matter the time period, people have always spent a lot of time and effort to stay in touch. And so it should come as no surprise that mobile messaging apps have been on the rise in the last couple of years.

Mobile messaging apps didn't always come with a boatload of features. In the beginning, many of these apps offered a bare-bones approach; WhatsApp today is still "just" a messaging app. But with competition heating up, many apps have now come to include features such as voice calls and games in a bid to stand out and attract more users. Apps are also looking to develop their own ecosystems to build a community that will continue to use the service because of the social aspects.

These apps build their user base by offering a free alternative to SMS (free as long as your data holds out), but the developers need revenue to maintain their businesses. To do that, these messaging apps have come up with several creative ways to diversify their revenue streams.

Take the Line mobile app, which was first developed as an emergency messaging service in the wake of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake. Today, its feature set actually makes it closer to being a social network. Line users have a profile space that's similar to the Facebook wall, where users can post updates and photos for friends. Line is bridging the gap between mobile messaging and social networking.

This approach is working well; the app has not only managed to attract 330 million registered users, but also a 1,500% increase in

HOW MANY PEOPLE USE APPS?

Portio research (March 2013) estimates that 1.2 billion people worldwide were using mobile apps at the end of 2012.

This is forecast to grow at 29.8% each year, to reach 4.4 billion users by the end of 2017. Much of this growth will come from Asia, which will account for almost half of app users in 2017.

revenue in the third quarter of 2013, compared to the third quarter of the previous year. Revenue was US\$ 157 million in the third quarter of 2013, up from just US\$ 10 million in the same time period in 2012.

Just how has Line been making such massive growth? Since the app is currently free of charge, it has been driving up revenue through the sales of digital goods. Users purchase tokens for the in-app games, as well as stickers for

text messages (expressive drawings that work just like emoticons).

Stickers are an important form of income to many messaging apps since it's the least intrusive way to monetize a service or feature without having to ruin or disrupt the user experience. And since many find stickers to be more expressive than emoticons, sales of stickers have been doing well. In fact, the sale of stickers has earned Line more than US\$ 10 million a month.

Shopping and Messaging All in One App

So far, mobile messaging apps have been making bank by selling their own digital content. There's still a lack of business transactions involving physical goods, but companies are testing the waters and finding them inviting. In December 2013, Line explored the idea of selling items in Thailand through a mobile flash sale. The company partnered with full service e-commerce provider, aCommerce, and cosmetics brand, Maybelline New York. All 500 sticks of Maybelline Lip Polish on sale were sold out within five minutes. Line Singapore is also slowly easing into mobile commerce by coming up with a

Line Shopping service. Users will need to add the Line Shopping account as a friend, and it will ping the user whenever there's a deal.

But even then, Line had to partner up with aCommerce in order to handle the logistical aspect of the sale. For many businesses looking to conduct mobile commerce, the main obstacles are logistics and payment. Chinese messaging service, Weixin (the Chinese version of WeChat), decided to partner with Tenpay, an online payment service, to explore making purchases and paying for them all through your phone.

Make Your Lucky Day at LINE SHOPPING!
HP Sleekbook Red

Event Period

4 APR 4:00PM - 6 APR 4:00PM

SGD 800.00 ~ SGD 5.00 ~ SGD 50.00

Line Shopping (Singapore) has also run events that require user participation in order to buy a product at a discounted price.

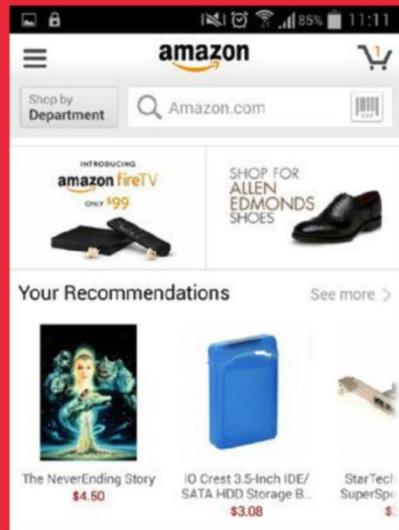
BUSINESS TO CONSUMER

Commonly termed as B2C, a business to consumer transaction is where a business, brand, or retail outlet offers products for sale to the general public (consumers). This is the traditional mode of commerce similar to buying from a brick and mortar store. Amazon is a popular example of a B2C e-commerce service.



ASOS

Fashionistas will be familiar with this English online fashion retailer. The online store has also come with a mobile version that's visually attractive and easy to navigate. The downside is that the app takes a while to load up.

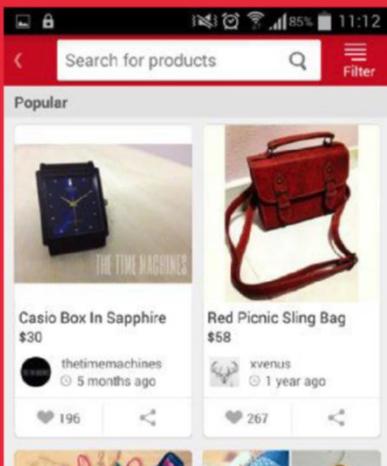


Amazon

No introduction is needed for this online retail giant, and the good news is that the mobile app's interface is very similar to what you have on the desktop version, so it should be pretty easy to part with your money.

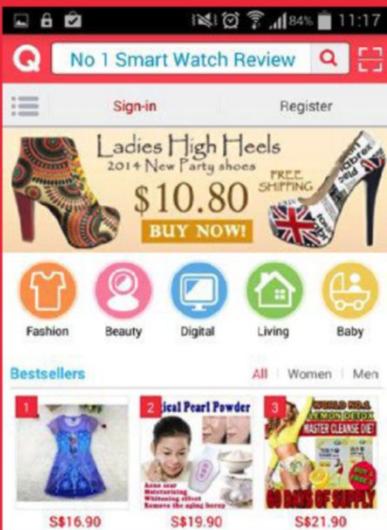
COMSUMER TO COMSUMER

Commonly termed as C2C, this is where consumers buy and sell goods from and to other consumers. Online auction website eBay is an example of a C2C model, though businesses often use the same platform to offer goods to consumers as well. Apps in this category provide the common platform for consumers to list their products for sale and interact with buyers.



Carousell

This Singaporean startup made headlines by receiving S\$ 1 million in funding from various sources, but what's most attractive about it is its interface and the ease at which users can sell and purchase pre-owned items.



Qoo10

It's pretty hard to classify Qoo10's business model, as it includes a shopping mall and an auction house in a single package. Users can buy from other registered users and from retailers, making it a shopping portal to suit your needs.

Only on LINE Shopping
FREE @ 11am

Qoo10

Manhattan FISH MARKET Fish 'n Chips
500 Sets Only!



Add **LINE Shopping** as a friend to redeem!

10:00

Line has also thrown mobile coupons and vouchers into the mix, where users can flash a mobile coupon to redeem a free meal.

The best part about this partnership is that Tencent owns Tenpay, Weixin, and WeChat, so WeChat and Weixin are able to tap onto Tenpay's payment services without having to engage a third-party service provider.

By providing an easier payment process, users will not need to be directed to a third-party payment site like PayPal. This keeps the process seamless and provides an all-in-one service for users who like to keep things within a single app. So regardless of whether the messaging app is selling their own goods and services, or acting as a facilitator for a retailer or manufacturer, having the ability to handle logistical and payment demands will work in favor of all parties involved.

One successful example of this approach was when Weixin showcased a selection of products available on 51buy, Tencent's e-commerce website, during Single's day, an online shopping festival in China. Users who registered their bank card with Weixin were able to buy and make payments directly through the messaging app, skipping the need to check out your shopping cart if you were to shop on a website or through a mobile

shopping app. While there were no official details revealing how much this integrated campaign earned for Tencent, the total revenue brought in during the Single's Day sale for the goods sold on 51buy was well over 500 million Yuan (US\$ 80 million).

WeChat is also looking to become an all-in-one platform after Weixin's positive foray into mobile commerce, with Tencent Singapore and Malaysia Country Manager, Louis Song, saying "Combining shopping, payment, and the social mobile platform is one of the strategies of WeChat, so that users can do everything within the app." But for that to happen, he also mentioned that it was important for WeChat to set up the payment gateways before being able to embark on the next step.

With their large user base and the ability to send marketing messages straight to the user, mobile messaging apps are a big part of mobile commerce's future. With more low-cost Android smartphones hitting the market and online mobile shopping on the rise, it's becoming more of a case of when, rather than if, messaging apps will replace your next trip to the mall.

MEET XIAOMI, RISING ANDROID POWERHOUSE

Text by Sidney Wong

Illustration by Ven

Art Direction by Ken Koh



Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi is expanding its operations globally with Singapore as its first international market outside China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. A brand that was little known outside of China three years ago, Xiaomi is now making waves across the mobile industry. We take a look at the humble beginnings of Xiaomi, and trace its growth and achievements over the past three years.



PICTURES XIAOMI

● Where It All Started

Xiaomi was founded in April 2010 by Lei Jun, who assembled a team of seven co-founders. They are Lin Bin, Li Wanqiang, Dr. Zhou Guangping, Huang Jiangqi, Hong Feng, Wang Chuan, and Liu De.

The founding team is made up of former employees of Google, Microsoft, Motorola, and other major technology companies. It added another valuable member to the team last year in the form of Hugo Barra, who was the then-Vice President of Android product management.

Lei set up Xiaomi with the goal to build a smartphone company that could challenge Apple. The members of the founding team were carefully handpicked, with a diverse mix of work experiences and talents proving to be valuable assets for Xiaomi.

As many of its co-founders are experts in engineering, hardware, and software development, Xiaomi is, for all intents and purposes, able to build hardware at the speed of software.

Barra describes Xiaomi as "a new kind of company that the world has not seen yet" and finds it "quite spectacular" that it has eight founders with each individual "running a startup within a collection of startups."

Not many companies can achieve that level of synergy. Software giant Google tried to reinvent mobile hardware with the acquisition of Motorola Mobility, but it was met with little success, eventually selling the company off to Lenovo.

Apple is one of the few companies that does hardware and software well, which is why Xiaomi is sometimes referred to as the "Apple of the East." However, Xiaomi at its core is very different from Apple.

Xiaomi began work on MIUI, which started off as a pure software effort to build an alternative ROM for Android. The team approached several manufacturing partners and suppliers such as Qualcomm, Broadcom, and Foxconn, eventually releasing their first smartphone, the Mi 1, back in 2011.

MI 1 BY THE NUMBERS

150,000
units sold in under 13 minutes

300,000
units in less than two days

WHO'S WHO IN XIAOMI

Lei Jun Founder, Chairman, and CEO

Before Lei set up Xiaomi, he was an active entrepreneur in the Chinese tech industry. Lei was part of the founding team of Kingsoft in 1992, and became its CEO in 1998.

He was also a founder of online retailer Joyo, which he sold to Amazon in 2004 for US\$ 75 million. Lei is also a well-known investor in several Chinese companies such as UC Web, a mobile Internet company.

Lin Bin Co-Founder, President

As President of Xiaomi, Bin is in charge of the company's day-to-day operations, business and product strategy, carrier relationship, and strategic partnership with domestic and international carriers, suppliers, and business partners.

Bin worked at Microsoft from 1995 to 2006 and held senior positions such as the Senior Development Manager at Microsoft Research Asia. He then joined Google as the Engineering Director from 2006 to 2010.

Hugo Barra Vice President

Barra is responsible for Xiaomi's product portfolio and operations in all markets outside Mainland China. Before joining Xiaomi in October 2013, Barra worked for five and a half years in Google. He oversaw the development of the Android platform, Nexus device portfolio, and several of Google's Android apps.



❷ A Different Business Model

Xiaomi's driving philosophy is based on the belief that its business should be built on services, and not hardware or devices. The nature of the Chinese mobile phone market also played a part in shaping the business model of Xiaomi.

By focusing on services, Xiaomi would hopefully avoid the fate that Lin feels other smartphone makers will face in the near future – declining profit margins from sales of hardware. During the D: Dive Into Mobile Conference in New York last year, Lin stated that "the future of the mobile Internet is really about services." He feels that smartphones are going through a phase that PCs experienced twenty years ago when profit margins were huge. With

the profit margins of PCs in single digits now, Lin believes the same would happen for smartphones soon.

To build a business on services, Xiaomi needs volume, and it seems to know exactly how to achieve that, thanks to two inspirations that helped Lei model Xiaomi after: a traditional Chinese medicine company called Tongrentang, and hot pot chain Hai Di Lao. According to Lei, both

companies taught him to never make low-quality products for the sake of cost, and the importance of customer service.

Hence, Xiaomi became what we all know it for today: a company that sells its smartphones at a low cost, yet offers plenty of bang for the buck. This is in contrast with the approach taken by other Chinese companies that offer low-spec, cheap devices. Its focus on services is also similar to what Amazon is currently doing: selling its Kindle tablets at low prices and earning profits through the sales of e-books.

Lei mentioned in an interview with TechCrunch that the Chinese mobile phone market is more open. Consumers can buy and use what they want; hence, phone makers do not necessarily need to maintain good relationships with the telcos to sell their devices.

This is different from other countries such as the US, where telcos have the upper hand, determining what devices to push, as well as selling phones at subsidized pricing with contracts. Considering that Xiaomi smartphones have very low price points, consumers can buy them without signing any long-term telco contracts.

XIAOMI SETS UP INTERNATIONAL HQ IN SINGAPORE

Bin announced on February 19 that Xiaomi is setting up its international headquarters in Singapore.

Singapore will serve as a platform for Xiaomi to manage overseas expansions into the region and a hub for coordinating all its activities, including the launch of future products.

Barra will oversee the operations of the HQ with a small local team led by Steve Vickers, a Director with Xiaomi in charge of launching the Xiaomi brand and products in new markets outside China.

③ Market Strategies

To minimize cost for the consumer, Xiaomi also eliminates the middlemen and distributors by selling most of its smartphones online through its website and social networks. For example, Xiaomi announced in December 2012 that it would be selling phones via Sina Weibo, which is China's top microblogging platform with over 400 million members.

It also partnered with social networking site Qzone to release the first batch of 100,000 Redmi devices in August 2013. Xiaomi teamed up with instant messaging app WeChat to sell 150,000 units of its flagship Mi 3 smartphone in November 2013. The partnerships with social networking sites and apps helped Xiaomi project itself as a hip and cool company that appeals to the younger generation.

Xiaomi releases its smartphones in limited quantities or batches on these platforms, and the responses are generally overwhelming. Critics pointed out that the company is using scarcity marketing by creating artificial shortages to motivate consumers to buy the phones, but Xiaomi countered by saying these "flash sales" are deployed to gauge consumer reaction.

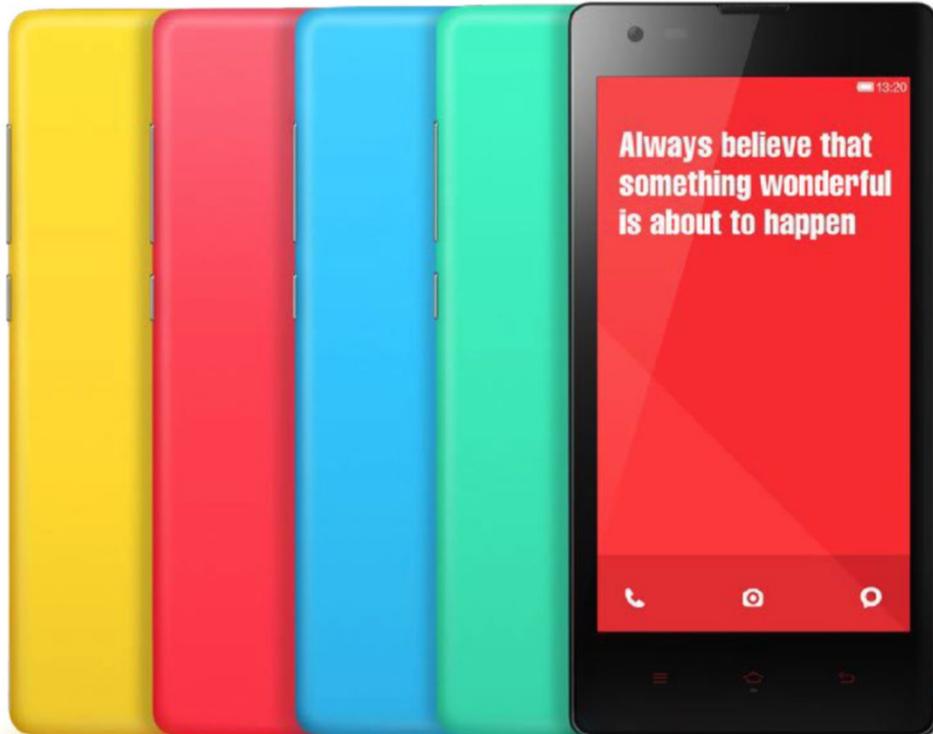
If the response to a particular model exceeds initial expectations, Xiaomi will increase production of the phones to meet demand. This helps the company keep costs to a minimum while ensuring that there is no surplus.

It is undeniable that such "flash sales" will generate a lot of excitement and media buzz. As Xiaomi begins its global expansion, the strategy of selling phones online may change, as there are markets in other regions where sales of devices are mainly driven by in-store sales and subsidized, contract pricing from the telcos.

Direct-selling, reliance on social media, and flash sales are no doubt savvy marketing strategies, but Lei feels that the most important ingredient in the recipe for success is that "Xiaomi is not selling a product, but an opportunity to participate."

Lei used Apple's iOS 7 as an example to show how Xiaomi's approach is different from its competitors. Apple is famously known for its closed system approach, and users had no idea of what to expect in any new software release. Apple believes it can anticipate and know what is best for users.

On the other hand, Xiaomi gives users a say in the development process of its hardware and software. For example, the company encourages its software engineers to engage users in forums to gather feedback on MIUI. Based on the feedback, Xiaomi issues free software updates every Friday for its users.



REDMI BY THE NUMBERS

100,000
units sold in 90 seconds

10,000
units in 9 minutes and 50 seconds
(Taiwan)

10,000
units in 36 seconds (Hong Kong)

200,000
units in 3 minutes and 57 seconds

**7.45 million
reservations**

According to Lei, two features of the voice recording app on Xiaomi phones were contributed by a group of Chinese journalists. The journalists suggested that the app should continue to record even if an incoming call comes through, and the phone be switched to silent mode when the app is in use. Following their input, Xiaomi made these changes to the app.

User participation not only helps Xiaomi build a loyal fanbase, it also helps cut down development costs, as MIUI is constantly refined with features that users actually want and use. In comparison, other phone makers invest huge amount of funds, time, and effort to develop features that may turn out to be not practical or irrelevant for users.

④ Breaking into the Global Market

With a goal of selling 40 million phones this year, Xiaomi has to expand its market reach globally. Its first international stop is Singapore, where the company has started selling the Redmi smartphone since late February.

Singapore is an important test for Xiaomi, as the market is considered small. The country has a population smaller than Hong Kong at 5.3 million, but with a similar smartphone penetration rate similar of 87 percent based on a Nielsen report in September 2013.

Like the US, the Singaporean market is still largely driven by on-contract, subsidized devices. It's too early to determine whether Xiaomi can replicate its success in Singapore by selling its phones directly to consumers.

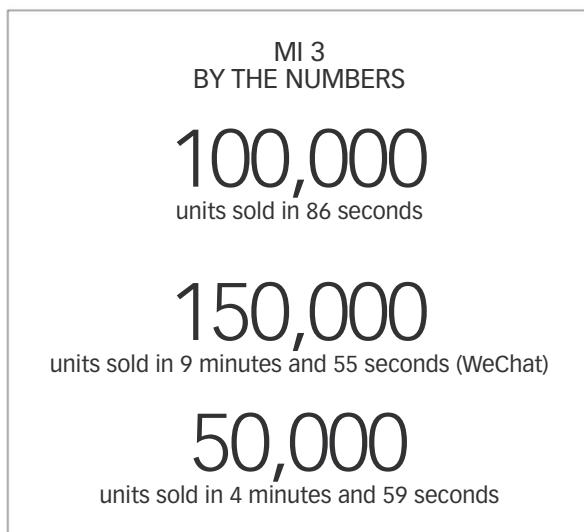
The concept of buying unsubsidized phones hasn't taken off, although there are signs that it is picking up, as the recent launch of the Motorola Moto G showed.

As a Chinese company, Xiaomi cannot escape the perception of Chinese products as knockoffs of popular brands. Many Chinese companies have tried to break into international markets with little success, except for Huawei and

Lenovo. Whether or not Xiaomi's growing cult status and social media strategies can alleviate this remains to be seen.

Xiaomi's emphasis on building high-quality, high-performance products at low cost has not gone unnoticed. During a panel interview at Xiaomi's headquarters in January, Apple's co-founder Steve Wozniak proclaimed that Xiaomi makes excellent products, good enough to break into the US market. Apparently, he has been using a Mi 3 and grew a liking for the device.

Moving into new markets may pose a challenge for Xiaomi when it comes to maintaining its focus on customer service and gathering feedback from different markets. Even though Xiaomi has done a pretty good job on its home turf, managing the needs of different markets simultaneously is a totally different ball game, and one that can strain the resources of a company with over 3,000 employees.



TOP FIVE FEATURES OF MIUI V5

MIUI V5 is the latest version of the mobile software running on Xiaomi phones and has a truck-load of useful features. Here are the five features we like best about MIU:

- Over 4,000 themes for customization
- Number of rings to indicate urgency of missed calls
- Full user control via App Permissions
- Call recording function
- Simple and Expert Mode for Camera UI



KEEPING IT REEL SIMPLE

What's a movie without good editing? Use these simple tips to get started turning your home videos into professional-looking pieces without expensive software. Video editing experience not required, too.

Text by *Marcus Wong*
Art Direction by *Ken Koh*





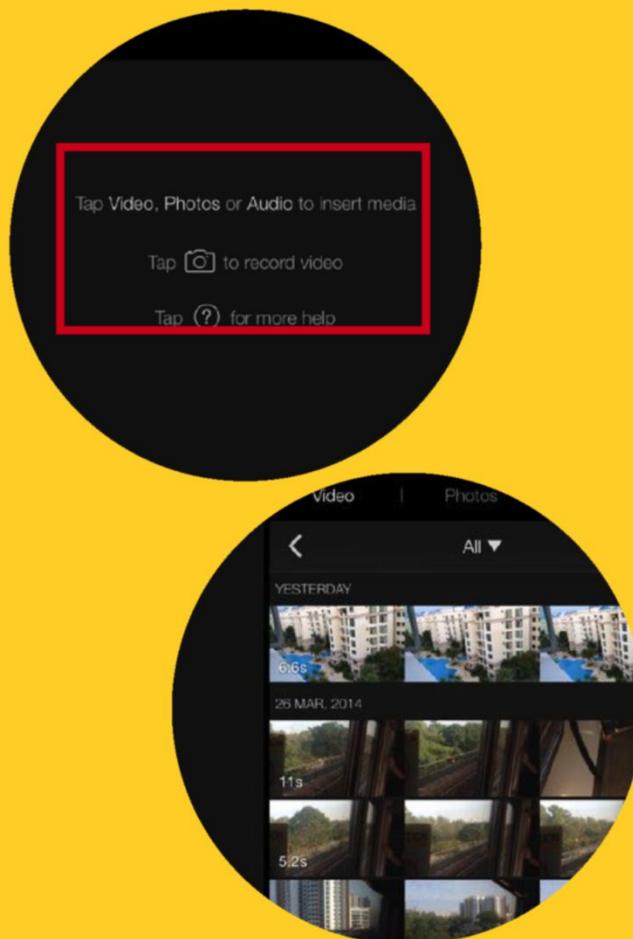
ILLUSTRATIONS KEN KOH

VIDEO EDITING WITH iOS

If you've recently (after last October) purchased an Apple device, then you're in luck – you get iMovie for free! This simple, yet powerful app is all you need to dive into video editing on your iPhone or iPad, but as with most things, it's all about the small touches.

STARTS AT THE HEAD

First, pick a template and load your base video. You'll notice a white line that splits the viewing area. That's the playhead, and moving clips past that line brings up the corresponding video in the Viewer pane. When inserting new media, this is where they go by default.



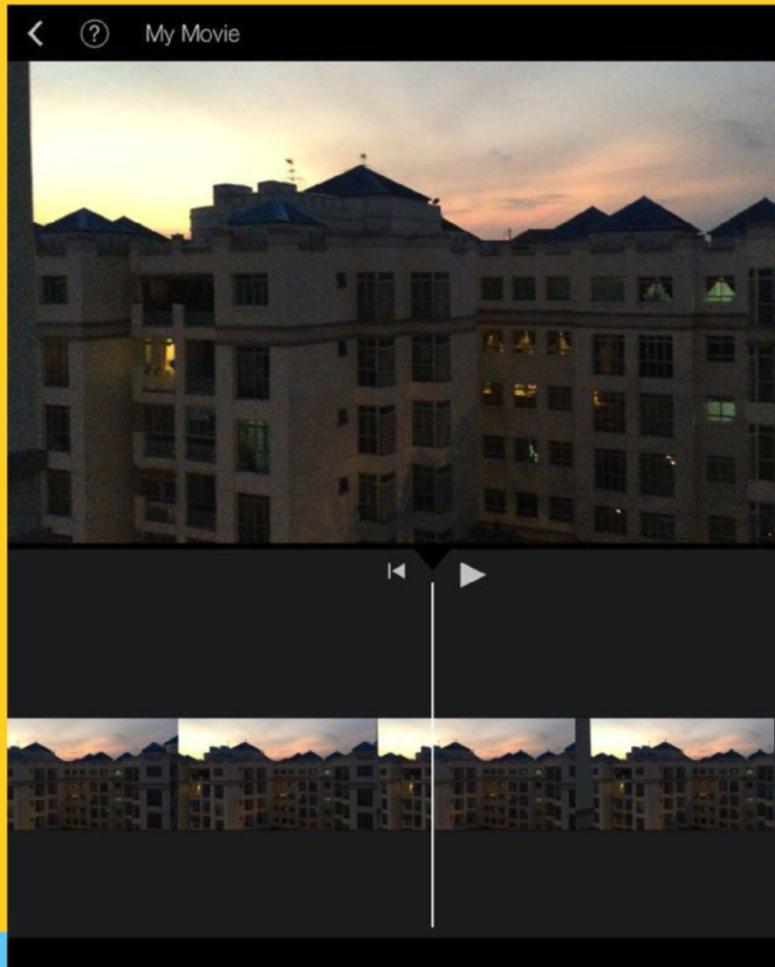
TAP IT, MOVE IT, SLICE IT

- To move clips, tap and hold on the playhead line. The clip will move up slightly, and you can then move it to the desired location.
- To cut a clip, advance it to the start of your cut and tap the clip to highlight it. Then, run your finger down the playhead. The clip splits in two, and you can delete the unwanted part. (For video clips, you can also tap Split in the menu below.)



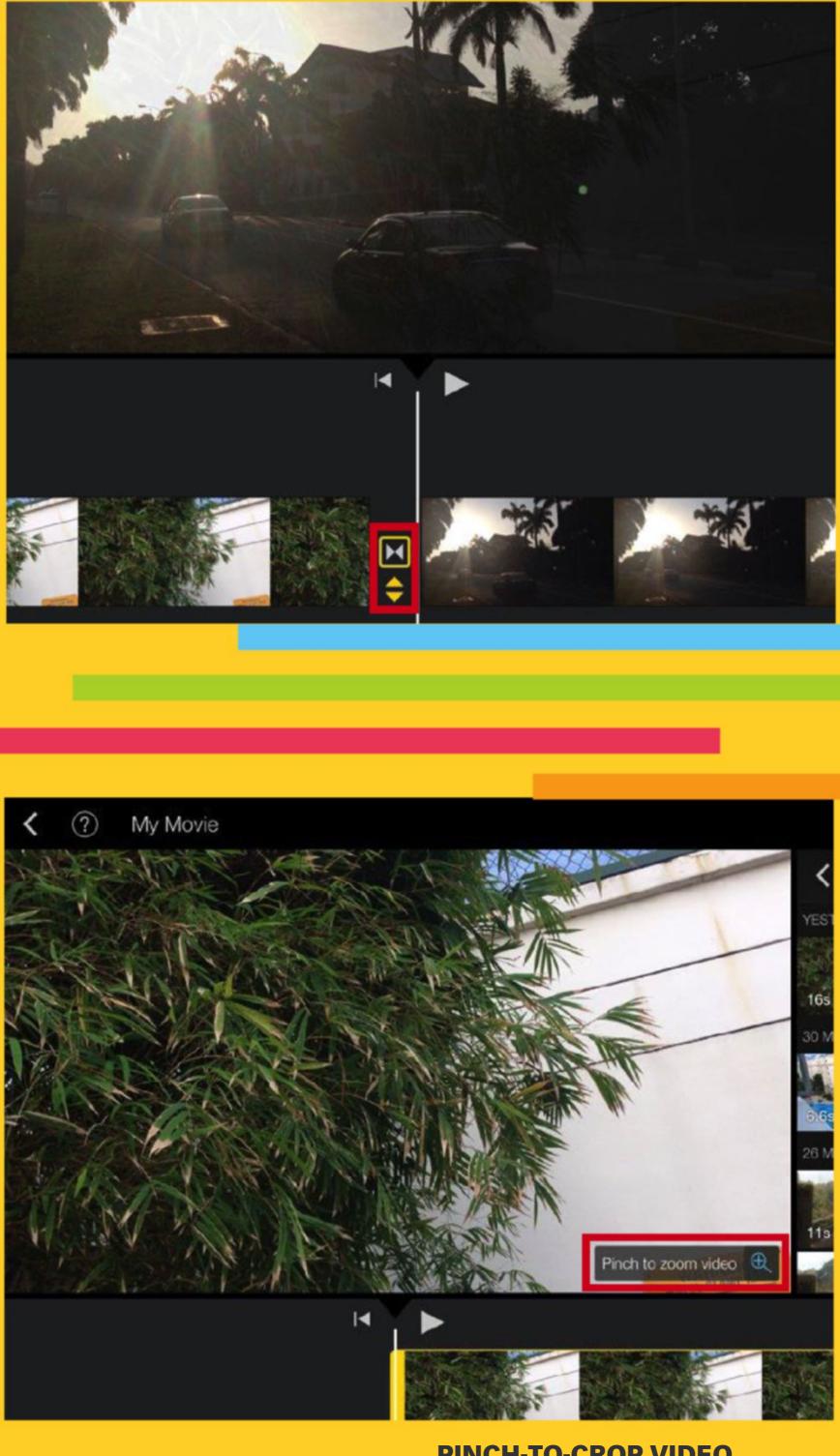
ADDING CLIPS

In most home movies, you'll probably have only one layer for video tracks. This is fine if you want to move from one clip straight to the next, but if you're looking to do more, tap on the ellipses to get the option of overlaying a new clip in, placing it in a picture-in-picture window (handy for commentaries), or as a split-screen. Selecting the jiggly line with the small "plus" adds the video as a soundtrack (i.e., keeping the sound without the video). Clips will be added at the playhead, so adjust the track in the project pane appropriately.



TRANSITIONS

When you add (or cut) a clip, a small square with two triangles appears between the clips. That's where transitions are in iMovie. Tapping on it gives you five options. The star gives you the default transition for the template you chose. Next is your traditional crossfade, and after that you have two options for screen wipes. Finally, you can choose to fade to white or black. The options don't end there though; when you've inserted your transition, tap on it again to bring up two triangles. Tapping that allows you to adjust the duration of your transition.

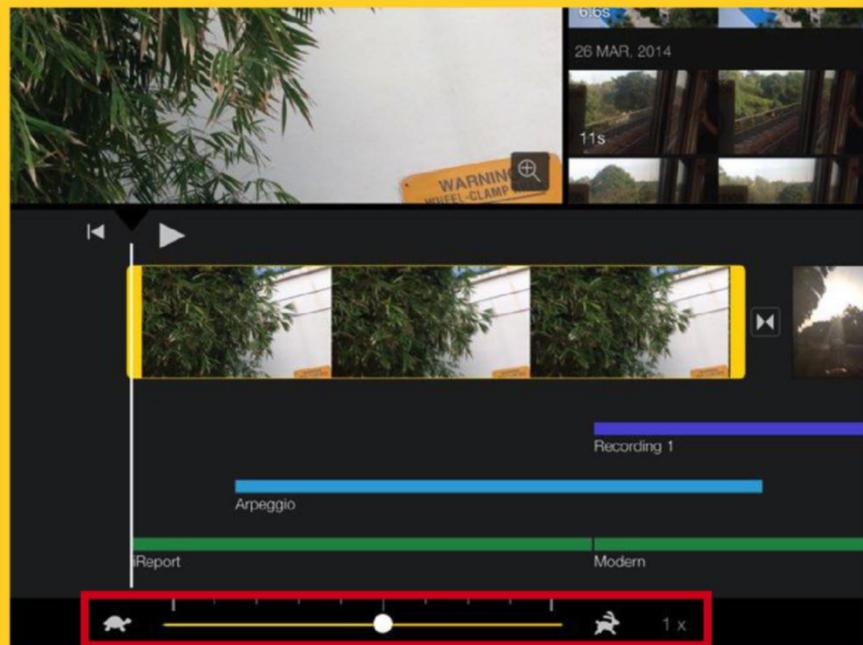


PINCH-TO-CROP VIDEO

To crop video, tap the clip on the timeline, and a magnifying glass will appear at the bottom-right corner of the preview window. Tap on that, and "Pinch to zoom video" will roll out. You can now pinch and spread your fingers to zoom in on the clip, or pinch and close to zoom back. You will also be able to move the clip to adjust your framing, and the entire clip will stay in that crop.

SPEED IT UP, SLOW IT DOWN

To adjust the speed of a clip on the timeline, tap Speed and adjust the slider appropriately. This will be adjusted to the entire clip, so remember to slice the clip into sections if you want to adjust it back later. If you want to change the speed of a video clip without affecting the audio, go to Project settings (at the bottom-right) and ensure that "Speed changes pitch" is off.

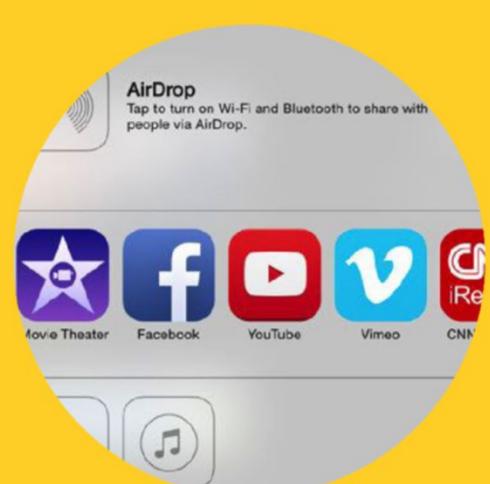
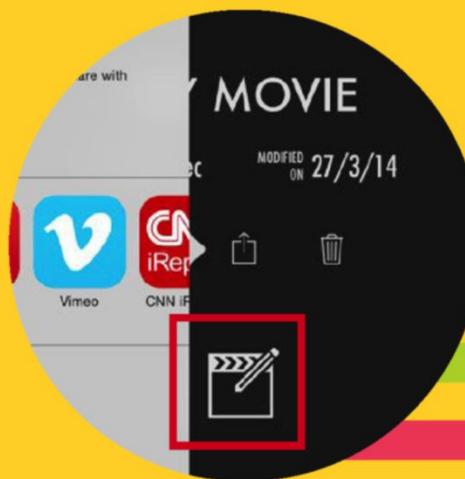


AUDIO OPTIONS

As mentioned above, you can use a video track as audio, use one of the preset soundtracks that comes with iMovie, or import audio files from your iTunes library to score your video. There's also a selection of sound effects, and you can record audio directly from iMovie by tapping on the microphone icon at the bottom-right corner. To fade audio tracks in and out, tap on the audio clip, and tap Fade. Two triangles will appear at the front and end of the clip. Moving the triangle adjusts how it fades in and out, respectively. You can also adjust the speed and volume of the track.

PUSHING IT OUT

When you're done with your video, iMovie provides you with an easy way to get your masterpiece out in front of audiences. Just hit the middle icon in the project pane. You'll get options to share your movie via AirDrop, push it out to iMovie Theater, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, CNN iReport, or send it to someone via Mail. You can also choose to export your video to your camera roll, or send it to your iTunes library as a shared video.



APP ATTACK:

Child-Friendly Apps to Make Parenting Easier

by Hafeez Sim

Parenting is a reward in itself, except that it doesn't come with an instruction manual! Here are some apps to help cope with the task.

MY365

Android/iOS
Free



Keep a visual record of your child's growth with the My365 app. Snap a picture every day and place it in the calendar to capture special moments in your child's life, such as his first haircut or birthday party. But that's not all; you can also apply filters to the pictures, or make them resemble Polaroid snaps. You also get the option to keep your pictures private, or share them with family and friends, so loved ones can also watch your child grow up day by day.



While not specifically designed for parents, it's a great app to chronicle the growth of your bundle of joy easily.

CHOREMONSTER

iOS
Free



Make your kids help out with chores by using the ChoreMonster app. All you need to do is create scheduled chores and assign points to these chores. By completing these tasks, your children will earn the points. These points can then be used to purchase rewards that you have specified, such as a new toy or a trip to the amusement park. As an added bonus, kids will also unlock random monsters when fulfilling chores. You probably won't need to resort to punishment again just to make your children do their housework.



ChoreMonster provides a point collection system for every chore done, which can then be redeemed for rewards.

WORD WIZARD

iOS
US\$ 2.99



Teach your children how to spell and pronounce words with this useful app. This interactive app lets you align letters to form words, and it will read out the sounds of letters, and will also read out words for your children. They will learn about the alphabet and move on to reading and spelling, with the app providing more than 1,400 questions and answers. Interactive animations will pop up as a reward when your child answers the quiz correctly, while you also receive a report to track your child's progress.



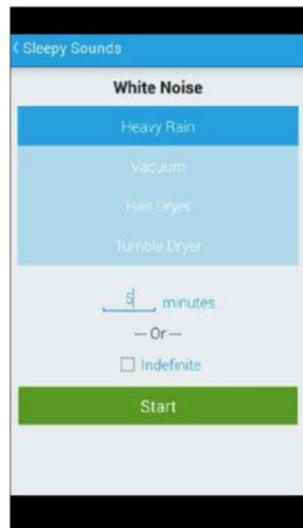
A hands-on approach to early vocabulary building. Kids can figure out how each letter sounds as it makes up a word.

SLEEPY SOUNDS

Android/iOS
Free



Not all children fall asleep easily, and the Sleepy Sounds app will help make that happen. The app comes with four options to help your child sleep, which include playing a selection of lullabies, or a soothing white noise. You can also choose to play the sounds of nature or a selection of your own music that you have on your phone. The best part about the app is that you can choose to loop the music indefinitely, or set the app to play the sounds for a specified period of time.



Not only can you play a variety of sleep-friendly sounds and music, you can also adjust its duration of play.

TOP 6 UI CHANGES IN THE WINDOWS 8.1 UPDATE

Proof That the Modern and Desktop Environments Can Coexist After All

by Ng Chong Seng

The first major update for Windows 8.1 is sprinkled with UI changes to reduce the navigation confusion faced by many desktop PC users who made the jump. But are they enough to entice those still sitting on the fence?

POWER AND SEARCH BUTTONS ON THE START SCREEN

After the update, you'll notice that there are two new buttons – Power and Search – at the top-right of the Start screen, right beside your account picture. For mouse users, that means no more slamming the cursor to the top- or bottom-right corner of the screen to bring up the Charms bar, and then clicking the Settings charm just to get to the Power menu.

DESKTOP-STYLE CONTEXT MENU WHEN YOU DO A RIGHT-CLICK

Before the update, when you right-click a tile, the tile will be selected and a menu bar will appear right at the bottom, showing you more options. After the update, this is no longer the case. Instead, you get a context menu right beside your cursor – you know, just like the desktop environment.

NEW METHODS FOR CLOSING AND MINIMIZING MODERN-STYLE APPS

Closing a Windows Store app is quite a chore and isn't very obvious if you're using a mouse, which is to click the top of the app and drag it to the bottom of the screen. After the update, when you bring the cursor right to the top of the screen, a title bar will appear. You can now close the app by clicking – you guessed it – the Close (X) button on the right. There's also a Minimize (-) button.

SHOW MORE ITEMS IN THE START SCREEN AND ALL APPS LIST

Windows 8.1's Modern environment takes both screen resolution and size into consideration to determine the size of the on-screen elements. But if you have a high-DPI screen, you may want to shrink the elements so that more things can be shown. Now, there's an easy way to decrease the DPI scaling for the Start screen and the All Apps list. Simply go to the Settings charm, select Tiles, and enable "Show more tiles on the Start screen" and "Show more apps in Apps view."

PIN WINDOWS STORE APPS TO THE DESKTOP TASKBAR

After the update, it's possible to pin Windows Store apps to the desktop taskbar: just right-click a tile on the Start screen or an app icon in the All Apps list, and select "Pin to taskbar." Like how it works for desktop apps, you can see a thumbnail preview of the last opened window when you hover over a Windows Store app icon on the taskbar.

TASKBAR IN THE MODERN ENVIRONMENT

After the update, the taskbar is no longer a desktop exclusive. It'll also pop up in a Windows Store app or at the Start screen when you bring the cursor to the bottom of the screen. In fact, Windows 9 (expected in mid-2015) is widely speculated to go even further, letting users run Windows Store apps (in floating windows) in the desktop environment.

THE SCIENCE OF TIRES

by Kenny Yeo

You may know about rim size, you may be dazzled by the marketing of the wonders of tire treads, but have you ever wondered what those markings on the sidewalls of your tires mean? They're not gibberish and do in fact contain vital information about the tires and the consideration that goes into making one. We'll explain how to read them.

MODEL NAME/BRAND

Example: P215/65R15 95H

TIRE CLASS

The first character signifies the tire class. In this case, "P" means that it is a passenger tire meant for passenger cars. Other tire classes include "LT" for light truck, "ST" for special trailer, and "T" for temporary spare wheels.

SECTION WIDTH

The next three digits indicate the width of the tire in millimeters, in this case, 215mm.

ASPECT RATIO

The next two digits indicate the height of the sidewall as a percentage of its section width. In this case, the height of the tire's sidewall is 65% of 215mm or 139.75mm.

CONSTRUCTION

The next letter represents the tire's internal construction. "R" stands for radial construction, which has been the industry standard for passenger cars for the past two or so decades. Other construction methods include "B" for bias belt and "D" for diagonal, which can sometimes be found on truck tires.

DIAMETER

The final two digits indicate the diameter of the rim for which this tire is sized. In this case, the tire is meant for a 15-inch rim.

LOAD INDEX

The next two digits represent the tire's load index, which tells you how much weight each tire can support. The higher the number, the more weight it can support. To know exactly how much weight, this number has to be looked up on a load index chart. In this case, "95" corresponds to a load index of 690kg.



SPEED RATING

The last character indicates the tire's speed rating, the speed at which the tire can run for extended periods of time. To know exactly what speed corresponds to the rating on the tire, one must look up a speed rating chart. "H" in this case means the tire can run safely up to 210km/h.

UTQG RATINGS

The UTQG (Uniform Tire Quality Grading) system was devised by the NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) to provide consumers with vital information – treadwear, traction, and temperature – when it came to purchasing tires. However, it is important to note that the ratings are not designated by the NHTSA themselves. Rather,

they are assigned by the tire's respective manufacturers based on their own test results or those obtained from an independent testing facility. As a result, there has been some debate as to how useful these ratings really are.

TREADWEAR

Treadwear grade does not give an actual guarantee of the tire's mileage; rather, it gives a rough gauge of how long the tires would last compared to the test tire used by the respective tire manufacturer. For example, a treadwear of 100 would mean that the tire would last as long as the test tire whereas a rating of 200 would mean that the tire would last twice as long.

TRACTION

Traction grade is an indication of the tire's ability to stop on wet pavement as measured under controlled conditions on government-specified test surfaces of asphalt and concrete. There are four grades – AA, A, B, and C – with AA being the highest and C the lowest.

TEMPERATURE

The three temperature grades – A, B, and C – represent the tire's resistance to the generation of heat at a certain speed. For example, a tire graded A would be able to effectively dissipate heat up to speeds of over 185km/h. For B, the speed limit is reduced to between 160km/h and 185km/h; and C between 136km/h and 160km/h.



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YOUR DETAILS

Name		
Mailing Address		
Home No.		
Office No.		
Mobile No.		
Fax No.		
Email		
Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Female

Education

- Primary
- Secondary
- College
- Graduate
- Post-graduate
- Others

Industry

- Advertising/Media
- Automotive/Transportation
- Construction/Engineering
- Education/Training
- Finance/Accountancy
- Government
- Hospitality/Tourism
- Information Technology
- Legal
- Logistics/Distribution
- Manufacturing
- Medical/Health Care
- Military
- People/Real Estate
- Telecommunications
- Others

TELL US MORE ABOUT YOURSELVES

Occupation

- Executive Management
- General Management
- Administrative/Support
- Sales/Marketing/Distribution
- Call Center
- Self Employed
- College Student
- High School Student
- Others

Monthly Income

- PHP 5,000-Php 8,000
- PHP 8,001-Php 12,000
- PHP 12,001-Php 18,000
- PHP 18,001-Php 25,000
- PHP 25,001-Php 35,000
- PHP 35,001-Php 50,000
- PHP 50,001-Php100,000
- PHP 100,001 and above

STEP 3 PAYMENT METHODS

Cash Check

Enclosed is my check payment made payable to: **HardwareZone Philippines Corp.**

Name of Bank _____

Check Number _____

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- For inquiries and detailed instructions on how to subscribe to HWM, please contact HardwareZone Philippines Corp. at (632) 634-9179.
- Subscription rates may change without prior notice.

- Please allow 3 or 4 weeks of processing time.
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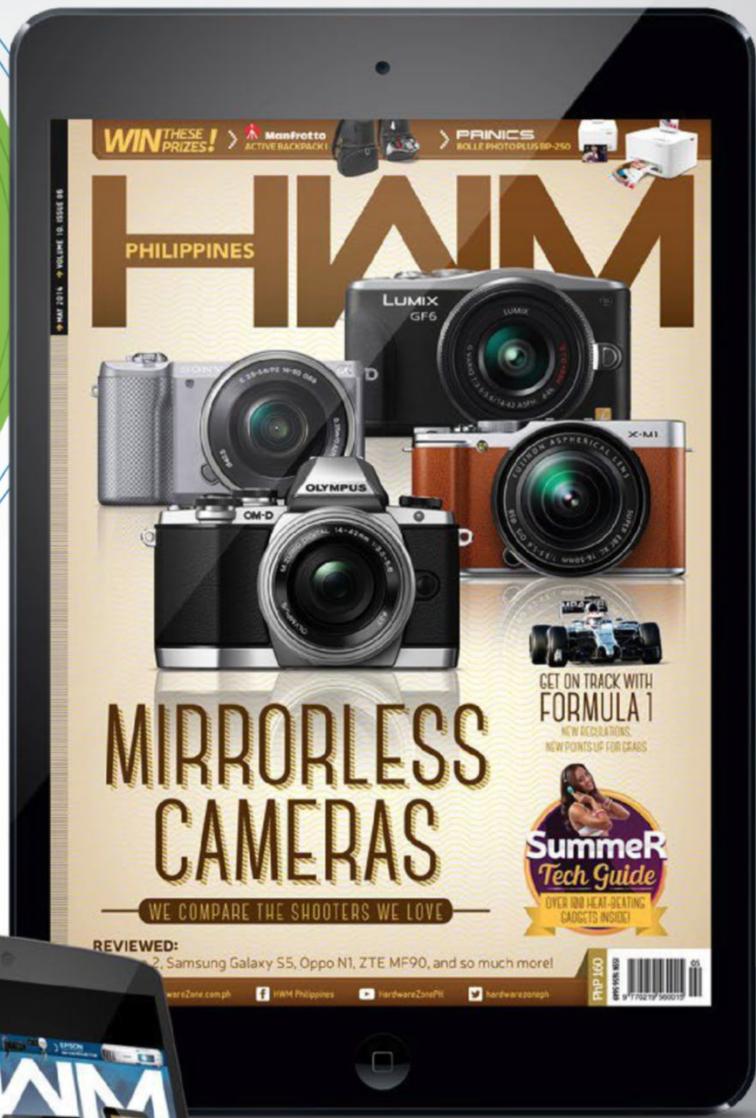
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Technological innovations aren't just geared towards the development of smartphones and tablets; just look at Leelen's Video Villa Door Entry System (JB-304). The JB-304 offers hands-free operation with its built-in camera and microphone, which allows for a safe and effective method of screening your visitors. You can also release door locks on top of letting you talk and see who is at your doorstep. Let your door have a taste of technology with the Leelen intercom system.

Itching to add another layer of security to your doorstep aside from the usual lock? You're in luck, as we're giving away a Leelen Video Villa Door Entry System! **Simply share with us where you'd use this product for a chance to win.**

Send in your entries via email to editor.ph@hwzcorp.com together with your name, address, and telephone number. For more information about the product, visit www.leelen.com/en.

The HWM Team congratulates Benjamin Jacinto, the winner of the Bolle Photo Plus BP-250 from our May Issue contest.



Terms and Conditions • This contest is open to all HWM readers except staff of Hardware Zone Phils. Corp. • The qualifying period for this contest is until 30 June 2014. • Only the winner(s) of the contest will be notified via email. • Winners are given 15 days to respond to the notification email and another 15 days since replying to claim their respective prizes. Prizes not claimed within this period will be forfeited. • Selection panel's decisions are final and no correspondence will be entertained. • Only one (1) entry per reader in a particular contest. • Should the specified prize be no longer available (e.g., phased out), the contest sponsor may change the prize to another product of similar or equal value. • By sending in your entries, you are agreeing to the above-mentioned terms and conditions.

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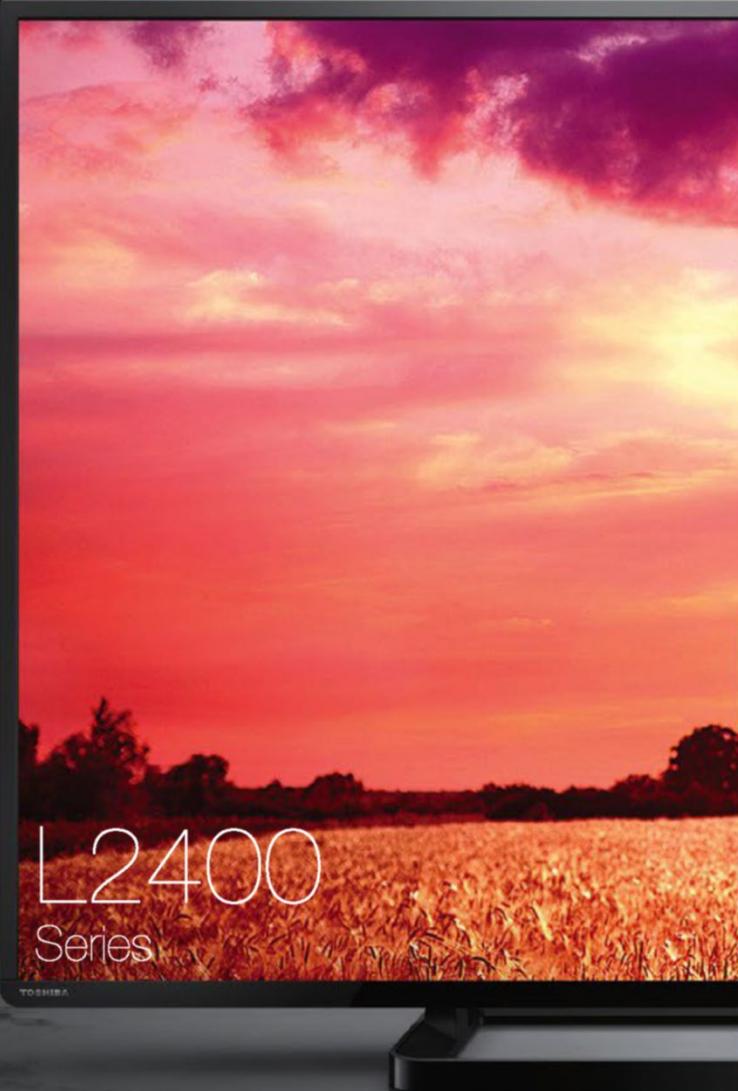
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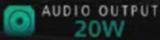
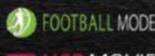
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