

TOUCH I TO INNOVATE

The iPhone's touch screen makes once frustrating features easy and elegant



MUSIC
Oh, baby. The vivid 3.5-in. screen means you can now flip through your music collection by album cover



MENU
Touch the icons to toggle among phone, e-mail, Web and iPod, as well as handy apps like Google Maps



MESSAGING
Text messages appear in jewel-like bubbles, organized by conversation, not jumbled together in your In box



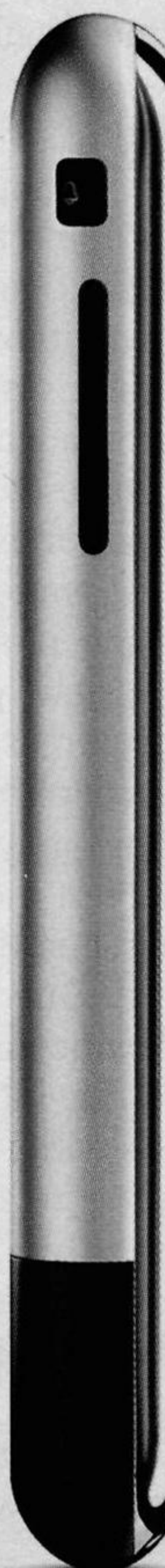
E-MAIL
iPhone handles mail just like a desktop computer, complete with images, HTML, rich text formatting, the works



WEB
This isn't the mobile Web. It's the real deal. Tap the screen with a fingertip to zoom in on part of a page

ACTUAL SIZE

The new iPhone is 11.5 cm high by 6.1 cm wide, and the whole package is just over 1 cm thick



BUSINESS

Then Jonathan Ive, Apple's head of design—the Englishman who shaped the iMac and the iPod—squashed the case to just over 1 cm thick and widened it to what looks like a bar of expensive chocolate wrapped in aluminum and stainless steel. The iPhone is a typical piece of Ive design: an austere, abstract, Platonic-looking form that somehow also manages to feel warm and organic and ergonomic. Unlike my phone. Ive picks it up and points out four little nubbins on the back. “Your phone's got feet on,” he says, not unkindly. “Why would anybody put feet on a phone?” Ive has the answer, of course: “It raises the speaker on the back off the table. But the right solution is to put the speaker in the right place in the first place. That's why our speaker isn't on the bottom, so you can have it on the table and you don't need feet.” Sure enough, no feet mar the iPhone's smooth lines.

O.K., so it's pretty. Now pick it up and make a call. A big friendly icon appears on that huge screen. Say a second call comes in while you're talking. Another icon appears. Tap that second icon and you switch to the second call. Tap the “merge calls” icon, and you've got a three-way conference call. It's ridiculously simple.

Another example: voice mail. Until now you've had to grope through your v-mail by ear, blindly, like an eyeless cave creature. On the iPhone you see all your messages laid out visually, onscreen, labeled by caller. If you want to hear one, you touch it. Done. Now try a text message: instead of jumbling them all together in your In box, iPhone arranges your texts by recipient, as threaded conversations made of little jewel-like bubbles. And instead of “typing” on a three-by-four number keypad, you get a display of a full, usable QWERTY keyboard. You will never again have to hit the 7 key four times to type the letter s.

Now forget about phone calls. Look at the video, which is impressively crisp and sharp. This is the first time the hype about “rich media” on a phone has actually appeared plausible. Look at the e-mail client, which handles attachments, in-line images and HTML e-mails as adroitly as a desktop client. Look at the Web browser, a modified version of Safari that displays actual Web pages, not a teensy, deformed version of the Web. There's a Google Maps application that's almost worth the price of admission on its own.

I do have nitpicks. You can't download songs onto iPhone directly from the iTunes store; you have to export them from a computer. And even though it has wi-fi and