

T-Mobile's phones are splashier, but not quite perfect

March 18 2009, By Eric Benderoff

T-Mobile's phone lineup is starting to sparkle. Still, some of the company's models could use more luster.

The products include the T-Mobile G1, also known as the Google [phone](#); [Samsung](#) Memoir, the nation's first 8-megapixel camera phone; the refreshed [BlackBerry](#) Curve 8900, the lightest full-Qwerty BlackBerry available; and [Motorola](#) Renew, the first phone in the U.S. made of recycled materials.

Outside of the G1, which is second-best to the [iPhone](#) (AT&T), T-Mobile's other top offerings are not quite whole - and that applies to the Memoir and the Curve 8900. Let me elaborate.

- Samsung Memoir \$250, two-year contract

Few phones offer resolutions comparable to a point-and-shoot camera. The 8-megapixel Memoir does, and it even looks like a camera.

The phone is controlled via touch screen, but the camera can be activated by pressing the shutter button - then point and shoot. It couldn't be easier to capture spontaneous fun. For more shooting choices, tap the screen. Options include digital zoom, a flash, brightness adjustments, a timer, five shooting modes and a video recorder.

Some of my shots were very good, while others were so-so. The camera has shutter lag issues, like most digital cameras. The lag here is slightly

worse but acceptable in daylight or with good interior lighting _ particularly for a phone. The flash helps in lower light.

As a camera phone, few are as good as this one. As a touch-screen phone, however, the Memoir lags the iPhone and the G1. The home screen on the Memoir allows you to move icons with the touch of a finger. It's a good feature reminiscent of the G1. Also, dialing by touch is simple.

But the touch screen is a pain when browsing the Web. Scrolling is an exercise in unintended clicks. I needed to use a firmer touch than I do on the iPhone, resulting in my clicking of links I had not intended to open.

Also, for some reason, sending photos from the phone via e-mail didn't work well. Some e-mails went through, most didn't. I was able to make prints on a Dell printer and send photos to a computer via a Bluetooth connection.

- [BlackBerry Curve](#) 8900 \$199, two-year contract

This is not the first BlackBerry Curve, but it is the cutest. The 8900 is like a Mini-Me to the excellent Bold, the best BlackBerry available.

The Curve 8900 would challenge the Bold if it ran on T-Mobile's new 3G network. (The Memoir does.) If you use a BlackBerry primarily for e-mail, you'll be fine on the slower Edge network. (A 3G BlackBerry will be available later this year, a T-Mobile spokesman said.)

I did download several applications using Edge, including the fine Slacker App for BlackBerry. I was worried it wouldn't work well on the slower network, but it did.

The 8900 does compensate with Wi-Fi, but let's hope it works better

than it did in my house. My home network connected to the 8900 via Wi-Fi, but I couldn't open a Web page or application despite the phone showing a connection. I'm not the first person to use this phone, so there may be an issue with the review unit (my Wi-Fi is fine).

The 8900 is the smallest BlackBerry with a full keyboard. I had little trouble using the keys to send a message, but some people might find them cramped.

If not for the slower network, this would be the second-best BlackBerry on the market _ maybe the best if you want a smaller phone.

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