

Review: Motorola's Droid is a serious smart phone

November 4 2009, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer



The new Motorola Droid smart phone is shown in San Francisco, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2009. (AP Photo/Russel A. Daniels)

(AP) -- Since its debut in 2007, millions of people have gravitated toward Apple's iPhone, wooed by its sleek hardware, simple user interface and abundance of applications.

Other smart phone makers have been trying since then to dispel the notion that the iPhone is the be-all and end-all of mobile gadgets. The latest push comes from Verizon Wireless and Motorola, whose Droid is a good alternative for those seeking a feature-packed smart phone with a full keyboard and strong wireless service.

The Droid stands out from the crowd of iPhone wannabes with a slim but weighty body, noticeably angular look and large touch screen.

Its 3.7-inch screen is bigger than the iPhone's 3.5-inch one, and the extra real estate really makes it easier to navigate Web pages and play with applications. It also offers plenty of space on the home screen (and two side screens that you swipe to see) for software "[widgets](#)" that give a quick look at such things as your friends' Facebook status updates or the song you're playing on the built-in [music player](#).

And the Droid's cost is comparable with the iPhone's - \$200, after a rebate, with a two-year service contract with Verizon Wireless, its exclusive U.S. distributor.

The Droid runs the latest version of Google Inc.'s operating system, Android 2.0, which includes some enhancements such as the ability to zoom in on Web pages and photos by double-tapping on the screen. With one tap on a photo in your contacts list, you can also quickly see the ways in which you can contact your friends.

When it comes out on Friday the Droid will also be the first phone to include a cool, free mapping application from Google that can announce turn-by-turn directions.

[Google](#) Maps Navigation is easy to use and helped me out on a late-night ice cream run - I put the Droid in my pocket, turned up the volume and followed its female-robot-voice instructions while riding my motorcycle across town.

I was glad to see that the application quickly recalculates your route if you're prone to making wrong turns as I am. And if you live in a busy city with unpredictable traffic, you might like an option for getting alternate routes, all of which you can see overlaid on the same map along with their distances and estimated driving times.

Like other Android phones, the Droid has a voice search function. It can

be used, for instance, to help navigate routes when you're in the Maps Navigation application. Saying "Navigate to Starbucks in San Francisco" should give you a list of Starbucks Coffee shops. Pick one, and you'll get turn-by-turn directions.

I'll probably stick with using the Droid's keyboard to get directions, though, as it had a hard time understanding me. The phone tried to send me to Ikea when I asked it to take me from my office to my apartment. It offered me all sorts of unrelated results when I tried to get directions to a French restaurant near my home.

That's not to say the keyboard is perfect. Unlike many other phones with standard, "QWERTY" keyboards, the Droid has keys that are pretty much flat, which often made it hard to type accurately. This wasn't helped by the fact that, aside from the space bar, the keys are all the same size. Two blank key-sized spaces on the bottom of the keyboard - one on the left, one on the right - made me wonder why Motorola didn't try to at least enlarge the often-used "return" key.

One Droid feature touted heavily in Verizon's television commercials is its ability to run several applications simultaneously, which is something the iPhone can't do. Generally, I found that the Droid does this pretty well.

There were hiccups, though. As I was listening to music, I tried to take a photo to send in a text message to a friend. Elvis Costello started to stutter as I pressed the shutter button. Another time, I tried to make a call while the Maps Navigation application was running and had to endure very loud instructions about where to turn while the phone was ringing.

I did like the Droid's five-megapixel camera, which matches the resolution of another new Motorola phone that runs Android, the Cliq,

and can take sharper shots than contemporaries like the iPhone, whose camera hovers around 3 megapixels. There's also a very bright flash - another thing the iPhone and Cliq lack - so you can take photos in low light.

The Droid's big screen makes for a nice viewfinder, and a small menu of camera settings slides out from the left side of the screen so you can adjust the white balance and use different color effects. You'll have plenty of space to store the photos you take, too, because the Droid includes a 16 gigabyte microSD memory card.

The Droid runs on Verizon Wireless' network, and I was pretty impressed with its speed as I surfed the Web, looked up directions or checked e-mail. It also got a generally solid reception for making calls, and while my friends' voices didn't sound as clear as they could, I didn't have problems with dropped calls.

Motorola has been struggling to come up with a phone that comes close to matching the popularity of 2005's Razr, and the Droid is the latest indication that Motorola is really trying to figure out what consumers want.

It's also one of the most promising challengers to the iPhone, a field that now includes Palm's Pre and Research In Motion's BlackBerry Storm2.

Some Verizon Wireless customers have been holding out on getting the iPhone - available in the U.S. only through AT&T - because it means switching away from a service they are already used to and like. For them, the Droid might be a good reason to stick with that wireless provider.

Even if you aren't already using Verizon, if you're not swayed by the [iPhone](#), you might fall for the Droid.

©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Review: Motorola's Droid is a serious smart phone (2009, November 4) retrieved 8 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-11-motorola-droid-smart.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.