

Review: HTC HD2, the supersize smartphone

March 31 2010, By Brier Dudley



After spending a few days with the latest phone that Steve Jobs doesn't want you to have, I'm not sure what all the fuss is about.

I'm talking about the HTC HD2, a striking gray slab with an enormous 4.3-inch display -- the largest touch-screen of any phone now available in the U.S.

[T-Mobile](#) USA began selling the HD2 on Wednesday, and the first batch was sold out by Friday.

It's a pretty cool phone, but I wouldn't make a federal case out of it, as Apple did earlier this month. It sued to block the import and sale of the

HD2 and some other HTC phones because of alleged patent infringements.

Lawsuit or not, I'd sit tight for a while before deciding to buy an HD2. It's the first of several new phones coming this year with bigger screens, fast processors and new services designed for the faster phone networks now coming online.

That's why I was so interested in the HD2, even though it's not as sleek as the latest [Google](#) Android phones and it's based on Microsoft's lame-duck Windows Mobile 6.5 software.

The HD2 marks the beginning of a march toward bigger phones designed as much for video and Web applications as making calls. They're staking out a new category of supersize devices and stretching the definition of a phone, pulling it further down the path Apple blazed with the [iPhone](#) and its 3.5-inch [touch-screen](#).

Like the HD2, they'll have 4-inch or larger screens and take advantage of wafer-thin 1 gigahertz processors and network upgrades that are finally making mobile broadband a reality. They'll come with a suite of media applications, including mobile video downloads, streaming and digital book readers.

By the end of summer, Samsung will be selling a 4-incher that plays 720p video, and [HTC](#) and Sprint will have an Android phone with the same screen as the HD2 that runs on Clearwire's 4G network.

Then phones based on Microsoft's new [Windows Phone](#) 7 Series software will start appearing by the holiday season, with large touch-screens and the same 800 x 480 pixel resolution as the HD2.

People may not be able to wait. They're shopping for smartphones now.

According to Nielsen research released Friday, 45 percent of U.S. consumers in a recent survey said their next phone will be a smartphone.

Nielsen expects the majority of U.S. mobile-phone users will have smartphones by the end of 2011. That's up from 29 percent smartphone usage today.

People may be lured by the promise of a decent video player in their pocket, allowing them to download and watch videos wherever they can now make a phone call.

The HD2 is almost there, but not quite.

It's loaded with applications to take advantage of its big screen, including a new Blockbuster service for renting and buying movies to play on the phone.

But T-Mobile's network isn't yet fast enough to download videos on the go; you still have to connect via Wi-Fi to rent or buy a movie for your phone. The network should have broadband speeds through the country by year-end.

Both versions of the "Transformers" movie come preloaded on the 16 gigabyte memory card, along with a mobile "Guitar Hero" game and a digital book application from Barnes & Noble (for pretending you're doing homework?).

In my brief time with the phone, I didn't have time to try half of its features. But I did have some issues with its software. It briefly hung up a few times while I was setting up the various applications, several of which required updates and tedious registration processes.

The 5-megapixel video camera and camcorder were easy to use. It was

nice to browse and "pinch to zoom" images on the big, beautiful screen.

At first it felt a little funny to make calls with the big slab of glass against my ear, but the call quality was good and I didn't notice the size after a few calls. The phone is 4.7 by 2.6 inches and 0.43-inches thick.

HTC's interface is attractive and customizable, but I'm not a fan of the mix of gestures and hard buttons you use to navigate the device. There's a home button and a Windows button, for toggling between the home screen and the full list of application icons, but I wish you could just swipe your finger to call up the list.

Several of the preloaded games and applications are limited trials, including the MobiTV service for viewing TV content.

Movies and YouTube were crisp and clear. The screen's big enough that it's almost not ridiculous to watch them on a phone.

But the most fun thing about the HD2 may be its cachet as a phone that Apple's trying to banish from the country.

It's like carrying 5.5 ounces of smooth contraband in your pocket, for only \$200 plus \$60 per month for a voice and data plan.

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