

Review: Xperia Play not the phone gamers hoped for

June 1 2011, By LOU KESTEN , Associated Press



In this Feb. 16, 2011 file photo, Sony Ericsson's new mobile phone "Xperia Play" is displayed at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. The Xperia Play introduces a new gimmick into the crowded Android smartphone market: PlayStation Portable-style controls. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez, file)

(AP) -- Sony makes PlayStation game consoles and, through a joint venture, cellphones. Gamers have been asking for years why it hasn't combined the two products. Well, it finally has, with Sony Ericsson's Xperia Play.

Sadly, though, this is not the "PlayStation phone" gamers have been

hoping for. It is a solid machine that will feel immediately comfortable to PSP users, but it doesn't yet have anywhere near the breadth and depth of games you'd expect from something with "Play" in its name.

At launch, only one classic PlayStation game is available: the delightful but dated "Crash Bandicoot." This is disappointing, particularly since it's the first time Sony has allowed its PlayStation games to run on hardware not directly made by Sony. (Sony Ericsson is a joint venture with Sweden's [LM Ericsson](#) AB, and substantially independent from either parent company.)

The Xperia Play is available now from [Verizon Wireless](#), and costs \$200 with a two-year contract. As on many smartphones, a panel slides it out from under the screen. But it doesn't contain the usual keyboard. Instead, there's a full set of arcade controls that look like what might happen if you flattened a PlayStation controller to (almost) two dimensions.

On the left are directional controls (up, down, left, right). On the right are the now familiar PlayStation buttons (triangle, square, circle, X). In the middle are two pressure-sensitive plates meant to duplicate the two joysticks on the PlayStation DualShock controller. Left and right triggers - which land where your index fingers should be - round out the game controls. All those buttons make the Xperia Play, at two-thirds of an inch, a little thicker than most smartphones.

The [game](#) menu appears whenever you open the device. Besides "Crash Bandicoot," it's loaded with a variety of games that have been hits on other cellphone networks: Electronic Arts' "The Sims 3" and "Madden NFL 11," Gameloft's "Asphalt 6: Adrenaline" and "Star Battalion," and Digital Legends' "Bruce Lee Dragon Warrior."

More games can be downloaded through Verizon's VCast store. The selection is passable, ranging from family favorites like "Uno" to the role-

playing epic "Zenonia," but there's nothing exclusive to the Xperia Play. The device runs on Verizon's 3G network, and games can also be downloaded through Wi-Fi. (Gameloft's "Let's Golf 2" took about 5 minutes to download via Wi-Fi and install.)

While most of these games take advantage of the PlayStation-style controls, they make you aware of the phone's biggest drawback, compared with a PSP: The two plates that are supposed to mimic joysticks provide no tactile feedback, so it's hard to tell if you're applying enough pressure until you've slammed your racecar into a wall. In racing or flying simulators you can use the directional buttons instead, but games that require the virtual joysticks - like Glu Games' dual-stick shooter "Gun Bros." - are nearly unplayable.

The phone runs the latest version of Google Inc.'s Android operating system, so you can download plenty more games from the Android Market. These games don't use the PSP-like controls, though - they're the same touchscreen games you can play on most Android phones. And the Android Market is so clogged with dreadful software that it's difficult to find the few gems worth downloading.

While the 4-inch screen isn't as vivid as the PSP's, it is bright and sharp enough that your eyes don't get tired during prolonged gaming sessions. The battery gave me about five hours of playtime; [Sony Ericsson](#) says it can deliver up to seven hours and 40 minutes of talk time. The two front and back-facing cameras shoot adequate still pictures and video.

In short, the Xperia Play delivers just about everything you'd expect in a top-of-the-line [smartphone](#). What it doesn't deliver - yet - is the quality of gaming you get from a dedicated device. PlayStation fans who are in the market for a smartphone should consider it, but it won't replace your PSP.

More information: <http://www.sonyericsson.com/play/>

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Review: Xperia Play not the phone gamers hoped for (2011, June 1) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-06-xperia-gamers.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.