

Microsoft enters hardware business with Surface

October 26 2012, by Peter Svensson



In this Tuesday Oct. 23, 2012, file photo, a Chinese man tries out the new Surface tablet computer made by Microsoft at a show in Shanghai ahead of the launch of the operating system on Oct. 26. With the release of Windows 8, PC makers are doing their best to blur the boundaries between the PC and tablet with an array of devices that mash keyboards and touch screens together in different ways. (AP Photo) CHINA OUT

(AP)—Microsoft will be releasing its own tablet computer for the first

time when the new version of Windows comes out Friday, as the software company tries to challenge Apple Inc. and its dominant iPad.

The initial version of [Surface](#) will run a modified version of [Windows 8](#) called RT. That means Surface won't run standard Windows programs, only apps designed for it and obtained through Microsoft's new online store.

The device will start at \$499, the same as the most recent, full-sized iPads. The display is 10.6 inches (26.9 centimeters) diagonally, slightly larger than the [iPad](#)'s.

The Surface goes on sale Friday, though Microsoft is selling it at its store in New York's Times Square starting at 10 p.m. EDT Thursday (0200 GMT Friday). The only place to get them is at Microsoft's retail stores and its website. The earliest shipment for new online orders is now one to two weeks away.

A Surface with Windows 8 Pro and the ability to run regular Windows programs will come a few months later. Microsoft hasn't disclosed the price.

At the launch event Thursday, Microsoft described Surface as an extension of Windows, though the company noted that it's about extending other Microsoft products, too. Panos Panay, general manager of the Surface team, demonstrated watching movies and listening to music on the Surface. He also streamed audio and video from the Surface to a nearby Xbox.

In a gimmick to demonstrate the tablet's durability, Panay dropped the device from shoulder height to the stage to show how tough its glass and magnesium case was. He also displayed a photo of Windows chief Steven Sinofsky standing on a Surface outfitted with wheels to make a

skateboard.

The Surface has a kickstand and its back camera is angled in such a way that when it's leaning on the stand, it shoots straight out, not toward the table. Panay demonstrated how that design allows someone to use Surface to take notes and record video at the same time.

The cover for the Surface costs \$100 extra for the basic, \$499 device. It comes free with the \$699 version. On the inside of the cover are printed "keys" for typing. Panay noted that the cover is pressure-sensing, so if you just rest your hands on it, it's not going to start erratically typing.

The cover also folds back and can act as a support for the device's kickstand if you're placing it on your lap, although using it this way appeared to make it difficult to type.

As previously disclosed, the Surface will come with fully functioning versions of Office 2013 software for word processing, spreadsheets and other business tasks. Other tablets running Windows RT, the lightweight version of the operating system, will also come with a version of Office for free.

Is Surface a laptop or a tablet?

"It's not just a tablet, but it's actually the best tablet I've ever used," Windows chief Steven Sinofsky said. "It's not just a laptop, but it's the best laptop I've ever used."

Sinofsky said the Surface has twice the storage memory as competitors for the same price—though he didn't mention that about half of it gets taken up by the operating system and pre-loaded software.

The Surface marks Microsoft's first venture into making computer

devices, apart from the Xbox. In doing so, the company is competing with some of its partners, the manufacturers of PCs and tablets.

Microsoft didn't have any PC makers on stage at Thursday's event. One analyst suggested that PC makers didn't want to come.

"Maybe it's a freeze-out because of the Surface," said Richard Doherty, CEO of technology assessment and market research company Envisioneering.

Windows executive Julie Larson-Green said there was no such tension. She said PC makers gave Microsoft devices to show on stage, and representatives from each of them were in the audience.

"We made it a Microsoft event to keep it short," Larson-Green said after the morning's nearly hour-long presentation. A separate Surface event in the afternoon ran about 40 minutes.

Here are details the Surface:

—Windows RT version of Surface

Weight: About 1.5 lbs. (676 grams)

Thickness: 9.3 mm

Screen: 10.6 inches (26.9 centimeters)(diagonal) with ClearType HD Display

Connections: microSD slot, USB 2.0, Micro HD Video, 2x2 MIMO antennas (for wireless communications)

Storage options: 32 Gigabytes and 64 Gigabytes

Price: \$499 for 32 GB version, \$699 for 64 GB version.

Availability: Friday.

Extras: Touch Cover, which has working, printed keyboard on inside surface but whose keys don't move when pushed, will cost \$100 extra when purchased with the 32 GB version (It's \$120 if bought separately). It's included with 64 GB version. Type Cover, with keys that move, costs \$130.

— Windows 8 Pro version of Surface

Weight: About 2 lbs. (903 grams)

Thickness: 13.5 mm

Clear: 10.6 inches (diagonal) with ClearType Full HD Display

Connections: microSDXC slot, USB 3.0, Mini DisplayPort Video, 2x2 MIMO antennas (for wireless communications)

Storage options: 64 GB and 128 GB

Price: Not yet announced.

Availability: Not yet announced.

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