

Tech review: A gaggle of Android phones

October 22 2012, by Jim Rossman



LG Motion 4G

I think I'll join the folks who have told me they've had enough iPhone news for now. Let's look at three Android phones from different carriers.

Two have slide-out keyboards, which is sort of a rarity these days. One is significantly smaller and cheaper.

All of them are running Ice Cream Sandwich ([Android](#) version 4.0.4, to

be precise), and they all have a pretty nice feature set, including 4G LTE.

LG MOTION 4G: When you hear [MetroPCS](#), you probably think of it as a low-cost, no-contract carrier, and you're right.

The LG Motion 4G is not a top-of-the-line phone. It's a very capable phone at a very good price (\$149 after rebates).

This price is the "no contract" price, which means this is not a subsidized phone. There are no penalties for walking away after a month or two.

Before I get to specs, know that the Motion is not going to break any new ground.

The screen measures 3.5 inches, the same as the [iPhone 4S](#), but the resolution is a scant 480 by 320 pixels. It's fine for telephone use, but not for high-res chores like watching movies or [reading books](#).

The Motion has a 1.2 GHz dual-core processor and 1 [gigabyte](#) of RAM.

The main camera has a 5-megapixel sensor that captures stills and 1080p HD video. There's also a front-facing camera for [video chats](#).

The Motion has 5 gigabytes of storage built in and a [microSD card slot](#) for expansion.

The Motion's battery is 1700 mAh and is user-replaceable under the back panel.

MetroPCS has a \$55 unlimited plan that includes 4G LTE, so this is a very attractive choice if you're looking to save on your wireless bill.

The phone is a bit small in my big hands, but I'd have no qualms about using it daily.

-Pros: Small size, inexpensive with no contract.

-Cons: Screen resolution is low.

-Bottom Line: A nice smartphone available with no contract at a low monthly cost.

-Price: \$149 after rebates

-On the Web: metropcs.com



MOTOROLA PHOTON Q: Sprint has introduced the Photon Q from

Motorola, which boasts a 4.3-inch display with a resolution of 960 by 540 pixels and a slide-out keyboard with backlit keys.

The keyboard does increase the phone's depth and bulk but not to the point of annoyance.

Dimensions are 2.6 inches by 5 inches by 0.53 inches. It weighs 6 ounces.

The main camera is 8 megapixels with video capability of 1080p HD, and it features an HDMI output.

Storage of the Photon Q is 5 gigabytes, with a microSD slot for increased capacity.

The processor is a 1.5GHz dual-core with 1 gigabyte of RAM.

The Photon Q is available for \$199.99 with a two-year contract.

I hadn't used a phone with a physical keyboard since I owned a BlackBerry.

The Photon Q's keys are nice - they're backlit, and they don't feel too small on my big thumbs.

The number keys, on the top row, are not as tall as the other four rows and are a little hard to find if you're typing fast (or with big thumbs).

Lastly, the Photon Q has a 1785 mAh battery that is not user-replaceable.

-Pros: Great keyboard, large screen.

-Cons: Battery is not user-replaceable.

-Bottom Line: If you're a Sprint customer who wants a keyboard, give it a look.

-Price: \$199.99 with 2-year contract

-On the Web: sprint.com



SAMSUNG GALAXY S RELAY: The Galaxy S Relay from T-Mobile USA also has a slide-out keyboard with five rows of keys. But the Relay's keys are smaller and not so close together. They're also almost flush with the keyboard deck and don't travel very far when pressed.

I found it hard to find the home keys and type with any speed. But in its favor, the keyboard is backlit.

The Relay has a 4-inch screen with a resolution of 800 by 480 pixels, a dual-core 1.5 GHz processor, 1 gigabyte of RAM and 8 gigabytes of internal storage with a microSD slot.

Dimensions are 4.9 by 2.5 by 0.5 inches, and the Relay weighs 5.3 ounces.

The Relay's main camera is 5 megapixels, and it captures 720p HD video.

With a two-year contract, the Relay is available for \$149.99 after rebates.

The Relay is a solid-feeling phone with a midsized screen that would be a good choice if you want a slide-out keyboard. It did feel a bit bulkier than larger-screened phones from Samsung, but that's to be expected with a physical keyboard.

-Pros: Inexpensive, solid build.

-Cons: Keys are not so user-friendly.

-Bottom Line: Middle-of-the-road phone. Try the [keyboard](#) before you buy.

-Price: \$149.99 with 2-year contract, rebates

- t-mobile.com

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