In my book, HTC's new One smartphone is easily one of the best Android devices on the market.

I've long liked HTC's line of smartphones because they combine sleek design with cool features. Last year's One, however, was a disappointment. HTC got the design part right, but the software was often frustrating to use and the phone had some notable shortcomings, such as a subpar camera.
With this year's version of the One - which is also called the M8 to distinguish it from last year's M7 model - HTC has kept the cool design, fixed a bunch of the flaws from last year and added some great new features.

Like other high-end Android smartphones, the new One offers a beautiful, high-resolution screen, a fast processor and long battery life. But one of the ways HTC has tried to distinguish the device is with design.

This year's One, like last year's, comes in a sleek aluminum case with a rounded back and a screen that stretches nearly from one edge to the other. But the new model has a larger screen and is both slightly bigger and heavier. It feels good in the hand, and its metal case gives it a solid feel you don't get with plastic phones, such as Samsung's Galaxy S series.

A key feature of last year's model was BlinkFeed, a Flipboard-like newsreader that took the place of a traditional phone home screen. When you turned on the One, you saw a collage of tiles with updates from news sites and social networks such as Twitter. I found the feature annoying because it was your default home screen and there was no way to get rid of it. And it wasn't obvious how to get to your apps.

With the new phone, HTC has made BlinkFeed much better. It's no longer your default home screen. Instead, it's located just to the left and available with one swipe - and you can now delete the feature if you don't ever want to see it. You can also customize it to a much greater degree. You can have it display specific newsfeeds from foreign countries - basketball news from Spain, say - or only those updates that correspond with particular keyword searches, such as all entries on "San Francisco Giants."
Unlike last year's model, the new One has an SD card slot, which allows users to expand its memory. And it comes with the latest version of Android; last year's model shipped with an older version of the operating system than was then available and users had to wait several months to get the update.

But the new One does more than just fix last year's flaws. It also offers some neat new features.

The best and most interesting of these is a second camera on the back of the phone that provides the device with depth information.

One way the device uses that depth data is to let you easily blur out backgrounds or objects in a photo after you take the picture. Using the One's built-in photo editing feature, you can just tap on the area of a picture you want in focus and it will blur out everything else.

The dual camera system allows the One to easily identify people or other objects within photos, allowing users to add effects or filters without disturbing the subject of the photo. So, for example, you can make everything in the photo black and white while leaving your daughter at the center of the picture in full color.

With an upcoming update, the One's camera does something even more impressive. Users will be able to select a person or other object from within one picture and paste it into another photo. Thanks to the depth information, users will be able to do that by simply tapping what they want to cut, rather than having to painstakingly draw a line around it.

In addition to the dual-camera system, HTC has given the new One the ability to recognize some new gestures that can provide shortcuts to some of the phone's most popular features. With the phone's display off, users can tap the screen twice to get to the lock screen, swipe right to
view BlinkFeed, swipe down to access the phone's voice-dialing feature, or press down the "volume up" button and hold the phone in landscape mode to launch the camera.

To be sure, the new One isn't perfect. While I love many of its photograph-related features, the camera itself isn't great. Pictures shot in low light look darker than those shot with my iPhone 5s, and those taken in average indoor light are less sharp.

I also ran into a strange bug. Apps would stop responding when I tapped on links or menu items. The only way I got them working again was by shutting them down and reopening them.

Some Android users may also object to the fact that you can't remove or replace the One's battery, as you can with other Android smartphones.

But overall I liked the new One and would recommend it to those shopping for an Android device.

**HTC ONE (M8) SMARTPHONE**

-Likes: Dual-camera system allows users to focus photos after the fact; BlinkFeed news reader feature much improved from last year; new gestures offer shortcuts to popular features; expandable memory; beautiful high-resolution screen.

-Dislikes: Camera performs relatively poorly in low light; battery not removable.

-Specs: 2.3 GHz quad-core processor; 5-inch, 1080p display; 5-megapixel front and large-sensor rear with secondary depth-sensing camera; 32 gigabytes storage.
-Price: $200 with two-year contract from Sprint, Verizon and AT&T. $699 without contract.

-Web: htc.com

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