

Review: Sharp Aquos Crystal will make you take notice

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Sharp is not the first company that comes to mind when you think about cellphones, but its new Aquos Crystal is starting to turn some heads with its edgeless screen design.

The first thing people notice is the unique design of the Aquos Crystal (\$149.99, at Boost Mobile or Best Buy stores, \$239.99 without

activation).

The 5-inch screen has very little bezel. The screen is pushed to the top of the phone, which leaves me scratching my head wondering how you hear callers without a speaker for your ear.

I had to throw out conventional expectations with the Crystal and just see where the usual features were located.

Since the screen is pushed against the top, the front-facing camera and proximity sensor have moved down to the bottom of the phone's face.

When you want to take a selfie, a reminder pops up that the camera is on the bottom and you should hold the phone upside down to take better shots.

There's also no speaker hole for your ear.

Instead Sharp uses a technology called direct wave that turns the entire phone into a speaker. The body of the phone is actually conducting the sound. You can put your ear anywhere on the front (or back) of the Crystal and hear the calls. It's a bit strange at first.

The edges of the Crystal have the usual buttons for volume and power. The headphone jack is on top, and the microUSB charge port is on the bottom.

The back of the phone is covered in thin white plastic, which snaps off to reveal the sim card and microSD card slots.

The battery is not user-removable.

SPECS

This is a midlevel smartphone both in price and features.

The operating system is a pretty stock version of Android 4.4.2 KitKat with a few added apps.

The Crystal runs on a 1.2 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon CPU with 1.5 gigabytes of RAM and an Adreno 305 graphics processor.

There are eight gigabytes of onboard storage, but a 32 gb microSD card costs less than \$20.

The phone is CDMA, which means it runs on Sprint or Boost Mobile. It has GPS, Bluetooth 4.0 and 802.11 b/g/n Wi-Fi.

It's 5.17 inches by 2.64 inches by 0.4 inches and weighs 4.97 ounces.

The 5-inch screen has a resolution of 1280 by 720 pixels.

The main camera has an 8-megapixel sensor, and the front-facing camera captures 1.2-megapixel images. You can also capture 1080p HD video.

The 2040 milliamp-hour lithium-ion battery provides up to 13 hours of talk time.

A few other features worth mentioning are HD calling, Wi-Fi calling, and mobile hotspot.

It runs on Sprint's fast 4G LTE network.

NOT LIKE ALL THE OTHERS

I like the Crystal - it's quirky.

I also like it because it doesn't look like every other smartphone.

It's kind of like the Motorola Moto G in that it's a middle-of-the-road smartphone designed for people who don't want to pay \$650 for a non-contract phone.

I'm not sure how many accessories you'll find; it's a new phone.

The Crystal's speed didn't knock my socks off, but from reading the specs, I knew what to expect.

I'm not a mobile gamer, so I don't exactly tax a phone's graphics performance.

There are a few nice sound features like Harman/Kardon LiveStage, which boosts the sound through headphones, and Clari-Fi, which improves digital sound quality by restoring all types of compressed digital music.

So if you're a Sprint, Virgin or Boost customer and you want an affordable smartphone, give the Sharp Aquos Crystal a look.

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Pros: Unique design, inexpensive, not bloated with preloaded software.

Cons: CDMA-only; lack of a speaker for calls is strange.

Bottom line: This is a quirky [phone](#) with a great design, but I'm not sure that's enough.

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