

First Look: What's inside matters in new iPhones

September 10 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



People look over the new Apple iPhone 6s models during a product display following an Apple event Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015, in San Francisco. Apple staked a new claim to the living room on Wednesday, as the maker of iPhones and other hand-held gadgets unveiled an Internet TV system that's designed as a beachhead for the tech giant's broader ambitions to deliver a wide range of information, games, music and video to the home. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

Don't let looks deceive you. The new iPhones look the same as last year's

models on the outside. But changes on the inside matter, from camera improvements to new sensors that enable quicker access to tasks.

I had only about 90 minutes to try out the new Apple products unveiled Wednesday—not enough time, given that Apple Inc. has a larger iPad, a new Apple TV device and new software for the Apple Watch, alongside the new iPhone 6s and 6s Plus. I wasn't able to test the new iPhone cameras in natural settings, for instance, to say whether pictures are really better with 12 megapixels, instead of 8 megapixels in the previous iPhones.

But I was able to try 3D Touch, a new way to interact with the iPhone. You save a few taps by pressing and holding on an app icon to go directly to a particular function. Microsoft's Windows phones let you create shortcuts as home screen icons, but few people have Windows phones. On iPhones, the 3D Touch feature isn't about enabling new functions, but getting you there quicker.

If you want to take a selfie, for instance, you currently have to launch the camera app and hit a corner button to switch to the front camera. If you were taking video before, you need to slide the camera to "Photo" first. With the new iPhones, just choose "Take Selfie" when you press down on the Camera app. The phone makes all the switches automatically.

With Maps, you can use 3D Touch to get directions home, find nearby businesses or message your location to a friend. With Mail, go directly to your inbox or create a new message. I used 3D Touch to quickly post a status update—"Hi"—on a test Facebook account.

From a message, you get a preview of a Web page by pressing on a Web link. Similarly, you get a map preview by pressing on an address. Press harder to switch to the browser or Maps app. A new iPhone software update adds a back button so you can jump right back to what you were

doing, even in a different app.

As for the camera, selfie fans will appreciate having the phone's display mimic a flash. It's not a real flash like the main camera, but the display lights up briefly so that you can see faces in low-light settings.

With a feature called Live Photos, the iPhone camera records an extra second or so before you take still shots so that images appear in motion. You need an iPhone, iPad or Mac with the latest software to view it, though, which could limit sharing with your Android and Windows family and friends.



The Apple Pencil is used on on the new iPad Pro and then shown on Apple TV during a product display following an Apple event Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015, in San Francisco. Apple staked a new claim to the living room on Wednesday, as the maker of iPhones and other hand-held gadgets unveiled an Internet TV system that's designed as a beachhead for the tech giant's broader ambitions to

deliver a wide range of information, games, music and video to the home. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

Those expecting revolutionary changes will be disappointed, but the new iPhones have enough new features to consider buying over an older model. Of course, wait for a full test rather than just first impressions. The new phones aren't coming out until Sept. 25 anyway, although advance orders begin Saturday.

As for Apple's other products:

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— IPAD PRO (coming in November)

As someone who prefers an iPad Mini over the full-size version, I'm probably not the right customer for an even larger iPad.

But the iPad Pro does have promise for heavy-duty users, particularly if you pay \$99 for a stylus and \$169 for a physical keyboard cover, on top of the \$799 starting price. The keyboard doesn't feel as flimsy as ones for Microsoft's Surface tablets, but you don't get to change viewing angles as the Surface's adjustable kickstands allow.

What I like most is the new stylus, known as Apple Pencil. That's not an Apple Pen, mind you. The stylus does mimic a pencil when you try to draw on the iPad Pro's screen. When you choose a black pencil, it comes out gray, like a real pencil. The line appears thicker when you press harder, and you can shade in areas by drawing with the Pencil lightly from an angle.



The new iPad Pro with a Smart Keyboard is displayed following an Apple event Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015, in San Francisco. Apple staked a new claim to the living room on Wednesday, as the maker of iPhones and other hand-held gadgets unveiled an Internet TV system that's designed as a beachhead for the tech giant's broader ambitions to deliver a wide range of information, games, music and video to the home. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

APPLE TV (coming in October)

Although Apple TV's new app store will enable non-video apps, such as games and home automation, video will remain the centerpiece.

The new remote shows a lot of promise, with a touchpad much like what's found on laptops. You can fast forward through commercials

more quickly, or even hit the microphone button and tell the Siri voice assistant to "fast forward five minutes." And when you encounter dialogue that's mumbled, just say, "What did she say?" Siri will rewind 15 seconds and temporarily turn on closed captioning.



The new Apple Watch with a Hermès band is displayed following an Apple event Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015, in San Francisco. Apple staked a new claim to the living room on Wednesday, as the maker of iPhones and other hand-held gadgets unveiled an Internet TV system that's designed as a beachhead for the tech giant's broader ambitions to deliver a wide range of information, games, music and video to the home. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

NEW SOFTWARE (coming next Wednesday)

I've been using a preliminary, "beta" version of the new iPhone and iPad software, iOS 9, for more than a month. I particularly like that you can get transit directions on Apple Maps and scroll through photos more quickly. The font is bolder and easier to read. The update isn't as huge as what you got in previous years, but I'm not complaining when it's free.

Likewise, the Apple Watch's software update will enable new types of third-party apps. It should address many of the watch's current limitations, but it'll take time to try out.

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