

Samsung updates smartwatch, Lenovo ditches laptop keyboard (Update)

August 31 2016, by Anick Jesdanun



In this Aug. 25, 2016, photo, the Samsung S3's Samsung Pay feature is demonstrated in New York. The smartwatch comes with expanded ability to make payments at stores. As a result, there's now PIN protection on the watch, though it isn't automatically activated until the user sets up Samsung Pay. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

Samsung's next smartwatch will come with GPS capabilities and the ability to call or text for help by triple-tapping a side button.

The new Gear S3 retains the circular design of the current S2 model, but is slightly larger. Samsung will still sell last year's S2 to those who consider the S3 too big on their wrist. As with the S2, the outer ring of the watch face rotates to let you scroll through notifications and apps. Interface improvements include the ability to accept or reject calls with the ring rather than a swipe of the screen.

The S3 will come in three flavors. One has LTE cellular capabilities, allowing people to make calls, receive notifications and check weather without a companion phone nearby. A data plan costs extra. The other two models lack LTE and differ primarily in style. Samsung said prices will be announced closer to the devices' availability later in the year.

Samsung announced the new watch lineup Wednesday at the IFA tech show in Berlin. The Gear smartwatches have had impressive designs and battery life, but have been hampered largely by a dearth of apps, as many developers write for Apple Watch and Android Wear devices instead.



In this Aug. 25, 2016, photo, the Samsung S3 frontier, left, and classic version are displayed in New York. Samsung's next smartwatch will come with GPS capabilities and the ability to seek help by triple-tapping a side button. GPS will help Samsung stand out with the Gear S3, as the feature so far isn't common in smartwatches. But the watch still faces a dearth in apps compared with Android and Apple. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

All three S3 models will have GPS, making them more accurate for workouts. In the S2, GPS was limited to a pricier model with cellular capabilities (on the slower 3G network). GPS, so far, isn't common in smartwatches, allowing Samsung to stand out with the S3. Although GPS tends to drain battery quickly, Samsung expects at least three days of battery life in the S3.

Meanwhile, the emergency-calling feature echoes the "SOS" feature coming to the Apple Watch this fall. Where the Apple Watch will call 911 or the relevant emergency service elsewhere directly, though, the S3 will call or text emergency contacts, such as friends or relatives. These will be pre-recorded or pre-written messages. For an extra recurring fee, which has yet to be announced, S3 users will also be able to make a live call to ADT's security dispatchers, who would then be able to call 911 or offer other help.

The S3 also comes with expanded ability to make payments at stores through Samsung Pay. And the watch's always-on feature improves with a display of millions of colors, rather than just 16 before.



In this Aug. 25, 2016, photo, taken in New York, the Samsung S3 classic version is displayed with some of the many apps that are available for the smartwatch. Samsung's next smartwatch will come with GPS capabilities and the ability to call for help by triple-tapping a side button. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

SOMETHING MISSING IN A LAPTOP

Also at the IFA tech show, Lenovo unveiled a twist on the laptop: Its new Yoga Book won't have a physical keyboard.

It's an odd choice, given that Apple, Samsung and other tablet makers are pushing professional tablet models with keyboard accessories. Those companies are hoping to appeal to businesses and individuals looking to replace their laptops.



In this Aug. 25, 2016 photo, taken in New York, the Samsung S3 classic version is displayed. Samsung's next smartwatch will come with GPS capabilities and the ability to call for help by triple-tapping a side button. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

In Lenovo's case, the 10-inch Yoga Book retains the clamshell design of the laptop, but puts a second touch screen where the keyboard normally goes. People can type on a touch-screen keyboard there, or just write or draw on that second screen with an included stylus. You can even use a regular pen or pencil, though you'd want to put a sheet of paper over the screen to avoid damage.

Although Lenovo calls Yoga Book a tablet, the keyboard part isn't detachable, making the device a laptop. The keyboard, though, can fold all the way to the back to make the device feel more like a tablet.

Lenovo says the Yoga Book is 9.6 millimeters (0.38 inch) thick, slightly more than the thickest iPad at 7.5 millimeters.



In this Aug. 25, 2016, photo taken in New York, the Samsung S3 classic version, left, displays a series of apps, including Uber, and the frontier version displays Samsung Pay. Samsung's next smartwatch will come with GPS capabilities and the ability to seek help by triple-tapping a side button. GPS will help Samsung stand out with the Gear S3, as the feature so far isn't common in smartwatches.

But the watch still faces a dearth in apps compared with Android and Apple. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

Jeff Meredith, a Lenovo vice president, said the Yoga Book might not be appropriate for extensive typing, but should be suitable for people—especially younger people—who now use the phone's touch screen to respond to email at night or even take notes in classrooms.

He added that when BlackBerrys were still popular, people couldn't imagine getting rid of physical keyboards on their phones, either.

The Yoga Book will start shipping in the coming weeks. An Android version will cost \$500, and Windows will be \$600.

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Citation: Samsung updates smartwatch, Lenovo ditches laptop keyboard (Update) (2016, August 31) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-08-samsung-smartwatch-gps-emergency-feature.html>

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