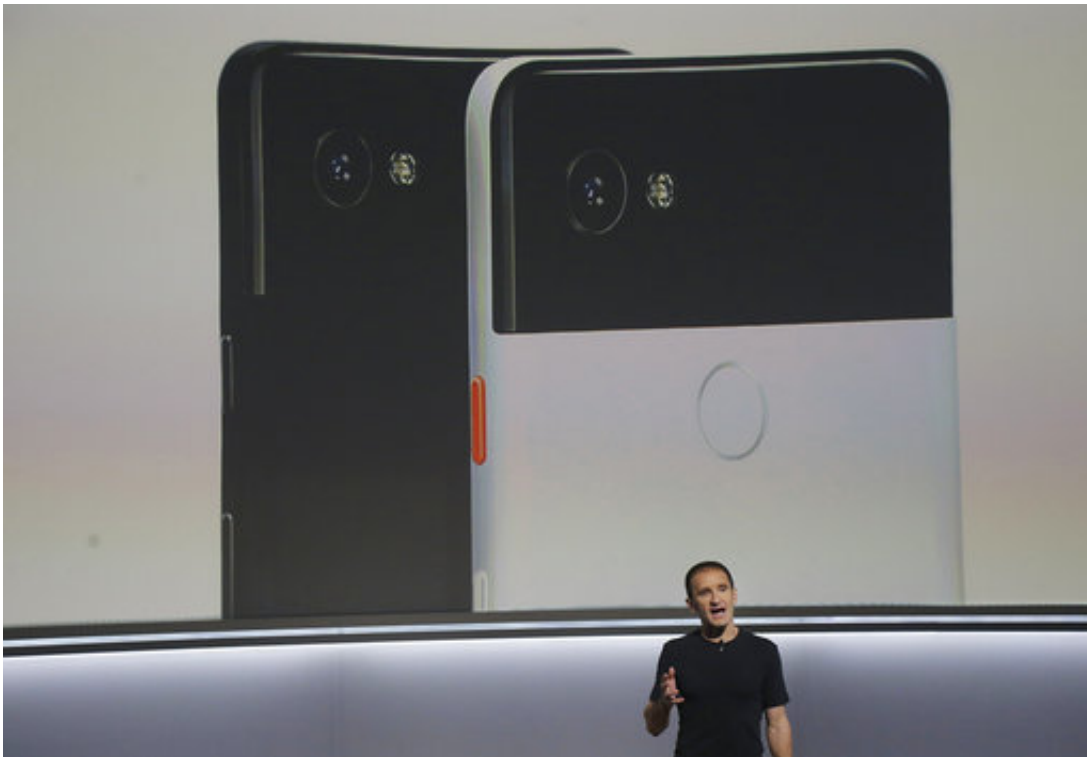


Google unveils new phones, speakers to counter Amazon, Apple (Update)

October 4 2017, by Michael Liedtke



Google's Mario Queiroz speaks about the Google Pixel 2 XL phones at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

Google on Wednesday unveiled new phones, smart speakers and other devices infused with artificial intelligence in its bid to claim the high ground against rivals Amazon and Apple.

NEW PHONES

The second generation of Google's Pixel phones unveiled Wednesday feature larger, brighter screens that take up more of the phone's front, changes that Apple is also making with its iPhone X scheduled to be released next month.

Both the 6-inch Pixel XL and the 5-inch Pixel will also do away with the headphone jack, something Apple did with the iPhone 7 last year.

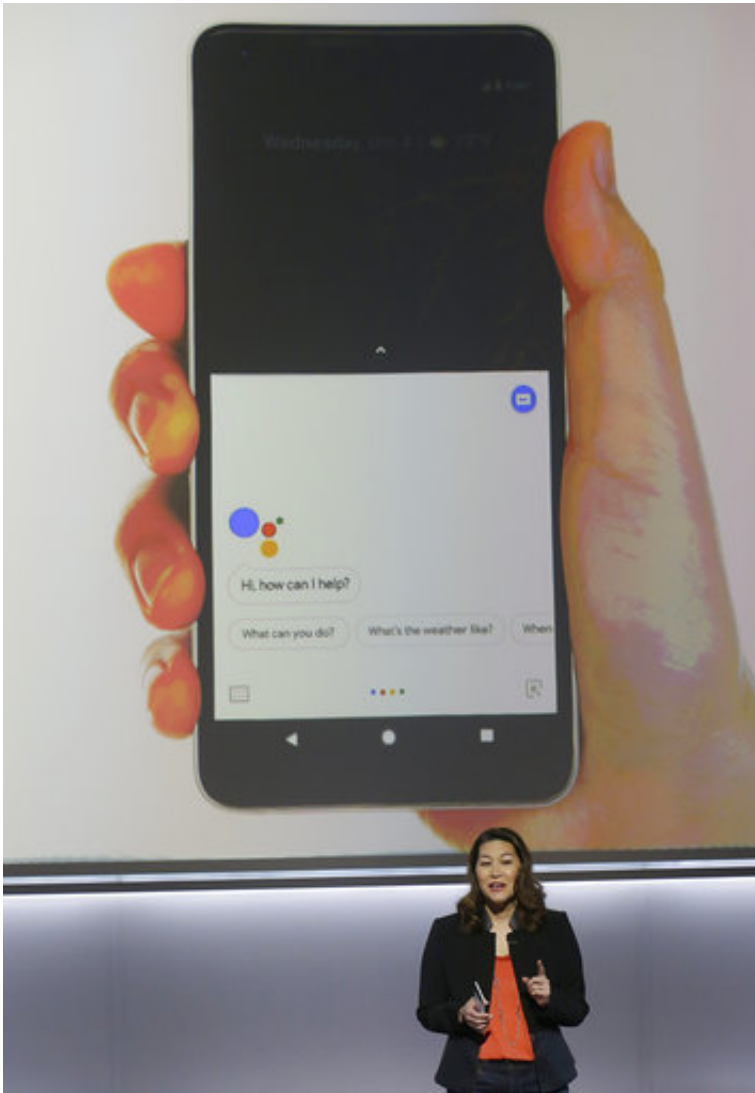
Google also souped up the already highly rated camera on the Pixel, boasting that it will take even better photos than the iPhone.

The smaller Pixel will sell for almost \$650, \$50 less than the iPhone 8. The Pixel XL will sell for almost \$850, or \$50 more than the iPhone 8 Plus. Prices for the iPhone X start at \$1,000.

Google also announced wireless headphones, called Pixel Buds. In addition to relaying audio from the phone, the headphones can also translate spoken language in real time, working with translation software built into the new Pixels.

SMART SPEAKERS

The Google Home Mini unveiled Wednesday is a button-sized speaker covered in fabric. It includes the same features featured in a cylindrical speaker that Google rolled out last year in response to Amazon's Echo .



Google's Sabrina Ellis speaks about the Google Pixel 2 phones at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

The Mini will cost almost \$50, roughly the small price as Amazon's smaller speaker, the Echo Dot. The standard Google Home speaker costs almost \$130. Last week, Amazon announced the next generation of its Echo speaker, coming out in time for the holiday shopping season, will cost just \$100, a price that Google decided not to match.

The Google Home Max is a rectangular speaker with superior acoustics for playing music, mimicking Apple's HomePod.

Like Apple with the HomePod, Google is promising that its Max speaker will learn your musical tastes so it can become a digital DJ that automatically selects tunes that you'll enjoy. But the Max speaker will work with a wider range of music-streaming services than the HomePod, which is designed to be a companion to Apple Music.

Google is selling the Home Max for almost \$400, about \$50 more than the HomePod. Both speakers are due to hit stores in December.



Google's Sabrina Ellis holds up a Google Pixel 2 XL phone at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

AI TAKES CENTER STAGE

Google's voice-activated digital assistant will serve as the brains for all the speakers, just as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri run their competing devices.

All three technology companies are trying to establish their assistants as prescient concierges that understand people's needs and desires to help them better manage their homes and lives.

Google is counting on the knowledge that it has accumulated through its dominant search engine to make its assistant far more intelligent than either Alexa or Siri, giving it an edge over its rivals over time.



Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)



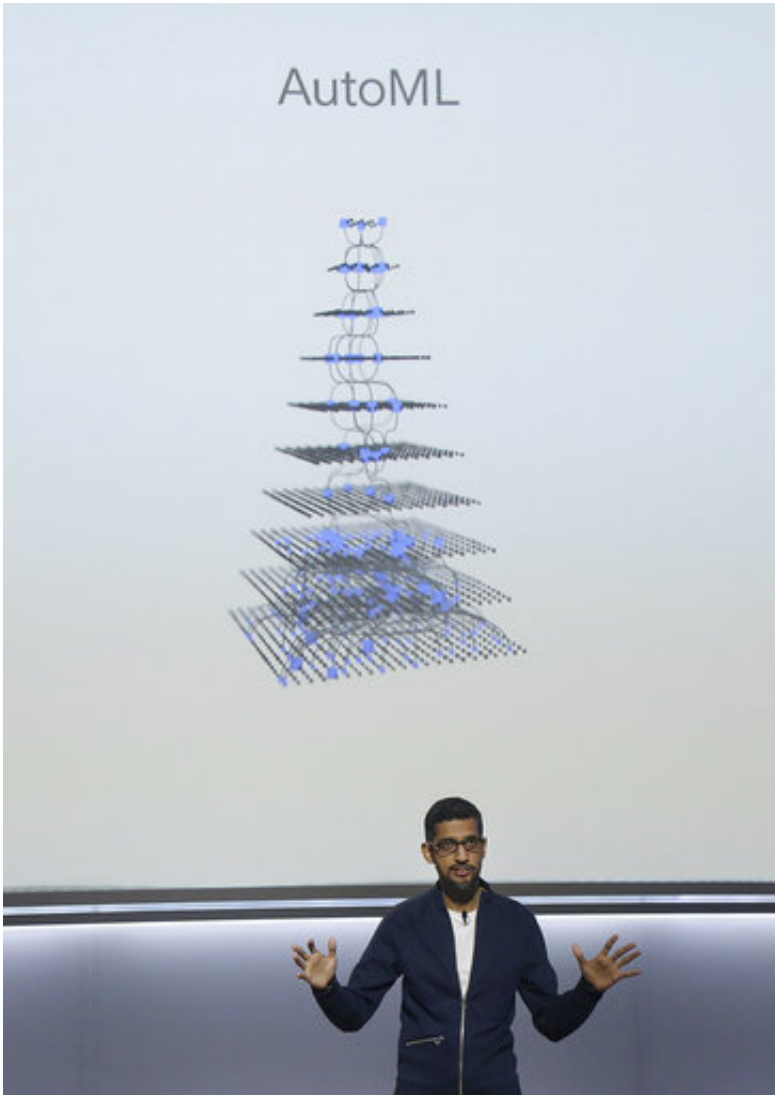
This March 23, 2010, file photo, shows the Google logo at the Google headquarters in Brussels. Google is borrowing from Apple's playbook as it tries to gain ground on its rival in the high-priced end of the smartphone market. The company is expected to announce several devices, including new high-end Pixel smartphones and updates to its Home smart speaker, on Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo, File)



Google's Juston Payne speaks about the Google Daydream View at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)



Google's Matt Vokoun speaks about the Google Pixelbook at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)



Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)



Rick Osterloh, Google senior vice president of hardware, speaks at a Google event at the SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

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