

Microsoft unveils new Surface devices, including headphones

4 October 2018, by Rachel Lerman, The Seattle Times



Microsoft announced several new Surface devices at an event in Manhattan recently, saying the computers have faster speeds and longer battery lives.

The big surprise at the company's fall devices event was not a computer at all, but Surface headphones, which feature 13 levels of noise canceling technology. The headphones have a microphone and integrate with Cortana, Microsoft's voice assistant technology.

The ear-covering headphones don't yet have a for-sale date—the company will say only they are coming "soon." They'll be priced at \$349.

The Surface team has been developing the headphones for about three years, said Robin Seiler, general manager of Microsoft devices. They are intended to "create space" for the wearer, and some of the 13 levels of noise cancellation allow for the wearer to still hear people's voices near them while blocking out background noise.

Microsoft also unveiled its second Surface Studio 2, a follow-up to the desktop computer made for creative types and engineers that the company released in 2016. It's just in time too—the original Surface Studio is out of stock in Microsoft's online stores.

"We see people creating on this product like never before," chief product officer Panos Panay said from the stage. "But they need more power."

That's the goal behind the Surface Studio 2, which has new pixel technology to make the screen brighter and graphics technology to boost its speed. The desktop is also "coming soon," and will start at \$3,499.

Microsoft's Surface line has been a success for the Redmond company for the last few years, even while PC sales had faltered.

Revenue from Surface devices increased 16 percent during the company's fiscal year, which ended this summer. Sales from the company's "more personal computing" division, which includes Surface sales as well as gaming and some Windows revenue, was \$42.3 billion for the year.

The success is a direct result of the teams of developers and designers who have worked to make the devices as customer-friendly as possible, Panay said in an interview recently. When Microsoft first released Surface products in 2012, they were simply hardware wrapped around already-created Windows 8 software, he said.

No more. Now the devices are developed in harmony with new software updates, Panay said, and are specifically designed to save customers time—the idea being that if the devices work as they should, they meld into the background as a tool for the user.

"We're creating instruments and those instruments

are the collections of all software, all hardware and all the intelligence of the cloud," Panay said.

Microsoft also announced the new Surface Pro 6, the latest in Microsoft's tablet-and-laptop-in-one line that will go on sale Oct. 16 and starts at \$899. It pledges to be 67 percent more powerful than the previous version of the Surface Pro, announced last year.

The biggest outward change is the color—both the Surface Pro 6 and the newly announced Surface Laptop 2 will now be available in black, a shift from the signature silver and the first time Microsoft has offered a Surface [device](#) in black for six years.

The Surface Laptop 2 also boasts a 13.5-hour battery life and faster speeds than its predecessor. It can be preordered today and will start at \$999.

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APA citation: Microsoft unveils new Surface devices, including headphones (2018, October 4) retrieved 21 September 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-10-microsoft-unveils-surface-devices-headphones.html>

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