

Samsung rival OnePlus debuts lower-priced Android phones for 5G video fans and gamers

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Would you buy a state-of-the-art phone touting more features than the top-of-the-line iPhone 11 Pro from a company you probably haven't heard of?

What if it were \$500 less than the Samsung Galaxy S20 5G and just as fast, if not faster, beautiful to look at and has a camera that's just as sharp and versatile, if not more so?

In India and China, the answer would probably be sure, in a heartbeat, as that's where OnePlus has its best sales.

The Chinese company has been stymied in finding mega-success in the United States, beyond its cult-like base of early adopters and tech enthusiasts.

But that's the challenge for the company, which is debuting two new phones Tuesday, the \$699 8 Plus and \$899 8 Plus Pro. Both come with 128 gigabytes of storage, twice the amount of storage as offered on premium Apple iPhones.

The phones are set to be in stores on April 29.

This time around, OnePlus has a major new card to play: Verizon, the No. 1 wireless carrier, has enlisted to start marketing the brand, in addition to T-Mobile.

Verizon says the move signals "the start of a brand-new relationship between the nations' most awarded network and one of the most exciting new smartphone makers in the world."

In a nutshell, both One Plus phones offer connectivity to new 5G networks and the Pro has a 6.78-inch QHD screen (compared to 6.9 inches on the Galaxy S20 Ultra), four primary cameras, including ultra-

wide, wide-angle and telephoto, with a 3X zoom, compared to 2X on the iPhone 11 Pro. (The cheaper [phone](#) doesn't get the telephoto lens.)

The One Plus 8 Pro has a refresh rate of 120 HZ, comparable to the Galaxy S20 Ultra, which means web pages load faster, videos and games play smoother. The iPhone 11 Pro has a 60 HZ refresh rate.

The new, faster 5G wireless standard has been one of those technologies that has been waiting in the wings to happen. Only a handful of 5G capable phones are available now, mostly from Samsung, but also LG, Motorola and OnePlus, with the 2019 7 Plus model. The carriers currently charge a premium for 5G service, which is spotty, at best.

Sure, hundreds of thousands of people are out of work because of the coronavirus epidemic, so this is not an ideal time to launch a luxury item, notes Daniel Ives, an analyst with Wedbush Securities.

But Apple won't have a 5G phone until much later in the year, he believes, and in the fall, both Apple and Samsung will duke it out for consumers' mindshare.

"It's a strategic gamble to launch now," he says. "A real uphill battle. But with Verizon as a partner, it's a good opportunity for them."

Many companies have suffered in getting product to consumers because factories aren't operating at full capacity, but OnePlus says it's not having issues and that the factories are churning out the phones.

The phones are made in China, Taiwan and India.

I've been playing around with the Plus Pro for the past few days, and the most impressive features are the beautiful screen and speed of the device.

In an informal YouTube test, for instance, a clip of the late Prince singing "Let's Go Crazy" at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame loaded in under 1 second on the OnePlus 8 Pro, vs. 4 seconds on an iPhone 11 Pro.

The wireless charging feature, highly promoted by OnePlus, was cool. The phone can go from 0 to 50% in 30 minutes, or get a complete charge in about an hour. (But it's still not really "wireless" charging, as you get a base with a big thick brick to plug into the A/C to attach to the phone. It's not like you can go into the field, wave your phone in the air and have it recharged. You'll also have to pay \$59.99 for the add-on.)

Is now the right time to buy a premium phone? Of course not. But if you're looking to a state-of-the-art Android phone for gaming, video viewing, photography or all of the above and don't want to pay \$1,400 for Samsung's top performer, you've got another option.

For \$500 less you get quite a feature-packed, gorgeous phone that none of your friends will probably recognize.

That's a conversation starter. Even in the age of social distancing.

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