

US Apple fans get hands on pricey Vision Pro headset

February 2 2024, by Julie Jammot with Alex Pigman in Washington



The new Apple Vision Pro headset is displayed during the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference on June 05, 2023 in Cupertino, California.

Eager customers lined up outside US Apple stores Friday to nab the first Vision Pro headsets, a \$3,499 device that is the tech giant's biggest

release since the Apple Watch nine years ago.

Vision Pro's arrival from the world's most iconic device maker could be a milestone for lovers of virtual or augmented reality, who see the technology as the next chapter in online life after the smartphone.

"I am really eager to try it out and get ideas for applications," said Jose Carlos, a software engineer at Uber as he stood outside a San Francisco Apple Store.

"It is expensive, but I'm willing to pay the price to be an early adopter," he added.

With the high price, and the middling success of similar and cheaper releases from Facebook owner Meta, early reviews expressed doubt that the Vision Pro will be a game-changer, at least for now.

The Vision Pro is an "astonishing" product, wrote tech website The Verge, but "also represents a series of really big trade-offs" that are "impossible to ignore."

It is "an impressive product, one that has been many years and billions of dollars in the making," but "even after trying it, I still have no idea whom or what this thing is supposed to be for," wrote The New York Times.

Critics acknowledge a definite "wow" factor, noting its state-of-the-art image quality and the joy of opening and closing apps floating in space using only your eyes and fingers.

However, the headset is heavy, messes up the user's hair and requires a clunky battery pack, they add.

Apple CEO Cook appeared Friday at Apple's Fifth Avenue store in New

York to greet the first customers accompanied by the applause of staff.

"It's tomorrow's technology today. It's the way I think about it," Cook told ABC News when asked about the steep prices.

"But over time, who knows what will happen. But we think we priced it for the right value today."

Cook had appeared earlier this week on the cover of Vanity Fair wearing the Vision Pro.

He drew criticism at a conference in June when he revealed the device without ever trying it on.

'Spatial,' not virtual

Apple refers to the Vision Pro as its first foray into "spatial computing," refusing the term virtual reality, which is associated with tech geeks and gamers.

In ads, users wear the Vision Pro to work or chat with friends or toggle through apps, and stream movies.

Apple says 600 specifically designed apps and games are available for the Vision Pro, alongside one million compatible apps.

"These incredible apps will change how we experience entertainment, music and games," said Susan Prescott, Apple's vice president of worldwide developer relations.

Disney has partnered with Apple to provide 150 3D movies, the companies said.

Netflix, Spotify and Google for now have declined to modify their apps specifically for the headset.

In an earnings call on Thursday, Cook said Vision Pro would become available in other countries later this year.

The Vision Pro can be tested in US Apple stores.

The device requires finely tuned adjustments and some training, as "most consumers don't have experience with gesture controls," Forrester Research wrote in a note.

According to analysts from Wedbush Securities, pre-orders have been strong and Apple should expect to sell about 600,000 units this year.

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