

What Apple didn't tell you about the new iPhones

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The late Steve Jobs was known for engaging in a "reality distortion shield" when launching new projects that perhaps didn't tell the whole story.

On Tuesday, Apple did a masterful job at its big reveal event of hyping its lineup of four new iPhones that, on the face of it, will have faster processors, improved camera features and connect to the new 5G wireless standard. In addition to starting out with a new HomePod mini, Apple unveiled an iPhone 12, iPhone 12 Mini, iPhone 12 Pro and the iPhone Pro Max, ranging in price from starting at \$699 on up to starting at \$1,099. We got the super detailed information on the processors, lenses and intuitive technology that makes it all work.

But what didn't Apple tell us? Well, a lot.

5G is here, but only sort of.

Apple touted 5G on iPhone as enabling faster game play, movies that would load faster and apps that would zip along. And it brought the CEO of Verizon onto the stage to hype 5G as well.

But good luck finding the 5G Apple and Verizon sold. ("We believe it will take carriers years to build a compelling 5G infrastructure," noted analyst and investor Gene Munster of Loup Ventures.)

What Verizon calls its 5G Ultra Wideband is in just 50 cities now and will increase to 60 by the end of the year. But the coverage is spotty, it works in certain areas of the city only and is unavailable in some major places, like Maine, Vermont, Louisiana, Alabama and North Dakota.

The 5G offered by T-Mobile and AT&T is more widespread but not currently much faster than 4G. Verizon on Tuesday unveiled a new, slower 5G, similar to what AT&T and T-Mobile have that it says is available to 200 million customers. Munster added that Verizon's touted speeds on the Apple presentation "are only available to about 1% of the U.S. population today."

That new iPhone could cost you at check out.

The iPhone 12 doesn't sound that steep at \$799. That is, until you add extra storage and Apple Care, which brings it to \$1,298, before tax. Then add the new MagSafe wireless charger and new case, and you're looking at \$1,398. Which could be a bargain compared to the \$1,768 for the top-of-the-line iPhone 12 Pro Max, which starts at \$1,099, before the extra storage, warranty and accessories.

The Mini is the smallest iPhone. Again sort of.

Of the new iPhones, the Mini clocks in with a 5.4-inch screen, smaller than the 6.1-inch screen of the iPhone 12 and 12 Pro, or 6.7-inch iPhone 12 Pro Max. The SE, which happens to be the lowest-priced iPhone, at \$399, has a 4.7-inch screen. Now that's a mini, compared to the others. And while the 12 Pro Max is the largest iPhone ever, at 6.7 inches, it is dwarfed by the Samsung Galaxy S20 Ultra and Galaxy Note 20, which are both at 6.9 inches.

The iPhone 12 doesn't have the highest resolution screen

The Samsung Galaxy S20 Ultra touts 3200x1440 resolution, versus 2778x1284 for the iPhone 12 Pro Max.

What is that 'ceramic shield'?

Apple says the new glass from Corning, the same company that has been providing the Gorilla Glass screens that so many people have cracked over the years, is "tougher" than any smartphone glass.

Corning also makes the screens for Galaxy phones and other smartphone makers, which Apple didn't mention. And how is this new glass four times less likely to crack, as Apple claimed? Did the company have drop parties to test it? Did it break 4 times out of 10? And did it compare it to phones from other manufacturers? Not exactly. Apple says it compared it to the previous iPhone.

You can shoot video in higher resolution Dolby Vision

Oh but what an asterisk! Yes, you can get brighter colors and sharpness from Dolby Vision, a feature seen on many TVs for more lifelike color and sound. But don't expect to share the videos on social media. The video files will be in a different format than what's supported on Facebook and Twitter. Best practice: sharing them from phone to phone, or using the AirPlay feature to beam the video from your phone to the TV could be your best shot, for now.

You can use the HomePod as a TV speaker.

The compact smart speakers have become so widespread and inexpensive, many people have wondered about connecting them to their TVs, instead of a soundbar, and having them by their, say, bedside.

Advantage: You don't have the sound tethered to the TV with an HDMI cable. Google's new Nest Audio speakers don't do this, nor do Amazon Echo speakers. But the HomePod, Apple's smart speaker, will be able to do just this by the end of the year, with a software update. However, this

won't work on the the new, less expensive HomePod Mini. Price differential: \$299 for the Pod, \$99 for the Mini.

How will it work? By using the AirPlay feature on the iPhone (or iPad), which beams media from devices, via the \$179 Apple TV 4K streaming box. That, in turn, will send the audio to the speakers. However, figure it's \$600 for two HomePods and \$179 for the streaming box. Most soundbars range from \$200 on the low end to \$800 for the high-end Sonos Arc.

The iPhone 12 is a brand new design, when in fact, it looks like an iPhone 5.

The iPhone 5 is from 2012, the last phone from the Steve Jobs era, released a year after his 2011 death. Well, all that's really similar is the side of the phone, but that didn't stop wags from having a field day on Twitter. Jason Calacanis called the 12 a "literal remix" of the 5.

Apple killed off the iPhone 11 Pro and Pro Max models

Still available for sale are the entry-level 11, the XR from 2018 and the entry-level SE. The 11 Pro and Pro Max were introduced in 2019.

The new iPhones will be released in spurts. Preorders for the iPhone 12 and 12 Pro open Friday, for release on Oct. 23, while the Mini and 12 Pro Max open their preorders on Nov. 6, and will be available Nov. 13.

The older phones got discounted. The XR is now \$499 and the 11 is \$599. The SE is still the best bargain, at \$399.

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