

Slideshow: Seeking the Ultimate Smartphone

EVEN IF YOU don't "Google" it, a web search for the latest hot smartphone is bound to turn up the search giant's inaugural entry -- HTC's T-Mobile G1.

The "Google phone," as it's more commonly known, is set to hit stores on Wednesday. Priced at \$180 (with a two-year contract), the G1 integrates **Google's** (GOOG¹) easy-to-use Android operating system with a sleek touchscreen handset made by China's HTC that includes a full slide-out keyboard and fast 3G network capabilities. By analysts' presale estimates, the G1 is a serious contender to meet -- or beat -- the first-generation **Apple** (AAPL²) iPhone's track record of selling one million units in fewer than three months.

The G1's debut shows just how far the smartphone market has come since Apple first launched the iPhone in June 2007. Smartphones are now twice as popular as they were this time last year, reports market researcher NPD Group. And, as competition among handset makers heats up, prices continue to fall and once high-end extras, such as MP3 players and web browsers, are increasingly being considered standard.

In the months ahead, a slew of new high-end handsets will join Google's smartphone. Among them: **Research in Motion's** (RIMM³) much-anticipated BlackBerry Storm, the Sony Ericsson Xperia X1 and Motorola's Krave.

With so many options to choose from, shoppers will need to decide what features will meet their wants and needs. "There will always be something newer, faster, better, sexier," says Gartenberg. "Make sure you can live with that device for the two years [of your contract]."

It's equally important to assess the service providers coverage and plans before signing on, advises Dan Havlik, editor of tech education site *DemystifyingDigital.com*⁴. That fancy new phone won't do much good if the carrier offers spotty coverage in your area or if the unlimited data plan the phone requires takes a toll on your monthly budget.



For Early Adopters

HTC Dream T-Mobile G1

(\$180, with a two-year contract)

"It's a revolutionary phone," raves Delly Tamer, CEO of cellphone plan assessment site *LetsTalk.com*⁷. Google's easy-to-use Android operating system paired with HTC's unique, angled handset design showcases the mobile versions of Google's popular online products like Gmail and Google Docs. But the G1 isn't without its flaws -- such as the lack of a dedicated headphone jack (you'll have to buy an adaptor and then connect through the USB charging port).

"The biggest potential for the phone is in three to six months," says Tamer. Google is opening its operating system up to all handset makers and carriers -- meaning even more Google phones are on the way. (Motorola (MOT⁸) has a version in development, as does carrier Sprint (S⁹),)

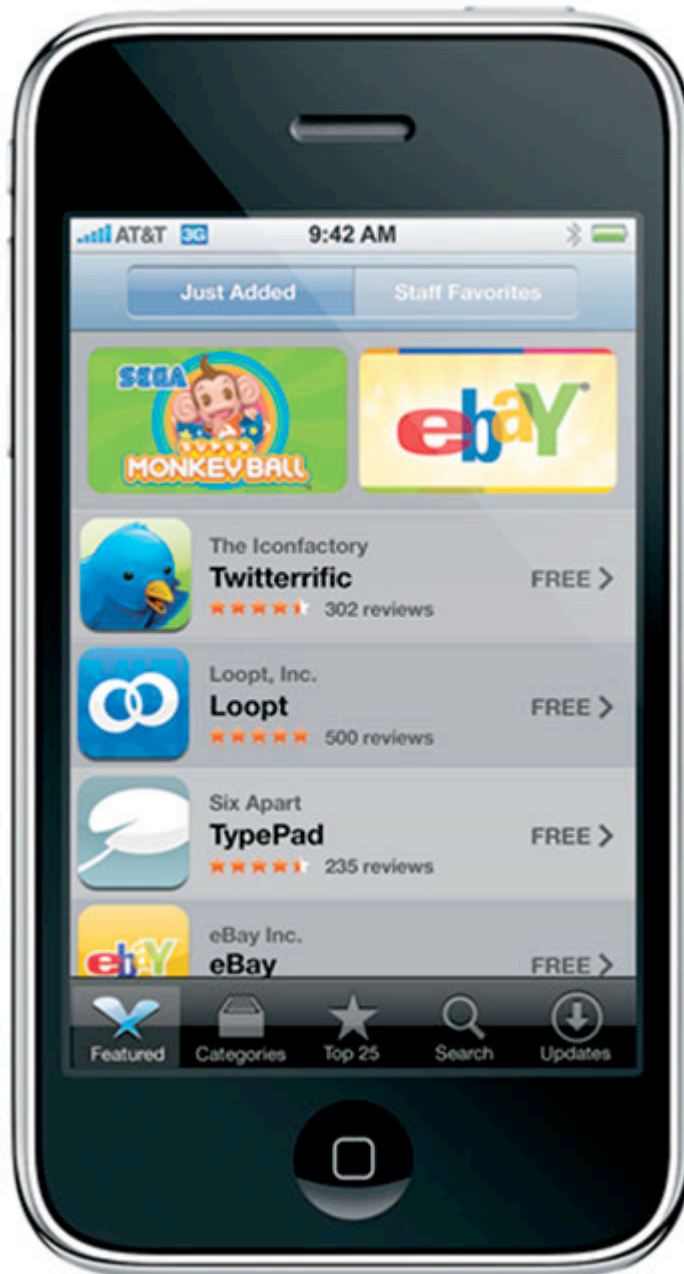


For Those Who Loathe Instruction Manuals

Apple iPhone 3G

(\$199 for 8GB model, with a two-year contract)

Apple's iPhone 3G remains the smartphone to beat. Its 3G Internet connection makes for speedy web browsing, as well as easy downloading from Apple's extensive store of third-party applications. Download all of the songs and podcasts from your iTunes library, use the touchscreen to navigate and play games and watch streaming video on the huge 3.5-inch screen. But for all the iPhone 3G's cutting-edge capabilities, its biggest selling point may be its straight-out-of-the-box ease of use, says Havlik.



For Media Lovers

Sony Ericsson Xperia X1

(Price to be announced)

Whether you love to watch streaming video or listen to music, the X1 will entertain you. Sick of listening to the songs in your MP3 collection? Switch over to the built-in FM radio. Watch streaming videos on the multimedia player, or create your own using the 3.2 megapixel camera. You can even add your favorite celebrity gossip and other news feeds. As for design, the X1's full curved keyboard allows for easy typing while the touchscreen lets you arrange the dashboard the way you want. Already popular in Europe, the X1 is anticipated to show up stateside before Christmas, says Bonnie Cha, senior editor for electronics review site *CNET*[®].



For Email Addicts

BlackBerry Storm

(Price to be announced)

Even though the latest BlackBerry doesn't sport the company's popular standard keyboard, crackberry addicts can still get their email fix. The Storm's innovative 3.25-inch touchscreen pulls double duty as a flexible keyboard, which you press down on instead of tapping. "The screen actually bends to your touch," says Gartenberg. Flip it horizontally for the full Qwerty keyboard, or hold it upright for an abbreviated version. To appeal to consumers, as well as businessmen, the Storm also includes instant messaging, mobile TV and an MP3 player.



For Newbies

Motorola Krave ZN4

(\$149 with a two-year contract)

Go ahead: Get touchy-feely with this phone. It has not one, but two touchscreens. Closed, the transparent cover acts as one touch surface that allows access to features like music and the GPS. It also protects the more sensitive inside screen (and prevents accidental calls), while enabling users to do more with the phone closed. Flip the cover open to tab through more options on the 2.8-inch screen. While electronics review site CNET bemoans the Krave's clunky browser and lack of Wi-Fi, it reports that its ease of use makes it a great introduction to touchscreen technology.



¹<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/GOOG/>

²<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/AAPL/>

³<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/RIMM/>

⁴<http://www.demystifyingdigital.com>

⁵<http://www.smartmoney.com/Spending/Technology/Slideshow-Googleing-for-Smart-Phone-Greatness/?page=2>

⁶<http://www.smartmoney.com/Spending/Technology/Slideshow-Googleing-for-Smart-Phone-Greatness/?page=2>

⁷<http://www.letstalk.com>

⁸<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/MOT/>

⁹<http://www.smartmoney.com/quote/S/>

¹⁰<http://www.cnet.com>

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