



Nexus One gives the iPhone a run for its money

HTC's Nexus One, which runs on Google's Android v2.1, is a legitimate challenger to Apple's iPhone

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Google made a wise decision when it decided to release an open source mobile operating system — it has allowed it to quickly infiltrate the smartphone market because of the business model: it's free and open source like Linux.

Despite this, most of the Android devices on the market today are not really true competitors to the iPhone, due to the immaturity, sluggishness and the availability of apps. But with the release of the latest device, the HTC Nexus One running Android v2.1, Android is finally becoming a threat to the iPhone, which has held its own for almost two years as the most desirable mobile device.

The Nexus One is an extremely slim and sleek touchscreen device that sports a trackball and the obligatory Android keys (back, menu, home, search). It uses a virtual keyboard so it's much smaller than previous Android phones we have reviewed, such as the flagship G1. In fact, it makes the iPhone look quite bulky by comparison.

Under the hood lies some serious computing power, the likes of which powered our desktop computers less than 10 years ago. The Nexus One is actually more powerful than some of the older computers we are still using today. It packs an astonishingly high 512MB of ram, 1GHz Snapdragon ARM CPU (central processing unit), 4GB of internal storage and a huge screen resolution of 800 x 480. Finally, true multi-touch ability has hit Android devices and the Nexus One can do most of what the iPhone can do in terms of touchscreen gestures: you can pinch to zoom in on a map for instance, or slide a menu up with a simple flick of your finger. It still can't, however, perform the most advanced iPhone multi-touch functions, such as touching and rotating your hand around to also rotate the map.

Apple claims half of the great features the Nexus One sports — or 20 of its patents — have been infringed upon, and not just the touchscreen. The list of alleged infringements contains things like "Object-Oriented Graphic System," "Unlocking a Device by Performing Gestures on an Unlock Image," "List Scrolling and Document Translation, Scaling, and Rotation on a Touch-Screen Display" as well as power-saving patents like "Conserving Power by Reducing Voltage Supplied to an Instruction-Processing Portion of a Processor." Either way, once the Nexus One is in your hands it's extremely unlikely Google would issue an update to remove features based on the current legal situation, but it does raise concerns that Apple holds such broad patents that could effectively give it a competitive advantage for years to come.

One of the beautiful things about the Nexus One is its vibrant high-resolution 3.7-inch screen with an extremely bright backlight. The camera is decent, too. It's a 5.0 mega-pixel camera with autofocus, capable of taking near-perfect shots during the day and not so bad shots at night using a better-than-average LED flash. Video can be recorded at 720 x 480 resolution, the same resolution as that of an ordinary TV and a very rare feature for mobile phone cameras right now. The usual array of features are all included: Bluetooth, WiFi, microSD slot, GPS, mini USB, accelerometer, compass, proximity sensors, and — a real deal-breaker for some — an ordinary-sized headphone socket that can link the Nexus One directly to your sound system or headphones like people have been doing with iPods for years.

Operating the phone feels snappy. The Android operating system doesn't drag at all like it used to and the 1GHz CPU is really quite powerful. You won't feel much slow down unless the phone is still booting or

performing some synchronization in the background. The Android 2.1 operating system also ships with some new features such as live wallpapers, which are animated backdrops that can react to user input, such as touching the screen or rotating the phone. Google has also incorporated five different "home screens," a bit like the desktop we have become accustomed to on our PC. This means users can customize multiple screens on their phone. For example, users might choose to place all of their favorite games on the left home screen, which they can access with a flick of their finger. Similarly, they might want to keep live news and weather widgets on the far right screen. The middle screen comes as default with a Google search bar widget and four of the main apps you will use most often: "Phone," "Contacts," "Browser," "Maps." The search bar widget can be tapped to enter text, or users can click a small microphone image and tell the phone what they want to search for on Google.com — and guess what, it works!

The Android market is booming and the number of applications available for the phones running the operating system grows daily. Android now offers some really awesome apps and games that can be downloaded onto the device by using the "Market" application. The capabilities of the Nexus One are apparent when you see a racing game such as *Raging Thunder* running beautifully with no dropped frames — the Nexus One is as capable or more than the iPhone as a gaming device. Of course, there aren't that many top games out on Android yet, but within the next 12 months the market will likely be flooded with them as developers begin to take Android as seriously as the iPhone.

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[MOTORING]



▲ The four-door, 6.0-liter V-12 engine Aston Martin Rapide.



▶ The center console and instrument cluster of the Aston Martin Rapide.



▶ The interior of the Aston Martin Rapide.

PHOTOS: BLOOMBERG



The mature secret agent's car of choice

Looking for a new family hatchback? The 300kph Aston Martin Rapide is good enough for Mr and Mrs Bond

BY MARTIN LOVE
THE GUARDIAN, LONDON

Now that James Bond is longer in the tooth, he's possibly considering settling down and starting a family. In which case he'll need back seats, four doors and a bigger boot. He'll need a hardworking saloon, the sort of vehicle middle Britons use to hog the middle lanes of the nation's freeways. But the world's most famous bachelor is unlikely to feel comfortable behind the wheel of anything other than an Aston Martin, so it's fortunate that the legendary marque (now in the hands of Prodrive-owner Dave Richards, who bought it from Ford in 2007) has chosen this moment to launch a family saloon. Though it's not like any other you'll have seen.

The Rapide is being billed by Aston as its first four-door, four-seat car. Like all new parents, carmakers love to claim firsts for their precious offspring. But the 1941 Aston Martin Atom had four doors and four seats, as did the 1976 Lagonda and the 1994 Lagonda Virage. The Rapide can, however, claim to be the fastest of the four, and it can also claim to be the only one built in Austria.

I first encountered the Rapide in a concrete car park in central London, hidden three stories below ground. It was the kind of location 007 would have approved of. The lift opened and there, in a curious shade of pale beige called "silver blonde," was the US\$207,500 saloon. From the front it looks like a DB9. From the back it looks like a DB9. And from the side it looks like a DB9 that's been stretched a bit. But that's the whole point. Bond wouldn't buy a saloon that looked like a saloon — he'll want one that looks like a fire-breathing, gravity-defying performance car.

A DB9, in other words.

This means that the only reason to buy a Rapide is its back seats. If they are too small or cramped the car will fail to persuade potential customers (who, let's face it, are all going to be man racers in deep denial over their parental responsibilities). Aston Martin's chief designer is the imposing Marek Reichman. He says he feels comfortable in the back. But then he would.

I (less imposing) gingerly opened the "swan-hinged" back door. The two sculpted leather seats, with their tapering headrests, are sunk deep into the base of the car, divided by a huge central armrest bristling with entertainment and air-conditioning controls. The headrests of the front seats have TV monitors embedded into the back of them. There is plentiful headroom. There is even knee room. They are proper seats!

Round at the front, I slide the Perspex fob into the dashboard, let my foot hover over the brake and press the ignition button. A moment's silence and then the colossal V12 5,935cc engine bursts into life. The magnificent throaty roar bounces around the walls of the concrete bunker. I, too, have a moment's silence and then burst into laughter.

Along with two friends who have enthusiastically agreed to be backseat lab rats, I drive the car up to ground level, through the city and then off up the nearest highway — 400km on a single tank and without a single whine from the back.

So, are you a family man? Should you buy one of these? Of course not. In no way is it a practical option. Besides, the visibility out the back isn't great, the boot has a fiddly catch, and the beast is so wide and long that parking anywhere other than your own stately home is a nightmare. But the Rapide is truly a joy to drive. And that's now a pleasure that you can share with all the family.