

## iPhone 3GS undergoes road-test

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By [Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson](#) (/couriermail/author/0,23829,5000516-8362,00.html)  
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**THE second coming of Apple's iPhone was greeted by hundreds of keen adopters who lined the streets of three Australian capitals at midnight on Friday.**

But Optus chief information officer Lawrie Turner, who witnessed the 30m-long queue in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall, said those who showed up only accounted for a small proportion of the more than 40,000 Australians who registered on the Optus website to hear more about the iPhone 3GS.

"One of the things Apple does well is create excitement," he says. "We were delighted and surprised by the turnout in Sydney (at the midnight launch) last year and we knew there was a level of excitement about this update among Apple devotees."

Other Australian carriers, Vodafone and Telstra, reported smaller queues but plenty of orders, and Apple Stores attracted lines after its surprise announcement to offer the phone as an unlocked device.

But the new iPhone has its doubters, who say this model is too similar to the previous iteration.

Telsyte principal analyst Warren Chaisatien says the iPhone 3GS will not be as popular as the iPhone 3G was in Australia as "the 3GS is not a brand new model," he says. "The heat has already been taken out of the marketplace."

Connect thoroughly tested the new iPhone 3GS and spoke to visiting Apple iPhone marketing executive Frank Casanova to get the full picture on Apple's new handset.

### SPEED

Above all things, the new iPhone promises more speed.

As such, the new handset is said to feature a 600MHz processor, replacing a 412MHz unit, and double the RAM at 256MB.

While Apple will not speak about components, Casanova says iPhone users can "conservatively" expect this phone to be twice as fast as the old model.

He says the most noticeable speed differences will be felt in web surfing, as pages render more quickly, opening email attachments and loading applications.

In comparison tests, the 3GS loaded iPhone menus 2 to 3 seconds faster, but some games loaded up to 7 seconds faster.

Email also appeared on the 3GS screen in a noticeably faster fashion, its progress highlighted with a new status bar.

Casanova says the new phone's speedier processing is not just about speeding up everyday tasks.

"There's two benefits to speed: the stuff that you normally do just goes faster, and the stuff that you couldn't do before that you can now do," he says.

### CAMERA

The iPhone's 2-megapixel camera has been a bugbear for many users, and has received a significant upgrade in the 3GS.

The phone now has a 3-megapixel camera with a unique focusing mechanism.

Apple has added a tool called Tap to Focus that allows users to touch the object on screen they wish the camera to focus on.

This act not only focuses the camera's lens, and chooses between foreground and background objects, but it allows the camera to adjust exposure settings to correctly light the object. It's a surprisingly effective system and creates significantly better iPhone photos.

The camera does not let users manually tweak exposure, ISO, picture size or effects settings like other phone cameras, however, nor does it feature a flash or a front-facing camera for video calls.

The new iPhone camera does capture video, however, in VGA (640x480) quality and at 30 frames a second. This video looks spectacular on the large iPhone screen, and the camera continues to adjust focus while recording.

Astutely, Apple has added options to send this video by MMS or email, or upload it directly to YouTube.

This addition is already having an effect on the web, with YouTube last week reporting that mobile video uploads had shot up 400 per cent since the phone's US launch.

### VOICE

In a novel addition, Apple has added voice controls to the new iPhone.

These controls are accessed by holding down the Home button and can be used to place phone calls or manage your music.

Phoning a friend named Jen, for example, is as simple as telling your phone: "Call Jen" at the prompt. It will then ask whether you want to phone her mobile, home or work number, if you have more than one number stored in your phone.

Playing a song is also simple. You can ask your phone to "Play songs by U2" and it will search your library and deliver them at random. You can then ask it to "Play next track" or to name the song.

If you're feeling tricky, you can also ask it to "play more songs like this" and the phone will suggest complementary songs from your music library using iTunes' Genius function.

Casanova says this feature also comes equipped with a dictionary of "the proper accent and words for Australia" so you don't have to fake an American accent.

In Connect's tests, this feature did as instructed more often than not, though speedy intervention was required on a few occasions when it phoned the wrong friend.

#### TETHERING

With this iPhone Apple has added an obvious and easy way to "tether" your phone to your computer, or to use your phone as a modem to connect to the net.

Casanova admits the act of tethering your phone and computer has been "cryptic, daunting ... altogether unacceptable" and needed an update.

With the 3GS, users can connect their laptop to the internet by turning the phone's tethering option on in its settings and plugging it into a USB port of a computer with current iTunes software. The computer can then connect to the internet using the phone's data allowance. This connection can also be made wirelessly by Bluetooth.

Setting up this connection is easy, although Australia's phone carriers are making it more complicated. Vodafone and 3 Mobile will not charge users extra to use their iPhones as a modem, although Optus will charge users \$10 a month to use the option.

Telstra, meanwhile, will not offer the option at all, in what is believed to be a dispute between Apple and the telco over data charges.

#### LOOKS

Put the iPhone 3GS beside the year-old 3G model, and you could not pick one from the other. The phones are the same shape, size and weight, and both come in just black and white.

There is one subtle difference, though: the new iPhone has an "oleophobic" coating on its screen, which Casanova says serves to "repel oil".

"So when you smudge, smear or otherwise put yourself on the phone, one quick swipe (on material) and it's right back to as good as new."

In practise, this coating works just as promised. Side by side, the iPhone 3GS attracts very few smears compared to its predecessor. The new coating appears to have given the new iPhone screen a slightly yellow tinge in comparison with its predecessor, though users are likely to adjust quickly.

#### EXTRAS

The iPhone 3GS has plenty of less noticeable enhancements too.

The new iPhone has stereo Bluetooth for use with wireless headphones, can be located through Apple's MobileMe service, will display its battery life as a percentage, and is capable of using even faster mobile phone networks (up to 7.6mbps).

Apple has also added a magnetometer that powers its Compass feature and improves its Google Maps feature.

Once employed, by tapping the Maps' location button twice, the magnetometer automatically moves the map around so you're always facing the right direction.

#### CONCLUSION

The iPhone 3GS does not reinvent the handset that changed the phone market, but it does enhance it.

The new camera is a welcome and much-needed upgrade, the speed kick eliminates frustration, and the ability to tether this phone to your laptop for emergency net connections could save you a lot of hassle.

Plus, web surfing on this phone is still second to none, thanks to that 3.5in screen and Multi-Touch controls.

The camera could be even better though, as it still has no flash and sits well below the 8-megapixel standard of leading phones, the screen is slightly dim, the battery will still only last you a day and you won't get any extra street cred for the upgrade as the new iPhone looks like the old model.

The upgrade does bring plenty of clout to this game-changing phone, though, and while the 3GS might not be a must-have upgrade, it's certainly a do-want device.

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