

## Review: Droid DNA by HTC

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*\$200 with two-year contract from Verizon*

If you've ever laughed at the person who rubs their expensive sports car with a diaper instead of driving it, you're about to know the feeling. Once you get your hands on the new HTC Droid DNA, Verizon's new flagship Android phone, you'll fall in love with this sleek beast's flat-out gorgeous five-inch, 1080p display and the breathtaking 1.5 GHz quad-core processor it has rumbling under the hood. You'll spend more time than you thought possible polishing the screen. You'll be reluctant to make calls for fear of your dirty ears leaving a smudge.

If it sounds like I'm going overboard, to use the cliché, you have to see it to believe it. The DNA's 440ppi crushes the pixel density of all competitors. Of course, the best way to check



out what this full HD display can do is with the brightness cranked all the way up, which will make short work of the battery life. Most of the time, you'll have the phone on auto brightness, which takes it down to about 50 percent. It's a bit depressing, like viewing the "Mona Lisa" through a dirty screen. But thankfully, the processor doesn't let up.

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The DNA comes loaded with Android's Jelly Bean (4.1.1) with HTC's Sense4+ UI running over the top. At all times while I was using the phone, it never stopped gliding with ease and firing up applications quickly. The Snapdragon processor, put together with the phone's 2GB of RAM and Verizon's network speed, makes for an exhilarating, satisfying and user-friendly experience. Not to say this phone looks friendly. Rather, the bad-ass design paints it as the Darth Maul of smartphones.

The back is all soft-touch plastic, with a cool matte finish and dotted with an indicator light, a flash and a camera lens wrapped with etched red metal. The same metal shows up on the sides in perforated accent strips and on the top as the power button, which is situated in the center. The power button is positioned in the center to make room for the SIM card tray, but it means hitting the power button and then unlocking the screen takes a bit of maneuvering to do one-handed. Because of the screen size, that shifting around can often result in accidentally launching apps. Oddly, that screen sensitivity doesn't always translate to the keyboard, where it's easy to touch the wrong key despite their fairly large size.

Another tiny gripe about the design is the paltry plastic door that covers the USB port, which is almost not worth mentioning since you won't miss it even if it breaks off. Also, the phone comes with built-in Qi charging so the problem can be avoided all together, provided you're up for shelling out \$65 for a charging pad; it's not included with the DNA.

But the front of the phone is where it's really at, with minimal space dedicated to touch buttons, an indicator light and red speaker and nearly all the room left over for the mighty display, which stretches nearly all the way to the sides ending in a comfortable, rounded edge. Combined with the concave back, the sides of the phone become much more slender than the actual phone and make it easier to handle.

Those narrow sides can make turning it sideways to use the camera feel a little precarious, but the brilliance of the camera is worth the slight risk. Boasting a more than sufficient eight megapixels (2.1 for the front-facing), the camera also excels in speed with little lag time between hitting the button and picture being snapped. Since the lens is mounted in the center, instead of the corner like on the iPhone or Google Nexus, there's less chance of your finger photobombing the shot. The camera easily switches between shooting videos or photos and allows you to take pictures while shooting video, and the nice array of built-in effects and basic editing functions practically renders Instagram obsolete.

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After quickly coming to terms with the limited battery life, which isn't much worse or better than anything out there, the biggest complaint about the DNA is the memory. The 16GB it comes with and 11GB that's available is the best it's going to get as the phone does not allow for upgrades. It's an issue that could really rear its ugly head if you plan on storing HD video on the device.

For gaming, the DNA is well-equipped with its Adreno 300 processor. For surfing the Web, text looks like it's printed on paper. For video, it's second to none. For everyday use, it's almost too big to be considered handy. But at \$199 with a contract, it stacks up nicely against similarly priced phones like the HTC One X and the LG Optimus. It's a steal compared to the \$299 plus you'll drop on the Samsung Galaxy Note II, and although the DNA has half an inch less screen than the Note II, it will save you from merciless "phablet" taunting.

The DNA is still a pricier smartphone option and definitely not for the casual email, Facebook and Web browsing enthusiast. It's for the end user who needs some heavy processing done quickly and wants to look good doing it.

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