

Editor's Take: First Impressions of iOS 7

Andrew Berg & Ben Munson

After fits and starts, error messages and shaky office Wi-Fi, Wireless Week got through the iOS 7 update and came out on the other side of the rainbow unscathed. With Apple's biggest overhaul to its mobile operating system yet running on both an iPhone 5 and a 4S, we settled in to actually play with it.

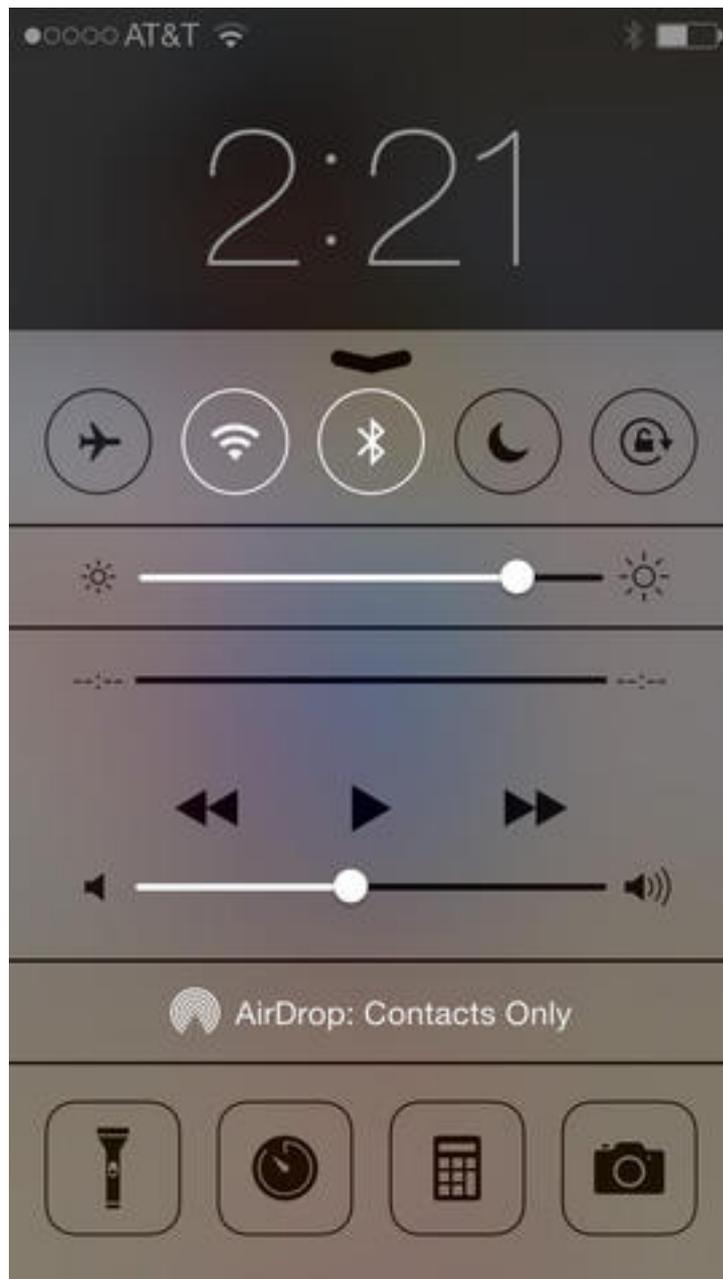
As to be expected with any huge remodel of a long-running OS, the new surroundings take some getting used to but we managed to pick out what we liked and disliked along with what surprised us.

Favorite new feature?

"I think my favorite new feature is the swipe-up toggle Control Center, which allows quicker access to functions like Wi-Fi, Airplane Mode, and screen brightness, among others. I also like that Apple has thrown a flashlight app and the calculator in this menu as well. That said, it took way too long for Apple to deploy these controls. Historically, when Apple held off on a feature that everyone else offered, one could have faith that it was because they were waiting until they had that feature perfected. In this case, they just took far too long to do exactly what Android has been doing for years." **(AB)**

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“I definitely agree with Andrew on the Control Center and I expect that to be one of the iOS 7 features I use most frequently. Though, I wish Apple had allowed for me to swap in or out utility apps. The flashlight app is great to have around but I’d probably like to have Notes in the menu instead of the calculator. As far as the updated feature that’s given me the most instant gratification, I’d say it’s the revamped multi-tasking function. I like the icons and screens scrolling at different speeds on different levels but I’d love it more if the screens updated without having to click on them. But it’s tons more fun to just flip apps upward when you want them to close rather than hold them down until they start wiggling and then try to hit their tiny minus signs.” **(BM)**

Biggest disappointment?

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"Sometimes I feel a little like Keanu Reeves' character in The Matrix, like I'm complacent to an illusion of freedom. It's part of the devil's bargain to which all iPhone users agree: You play by Apple's rules or you go somewhere else (the blue pill or the red pill). Apple's walled garden provides security and a continuity of experience across devices that is unparalleled, and yet it's a view of the world that can be suffocating. The launch of iOS 7 is akin to painting your living room...exactly the color Apple wants you to paint it. Sure, iOS 7 is pretty and it's different, but it doesn't offer users any real control over their phone's overall aesthetic. It's no wonder Motorola is trying to differentiate with personalization options. To paraphrase, I guess I'm most disappointed that Apple didn't go far enough. They still provide the authorized selection of certified sounds I can use on my phone. Apple still shuns slick homescreen widgets. For a company that espouses freedom of expression, they fail at allowing that expression on their own turf." (AB)

"Is it possible that I'm actually getting worse with the iOS keyboard? It sure feels like it and it's likely to only get worse for me. iOS 7 actually made Apple's frustrating keyboard a little more difficult to use. I missed keys a plenty before but now, with white keys sitting on a frosted, translucent board, the delineation is even more difficult to see. Autocorrect has gained some intelligence now and will go back and fix its tendency to throw in contractions based on what word proceeds it. But still, it's essentially the same keyboard and that's a big disappointment." (BM)

What surprised you the most?

"While it might not be technically a part of iOS 7, iTunes Radio first appeared along with this iteration, so I'm going with it. I didn't expect to have any use for iTunes radio, as I use a paid Rdio subscription for all my music. Still, I find myself returning to iTunes radio. I like the diversity of the selections within the stations, and the UI is slick and well integrated with the rest of the OS. I could be wrong, but I think there's a very real possibility Apple intends to expand on this service, but I guess we'll just have to wait and see." (AB)

"For as easy as it is to joke about the elementary school color scheme and minimalist icon design, I'm surprised at how much iOS 7's new look has won me over. The bright hues trigger happy feelings. The lines look cleaner. The rain in the weather app is soothing. The dialer now has circular buttons with translucent rings colored by your wallpaper. The folders never get full. It's all extremely pleasant so far. I know that most of this is cosmetic but since I give over so much of my attention to a device, I'm happy that Apple is making the time suck look so inviting." (BM)

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