Samsung Enters Wearables Market with Galaxy Gear Smartwatch

Andrew Berg

After a long wait and many rumors, Samsung Wednesday unveiled its new Galaxy Gear smartwatch, as well as the Note 3, and the tablet-sized Note 10.1.

In a dramatic webcast of a presentation at the IFA consumer electronics show in Berlin which was broadcast online, Samsung made a big deal over the redesign of its Note phablet, but it was the Galaxy Gear smartwatch that emerged as the most anticipated and innovative unveiling at the event. The new watch, which syncs with and can recieve calls and messages among other tasks, from Galaxy smartphones has been widely reported on in recent weeks.

Crafted with stainless steel, the Galaxy Gear smartwatch boasts 10-hour battery life and a touchscreen. It will allow users to recieve notifications like email, social networks, texts and calls. The idea is that as smartphones get bigger, in some cases approaching tablet size as is the case with the Note, people would rather not pull them out just to read a text.

The watch also allows people to raise their hand to their ear to take a call due to a microphone and speaker embedded in the Galaxy Gear's wristband. The device can also be controlled via Samsung's S Voice. The watch also has a camera embedded in the wristband.

Developers will be happy to know the Galaxy gear will be able to run applications. The company showed the watch running apps like Path and Banjo.

Initially the Galaxy Gear will only be supported by the new Note devices, with updates for other Galaxy devices, inlcuding the Galaxy S4, coming soon.

Aside from a textured back, and the usual suspects of spec upgrades--larger, thinner, faster, longer battery life--the Note 3 came across less as a revolution in device design and more as a routine refresh. The company did make a few improvements to the Note's S Pen stylus device, which can now access new menus and perform various commands by drawing shapes on the screen.

The new devices will be available in the United States and Japan in October and later this month from the rest of the world. Samsung did not offer pricing or carrier partnerships during today's event.

Samsung's announcement comes just ahead of Apple's Sept. 10 event, where Cupertino execs are expected to unveil a refresh of the iPhone, as well as a low-cost version of its flagship smartphone. Speculation has also been rampant that Apple may be planning to unveil a smartwatch of its own at the event.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/10/2013 - 10:59am*):
http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2013/09/samsung-enters-wearables-market-galaxy-gear-smartwatch