Hands-on with Apple's new iPad Pro and MacBook Air

Apple has wrapped up its event in Brooklyn, where it announced three new products with a focus on productivity. We spent some time using two of the new devices -- the iPad Pro and MacBook Air -- both of which are available to order right now and begin shipping next week.

By Jason Cipriani | October 30, 2018 -- 18:23 GMT (11:23 PDT) | Topic: Apple - ZDNet

What's old is new again. The MacBook Air has been modernized, and the iPad Pro brings back the iPhone 5's edgy design. Oh, and the Mac Mini has also been revamped.

Must read: Apple's new iPad Pro, MacBook Air, Mac mini: Can features, specs retain business momentum?

Apple hosted an event in Brooklyn on Tuesday, where Apple CEO Tim Cook and friends announced three new products. The focus of the event is summed up by one word: Productivity.

Every product announced, at least as was positioned by Apple, is meant to help the worker, student, and average person be more productive.

- **See it now:** [Apple Pencil 2 from Apple](#)
- **See it now:** [iPad Pro (2018) from Apple](#)
- **See it now:** [MacBook Air (2018) from Apple](#)

After the event, I spent some time using the new iPad Pro and MacBook Air, both of which are available to order right now and begin shipping next week. Let's start by looking at the new MacBook Air, which received its first major refresh in years.

MacBook Air

The new MacBook Air is what many wanted from the MacBook Pro with TouchBar. It's lightweight, portable, adds a Retina Display, and a fingerprint reader via Touch ID without the TouchBar that, at least on my MacBook Pro, stays untouched.

Apple is sticking with its butterfly keyboard design, using the third-generation design. The keys have been prone to letting dust collect under them, and with enough buildup, rendering a key useless. I can't vouch for the MacBook Air's keyboard's ability to ward off being defeated by dust, but the keys on it felt stiffer than the keys on my MacBook Pro. Granted, I'm using an older MacBook Pro with an older generation of the butterfly keyboard, but the change was immediately apparent. Even as I type this on my MacBook Pro, the difference is notable.

Also: [MacBook Air, Mac Mini and iPad Pro 2018: Everything Apple just announced](#) CNET

In the top right corner of the keyboard is a Touch ID fingerprint sensor, which in the demo I was shown works just as fast as it does on iPhone and other MacBook's. Touch ID is used to unlock the Air, approve purchases via Apple Pay, and gain access to apps like 1Password.

On the left side of the Air, you'll find you Thunderbolt 3 ports, or rather USB-C ports. On the right side is a headphone jack -- yes, Apple kept the headphone jack on its latest laptop.

The Retina Display on the new Air measures 13.3-inches, with a resolution of 2560 x 1600. And it's every bit as impressive as any Retina Display on a MacBook. The standard MacBook Air, which by the way is still available from Apple, has a resolution of 1444 x 900. The difference between the two is stark.

Also: [Apple sprinkles iPhone X magic on iPad Pro, MacBook Air, but challenges remain](#) CNET

I'd need a lot more time than the handful of minutes I had with the MacBook Air to give a thumbs up or down, but my initial impression is that this is the MacBook users are going to buy. At $1,200, it's pushing the envelope of affordable and powerful, but after the iPhone X's release, Apple users are willing to pay a premium for a better product.

iPad Pro

Remember the iPhone 5's square edges? Picture those, but on an iPad, and with a display that goes nearly edge to edge. Oh, and forget the home button.

That's the new iPad Pro. Actually, iPads Pro. There are two of them. There's an 11-inch model that's nearly the same overall size as the now older 10.5-inch iPad Pro, and a 12.9-inch iPad Pro that's smaller than the previous 12.9-inch model.

In hand, both sizes felt very balanced and not unwieldy. There was a uniformness to them that I liked. The display, a Liquid Retina display, is as crisp and sharp as I've seen on an iPad. If that display name sounds new, it kind of is. The iPhone XR is the only other product in Apple's lineup that uses an improved LCD display that Apple's dubbed Liquid Retina.
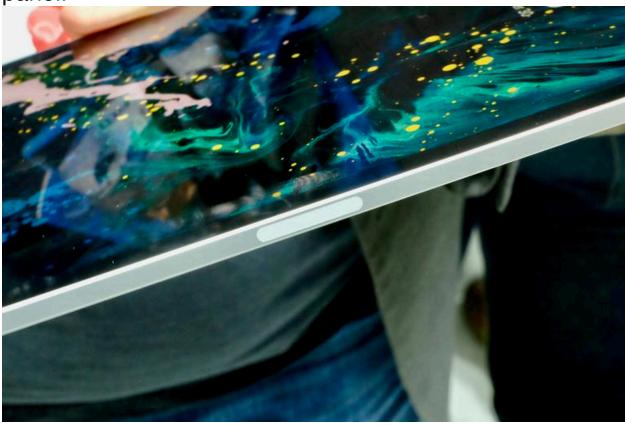
Surrounding the display is a slim black bezel. Tucked into the top of the bezel is Apple's True Depth camera system that's used for Face ID.

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Also: [iPad Pro 2018: Cheat sheet](#) TechRepublic

Face ID works regardless of the orientation, instead of only in portrait mode as is the case on the iPhone with Face ID. I watched as an Apple employee unlocked a demo iPad Pro with the True Depth camera system in all four orientations, and often times the lock was opened

(indicating Face ID has successfully recognized him) before the display rotated to its new orientation. One can only hope that, whatever Apple did to make Face ID work regardless of orientation, it can bring that to the iPhone.

On the bottom of the iPad Pro is a USB-C port. Ditching Lightning for USB-C gives the iPad Pro the ability to connect to a 4K display. In the demo area, there were a few displays with an iPad Pro connected. The demos ran through various apps, like iMovie. The default behavior of an external display on the iPad Pro is too mirror the iPad's display. However, developers can customize the behavior. For example, with the tap of a button in iMovie, a project's footage is shown on the display, instead of the editing panel.
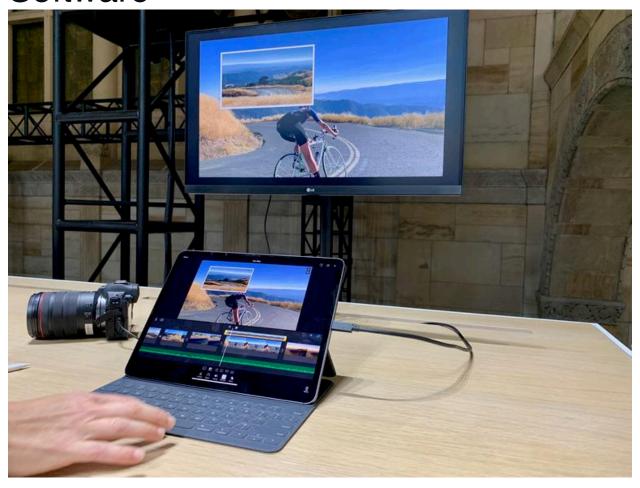
On the right side of the iPad Pro is a small, pill-shaped section. This spot is where the new Apple Pencil magnetically attaches to the iPad Pro. It also serves as a wireless charging spot for the Apple Pencil. Just place the flat edge of the Pencil near the edge of the iPad Pro, it snaps into place and begins charging.

Also new to the Apple Pencil is the ability to double-tap the Pencil -- roughly the bottom fifth -- to switch between tools. In the Notes app, a double-tap switches between the current tool and the eraser. Users can customize the action in settings. It's up to each app developer to integrate the Pencil's new double-tap feature and provide settings.

Also: [Apple's MacBook Air 2018 update: Cheat sheet](#) TechRepublic

As someone who used to do 95 percent of my work on an iPad Pro, Apple's latest tablets are intriguing and something I plan on testing in the very near future.
The 11-inch iPad Pro starts at $799 for 64GB of storage. The 12.9-inch model starts at $999 for the same storage, with both devices maxing out at 1TB of storage.

Software

What was largely missing from the event, especially concerning the iPad Pro line, is any updates to the software. Despite releasing iOS 12.1 just as the event ended, Apple appears to have made no notable changes to the iPad's core experience. Safari is still a mobile browser. Using an external monitor is the same as using AirPlay to mirror your display to a TV. In fact, when watching a video in the Photos app, the iPad Pro shows an AirPlay icon, while the video plays on a connected monitor.

Surely there's more in store for the iPad Pro. The hardware is extremely impressive and powerful but is held back by software. Yes, Adobe is releasing the "full" Photoshop experience in 2019, and that's a good start, but iPad Pro users need more of that. And fast.

original article:
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