

Newest PSP Vita rumors

Written by mike smith

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So far we all have heard about Sony's new handheld Vita, but still there are a lot of details that haven't been finalized and questions left unanswered. The following is an article from computerandvideogames.com that discusses some of the questions facing the PSP Vita such as the price point, the hardware capabilities, the deals with cellphone carriers and release dates.

For its part, Sony is keeping quiet on Vita's social media functions and broader apps until the GamesCom trade show in August - and this secrecy extends to key development partners. One high profile UK developer simply replied: "Sorry, I am under NDA [non-disclosure agreement] with Sony and, as a key developer working on a leading Sony IP, I can't really answer this stuff or be seen to be getting involved." That response was far from unique.

So it's a wall of silence? Not quite. We kept digging, and this is what the smart money says...

"Sony has been shrewd with that aggressive price point," says Tom Hoggins, games editor at The Daily Telegraph. "The premium 3G and Wi-Fi model looks like it'll be £280 [as hinted by Sony exec Andrew House last month], which was the initial price of the 3DS.

Considering the technical grunt, it offers decent value. Anything above £300 and it puts consumers off instantly." Still, even at £230 for the Wi-Fi only model, Hoggins concedes it's 'outside the impulse buy bracket,' adding, "Sony will need to make sure that Vita is worth every penny if people are to add it to their smartphone. It's in a better position than 3DS - the screen, specs and control are more enticing than 3D, which people still haven't fully embraced."

3G OR NOT 3G?

The cost of mobile data on 3G will hinge on the exclusivity deals Sony can strike with the mobile networks. One scenario is that you pay a reasonable monthly subscription to Virgin, O2, Vodafone or Orange and get a 'free' PS Vita in return.

It's worth noting the new Sony Ericsson Xperia Play phone is available on contract with all of the major mobile operators, despite early reports that Orange was Sony Ericsson's exclusive partner. It's likely to be the same with PS Vita.

But will PS Vita's 3G support allow us to turn off our PS3s and continue playing MW3 or FIFA 12 online while sitting on the train?

"I think cross-platform play will only apply to select titles like Ruin," says Hoggins. "I don't think

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Vita will be able to cope with a full-on game of CoD or FIFA. It'll only work for PSN titles, most likely."

Dr Richard Wilson, CEO of developer trade body TIGA, is similarly wary. "Only time will tell," he says. "It has the potential to open gaming to an 'On the Move' generation, but at what cost? It's unlikely we'll see full connectivity in launch titles. Outside big cities 3G doesn't really exist, so forget keeping the kids quiet in the car with online games."

So what does 3G offer? "It depends on Vita's specialized lifestyle apps," says Tom Hoggins. "The ability to web-browse, download smaller games, make Skype calls [a Skype icon was glimpsed on an official PS Vita presentation in Brazil] and use the in-built GPS would definitely be appealing, especially with that big, lush OLED screen.

"However, these are all things your smartphone can do. Positioning Vita as an all-singing lifestyle device to match your iPhone would be a mistake. Sony have to find something that only Vita can do. PS Near [Sony's answer to Streetpass on 3DS] is interesting, but UK gamers aren't as connected when it comes to portable consoles."

Third-party developers will also be key to PS Vita's success, with Activision pledging Call of Duty on Vita and EA certain to unveil FIFA. But what about more unusual, indie games? "Developers like new challenges," says the TIGA rep, "but without big-money support, it'll be difficult for many Indies to push the boundaries. It's powerful technology, and that will be expensive to develop for."

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WHAT THE TECH MEANS

"Vita's power allows graphics to match the best of bulky games consoles", says David Harold, Director of PR for Imagination Technologies. "The feedback we're getting from developers is that they're blown away. Why? Since POWERVR is a very different graphics architecture.

Put simply, it's a way of doing graphics that is much more efficient than traditional graphics renderers, enabling low power use but very high performance." Good news for battery life, then, although Sony haven't officially revealed how long we can play without a charge - but it's rumoured to be on par with PSP.

When will Vita hit the shops? Sony has promised a 2011 release, but that will most likely be Japan only, with a staggered European release to follow in early 2012. "We'll have all regions out by the end of the fiscal year," says Jack Tretton, meaning March 31 by the latest.

The biggest question, then. Will Vita succeed? "Sony has learned a lot from its experiences with PSP and PSP Go," says Hoggins. "While the idea that the PSP was a failure is a myth, there were a lot of issues with the machine that Sony has deftly addressed with Vita. I think,

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unless 3DS turns around its mediocre start, the Vita is the last chance for handheld consoles to make an impact."

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