

The iPhone 4 Gets an "S" (For Effort?)

Written by Marco Attard
05 October 2011

Like the rumour-based oracles predicted, Apple unveils the 2011 iPhone model at Let's Talk iPhone-- only not the "iPhone 5," but the iPhone 4S, a hardware upgrade on the previous model.

The revelation proved disappointing for the Apple disciples expecting something entirely new (as if Apple would reinvent the wheel), 4G (lacking) or an improved display (the iPhone4 Retina Display remains).



Inside is the dual-core A5 processor from the iPad 2, which Apple says improves on both graphics and iOS performance. Cameras also get an improvement-- iPhoneographers will be able to play with an 8MP camera handling 1080p video, complete with hybrid IR filter, real-time image stabilisation and temporal noise reduction.

Connections come through HSPA+, with GSM and CDMA antennas making it an "international" smartphone.

What's new is "Siri"-- the voice-controlled virtual assistant that speaks back, Hal 9000-style (only in a soothing female voice). In a very non-Apple (but very Google) move, Siri will actually launch in beta alongside the iPhone 4S.

A bullish Tim Cook took to the stage like a duck takes to water-- if not a low-key Steve Jobs,

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opening his appearance with "I love Apple!" before rattling out hyperbole and statistics. Other Apple executives also took the stage (including Scott Forstall, Eddy Cue and Phil Schiller), in a move only pointing out the elephant in the room that was the absence of Jobs.

The main question-- how will the iPhone 4S fare against the increasingly confident Android competition? Will such a simple upgrade fuel sales? TrendForce at least believes so, saying "a strong market demand remains" and predicting WW 2012 iPhone 4S shipments may reach 100M (resulting in a boon for the NAND flash market as it could cause flash undersupply, triggering a price increase).

Meanwhile iSuppli predicts Apple will remain on top of the smartphone pecking order, leading the general smartphone category to reach global shipments of over 1 billion units by 2015.

Technology-wise, the iPhone 4S races neck to neck against the latest Androids, while windows Phone remains something of a dark horse (with the promise of both "Mango" and WP7-powered Nokia handsets).

The iPhone 4S will be launch in the US on October 14, with other territories to follow soon-- or maybe later, if Apple wants international versions of Siri available.

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