

Google Brings Nexus to an End With Pixel Phones

Written by Marco Attard
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The Made by Google event involves a bevy of hardware announcements, including search giant's next smartphone line-- dubbed Pixel, not Nexus-- the Daydream View VR headset, the Home smart speaker, the simply named Wi-Fi router and the 4K-capable Chromecast Ultra.



Clearly underlining the end of an era, the Pixel-branded smartphones are described as wholly designed by Google, with HTC simply taking care of manufacturing duties. The phones come in two sizes (the 5-inch Pixel and 5.5-inch Pixel XL) and carry AMOLED displays, quad-core Snapdragon 821 CPUs, 4GB RAM and 12.3MP cameras inside aluminium and glass bodies.

However what Google really pushes with the smartphones-- and the rest of its hardware announcements-- is the software. The Pixel phones run on the latest version of Android and come with Assistant (the Google take on the Siri-style voice assistant) built-in. A long press on the Home button summons the Assistant, allowing one to access a variety of Google services and connected apps through voice alone.

The Pixel phones are also ready for VR through the Daydream framework, and for such purposes the company offers a the Daydream View headset. The headset is similar to any other smartphone-powered VR solution, but is built in breathable microfibres instead plastic, making it more comfortable to wear. Google showed off some new VR software at the event, including a Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them experience, a Starchart VR app and virtual theatre apps for Netflix, HBO and Hulu.

Making a reappearance at Made by Google is Home, the company's Alexa-style smart speaker. It speaker runs on Assistant, and can play music from YouTube or Spotify, queue media on Netflix or Hulu, and answer spoken questions. Google is also ready to take on home networking through Wi-Fi, a followup to the OnHub Router similar to the Eero. The system uses multiple, puck-like access points to blanket the home with wireless access, with Network Assist software automatically optimising the network. A companion app allows users to manually manage users.

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The final Google device announced at the event confirms a recent rumour-- the Chromecast Ultra, a 4K-capable version of the media streaming dongle. It supports videos with both HDR10 and Dolby Vision HDR, includes an ethernet port for more reliable networking and comes with of the addition of 4K content on Google Play Movies.

The Pixel smartphones are available now, the Daydream View, Home and Chromecast Ultra ship on November, and Wi-Fi router shipments follows on December.

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