



**Nokia 5700 Xpress Music** Text by Cheryl Zhang

I recognised the phone as the one from the 'bulldog' advertisement, but the 'twisty' version. Lifting the Nokia 5700 XpressMusic out of its box, the look and feel of the phone gave me a pleasant surprise. The phone came in a smooth black and white matt finish that fitted well in the palm of my hand, and came with buttons that could be depressed (not the smooth flat types which really annoy me). The large 2.2" QVGA display displays up to 16 million colours and comes with stereo loudspeakers with superb hi-fi sound quality. The music player was simple and sweet to use, with good sound quality and a 3.5mm headset jack that's compatible with almost all headphones. Of course, the allure of the phone was the 2-megapixel camera which could be activated simply by twisting the number pad 90 degrees forward, or 180 degrees backwards to activate the music player controls. However, the camera which comes with integrated flash and 4x digital zoom seemed to lag slightly when capturing images. Placement of the fingers on the camera button was also a bit awkward due to the lack of space, resulting in a two-finger operation. Changing camera settings were also a tad difficult, due to the multi-directional joystick knob (which is rather uncharacteristic of Nokia). We say bring back the usual navigation buttons, and this phone will definitely be a must-have. Otherwise, the Nokia 5700 XpressMusic does well in terms of usability and aesthetics. We like it. In fact, even my mother likes it.

**Sony Ericsson K810i** Text by Cheryl Zhang

Sony Ericsson maintains customer loyalty by constantly coming up with phones that are an improvement over the previous model. Targeted at those who want decent cameras on their phones, the 1039 K810i Cyber-shot phone comes with a 3.2-megapixel camera with Xenon flash, macro mode, red eye reduction, image stabiliser and 16x digital zoom. Pictures captured are clear (as always) and there is an ample memory of 64MB on the phone to store your photographs. Not enough? Slot in a Memory Stick. Micro for extra space. The numerous short cut keys on the phone are also a bonus, and relieve us from the pain of having to search for that link to macro mode, or turning off the flash. With its unconventional circle-shaped buttons that are placed comfortably apart, even guys with larger fingers can avoid pressing the wrong keys. The unusually large numbers of the keypad are also a boon for those suffering from presbyopia (go read our May/June issue if you don't know what it means). As always, the phone comes equipped with Bluetooth, Infra red, acts as a modem, has decent speakers and media player. This phone warrants a second glance, and is definite value for money.



**Sonic Gear iBall Speaker System** Text by Cheryl Hoon

Say goodbye to ugly, chunky black speakers! The Sonic Gear iBall speaker system made for the iPod charges your device while playing the favourite songs on your play list. Its design oh-so apple with its glossy white casing, there are no more worries about mismatched devices raising your room interior. As for the sound quality, the iBall provides a relatively decent bass line, and volume range can go really wide. Other than just playing music from your iPod, this speaker system houses an FM player, a clock as well as an alarm. Be warned, the FM radio only functions when you connect the wire antenna. Be sure to place your iBall in an airy and well-ventilated area to enhance the signal reception. Though it fits the 1st and 2nd generation iPod nano models better with its cave-like structure, the dock can be ejected to fit the iPod Mini and 4th generation iPods. For people who do not own an iPod, rest assured that other digital audio players are still compatible via a line-in jack too. Now instead of looking for speakers to match your plays, you'll have to buy audio players to match your iBall.



**Sonic Gear i-300 Ultra Portable Speakers** Text by Cheryl Zhang

Pretty in white? Check. Sleek curved edges? Check. Ultra portability? Double check. The pioneer of portable audio Sonic Gear keeps to its name and presents us with the uber-adorable ultra portable i-300. Small enough to fit into my handbag at 12cm by 8cm by 3cm, the i-300 comes with a swivel stand with a rubber base. We absolutely love the fact that it can be powered up via 4 AAA batteries, USB port or AC power. The sound is clear and crisp and volume level isn't compromised, and its bassline is surprisingly good for the port-sized speakers. We're rather pleased with the i-300 and are definitely convinced that size doesn't really matter.

**Nokia N76** Text by Cheryl Hoon

In first place, the red version of the Nokia N76 can be passed off as the phone in my pocket. Motorola RAZR (V20 edition) in fact, its similarities are so akin that I whipped out my phone for a quick spot-the-difference game (OK, I'm exaggerating). For a 3G phone and its stated power packed functions, the Nokia N76 is pretty slim (13.7 mm thick) – and pretty disappointing too. It may be sexy to look at, but some design quirks tipped the exasperation level. Firstly, the phone is impossible to flip open with one hand. There are no gloves where you can slide your thumb under, and the mechanism is rather stiff. I often found myself using both hands to open the phone (ugh, using two hands is just so uncool). Even with two hands, it was still quite tough due to the smooth and slick surface. Placement of the earphone jack and mini USB port prevents the phone from opening fully when plugged in, resulting in an awkward position that will frustrate you. Of course, like all Nokia phones, the functions in the N76 are fantastic. I loved the 1.36-inch color display external screen that enables me to read my SMS without opening the cover. When unlit, it transforms into a mirror which allows you to check for emerging pimples. My verdict: Get the phone if you have the patience, but till then, perhaps Nokia should keep away from creating damnable phones.



**Canon EOS-1D Mark III** Text by Cheryl Hoon

The Canon EOS-1D Mark III is one mean machine – holding it sure makes me feel like a true blue professional photographer. Shutter speed is extremely quick, it almost seems like a machine gun that I'm handling when I press the button. The automatic white balance and focus is a godsend, especially for amateurs like yours truly. What I don't like however, was the tiny joystick controller. It is hard to scroll in the image view zoom mode, with a high tendency of running about on screen. Furthermore, the camera's body might be too big for smaller hands. As a girl with considerably long fingers, I found myself fumbling for the shutter button in vertical mode once too often. The camera is relatively heavy too – I was nursing a wrist ache at the end of my fall day photo shoot. That said, the aforementioned are only minor flaws that are not unbearable at all. In fact, there isn't much to nitpick on. It's such a good gadget that working on it is enough to inspire me to hide behind the bushes and become part of the paparazzi pack.



**HTC Touch** Text by Cheryl Hoon

Just putting in the SIM card and waiting for the phone to load is bad enough to make me lose my patience. Start up is sluggish (no kidding, I waited for approximately 1 minute), and the SIM card slot at the side is incredibly hard to open. In fact, the only way I figured was to take out the back cover, and that defeats the original purpose of having the side slot in the first place. Also, messaging is tedious – the QWERTY keyboard is so small that it's impossible to type without the use of a stylus – fingernails are not an alternative. Other than these blunders, HTC Touch is not all that bad. Measuring at 99.9mm x 58mm x 13.9mm and weighing at 112g, it is small and light. The slightly rounded body has a smooth and rubbery feel, making it a pleasure to grip. Not to mention, interface is very cool. To activate the menu, swipe your thumb upwards. Change screen? Swipe, swipe, and swipe. I look like I'm wiping my screen, but who cares? I'm having fun.

**Philips GoGear audio videoplayer SA6025** Text by Cheryl Hoon

If you are looking for a decent audio and video player that is affordable, this is the way to go. Don't believe the hype, the Philips GoGear audio videoplayer SA6025 and its relatively minuscule price tag of \$51.99. The sleek black gadget is able to playback videos, pictures and music, and comes with a FM player and voice recording function. Interface is simple but effective – it's so dummy proof that you can navigate and find what you want without a manual. Though scrolling is sluggish at times, everything else is pretty spectacular. The player has a 3.4 x 4.5 mm screen that boasts of very sharp colours and quality. Watching 'The Pursuit of Happiness' in this player is so clear that it feels like you are watching it on a mini television. Design wise, it is light (it's only 75 grams), and the glossy finish eludes a chic feel. Though fingerprints are easily attracted, it is nothing that a cloth (or finger) can't solve. Let's give Philips two thumbs up – now students can look cool without burning a hole in their pockets.

**Motorola KRZR K3** Text by Cheryl Hoon

My opinion of Motorola has always been 'good design, mediocre function'. The K3 did not impress me much other than the fact that it had a 2 mega-pixel camera (which isn't as good as others in the market, but decent enough). Storage space has also increased from 200MB to 50 MB, and with the ability to insert a microSD card, memory is not that big a problem anymore. Predictably, design is stunning. From the same mould as its KRZR K1 family, K3 is sleek and soft to hold. Available in two colours, stone grey and dark pearl grey, its shiny surface attracts a tad too many fingerprints. For a Motorola phone, there really isn't much that you can complain about, but also nothing to rave about either. Comparatively, the KRZR K3 has definitely beaten its predecessors, but there's still room to improve.

