



**SPRING'S
HERE!**

APPLEPLAY

A quick entry to this month's Market Info with Apple's new iPhone 14 and 14 Plus that now comes in a fresh and timely new colour to usher in this year's sunshine (I hope) as springtime arrives.

The phones themselves are no different than the rest of the range released last year with the exception of its 'not for everyone' bright and vibrant yellow hue. The back glass highlights the bright yellow with the black lenses standing out in a way that they don't on other finishes. The surgical steel band holding the whole phone together is also a metallic yellow.

With the addition of this new colour, the iPhone 14 and 14 Plus now comes in six colours. Midnight, starlight, (PRODUCT)RED, blue, purple and the all new yellow. I feel like this does mean that other colours are planned in the range so could we potentially see green on the horizon? I think a green would fit in quite nicely in the range!



A NEW ERA

Sonos have revealed their all-new generation of wireless smart speaker systems built for “the future of immersive listening”.

The range is split into two new systems. The Era 300 which is intended for spatial audio with support for Dolby Atmos and the Era 100 which is a remaster of the best-selling Sonos One speaker. Sonos state that both speakers have been tuned by award winning artists and sound engineers with expanded connectivity from previous generations and Trueplay™ technology. Sonos have also stated that the new range is part of their “new responsible design standards” which aims to address long term serviceability concerns, utilise energy efficiency technologies and use of post-consumer recycled (PCR) materials.

The Era 300 is the more expensive of the two new speakers coming in at £449.00/ AU\$749.00, featuring a new “cinched hourglass” design. Sonos state that this new mix of angles, perforations and proportions enhances the direction and dispersion of the speakers sound waves to envelop their users. This makes them especially effective when paired with Sonos Arc or Beam (Gen 2) as wireless rear speakers with them delivering multi-channel surround sound, a first for Sonos. Each speaker consists of six drivers; an upward firing tweeter, a pair of



tweeters on the sides, a pair of high performance woofers on the sides, and a centre tweeter. On the front there is a custom waveguide built to disperse audio for an expanded soundstage. These are powered by six class-D amplifiers. There is also a set of far-field microphones with beam-forming and multichannel echo cancellation for interacting with the smart speaker.

The Era 300 features WiFi 6, Bluetooth 5.0 and a Line-in input which even enables connection of turntable via the optional Sonos Line-in adaptor. With the Sonos app users can tap the Trueplay™ tuning app which monitors the layout of your room and optimises the speakers EQ accordingly. The speaker is powered by a new Quad Core 1.4GHz A53 CPU.

The Era 100 features a 25% larger woofer than the previous model accompanied by dual angle tweeters powered by three class-D amplifiers. Besides these feature and the obvious size difference, the Era 100 shares the same features as it's bigger counterpart like WiFi 6, Bluetooth 5.0, Line-in and Trueplay™.

Both new smart speakers launch the end of March.

THE A GAME

Samsung may have just launched their top of the range smartphone offerings, but some of their best selling phones are models at the lower price points like Samsung's Galaxy A series featuring the new A34 5G and A54 5G.

Both phones feature Full HD+ Super AMOLED displays. There's a 6.4-inch screen on the A54 and 6.6-inch on the A34. Both phones feature Vision Booster technology for enhanced visibility in bright outdoor light and 120Hz refresh rates.

Both phones also feature a triple camera array. The A54 comes with a 50MP f1.8 main camera with OIS, 12MP f2.2 ultra-wide, and 5MP macro. The A34 features a 48MP f1.8 main camera with OIS, 8MP f2.2 ultra-wide and the same 5MP macro. The front camera is 13MP on both but the A54 gets the more elegant punch hole design with zero notch. Behind these cameras is the largest sensor built into a A-series phone for improved low light performance which improves video footage and allow users to take blur-free photos.

The A54 runs on the Exynos 1380 whilst the A34 runs on a MediaTek Dimensity 1080 chip



and the A54 is expected to perform 20% better for CPU related tasks and provide 26% faster graphics. The A34's chipset is not quite as capable but is still expected to perform well with everyday tasks despite its lower RAM count. Storage options are the same on both models with 128GB or 256GB models and expansion via microSD up to 1TB.

The phones are IP67 rated for dust and water resistance, something that's becoming the norm on mobile phones. Both come equipped with 5000mAh batteries which Samsung claim should provide up to two days of power with 25watt charging, but no capabilities for wireless charging.

The phones are each available in four colours. The A54 will be available in Awesome Lime, Awesome Graphite, Awesome Violet and Awesome White. The A34 will be available in Awesome Lime, Awesome Graphite, Awesome Violet and Awesome Silver. Samsung are certainly not naming the colours chosen for the range by half!

The new phones are available to buy now starting at £349.00/AU\$599.00 for the A34 5G and 449.00/AU\$699.00 for the A54 5G.

Leica have launched a range of new lenses for their SL system as part of the L-mount alliance with Panasonic and Sigma. This new lens line represents a saving being far cheaper than Leica's offering for the SL cameras up to this point, but this is cheap by Leica standards so the starting price still hangs around the £1,700.00/AU\$3,190.00.

The first of the new lenses to be announced this year were the new Summicron-SL 35 F/2 ASPH. and Summicron-SL 50 f/2 ASPH. Both lenses share the same body weighing in at just 400g, with the differences being the internal elements that make up each of the focal lengths.

The Summicron-SL 35 consists of eleven lens elements in nine groups with six aspherical surfaces, with a focus range from 24cm to infinity. The aperture range is electronically controlled with a range from f/2 to f/22 giving the user a choice between half or third stops. The Summicron-SL 50 consists of nine elements in eight groups, again with six aspherical surfaces. Focus range is 45cm to infinity and the aperture range is the same as the 35mm. Both lenses are housed in a aluminium and magnesium enclosure which is dust and splash resistant. Both have a 67mm filter diameter.

Also launched is a new telephoto, the Vario-Elmarit-SL 100-400 F/5-6.3. This lens is the longest zoom in the SL lineup and can be extended with the separate Leica Extender 1.4x to a focal range of 140-560mm which costs £785.00/AU\$1,490.00. The extender is recognised by the camera so that the extended focal length and aperture are read into the picture data. The lens consists of 22 elements in 16 groups with an aperture range from 5-6.3 at the shortest focal length

Affordable?

to f/22 with half or third stops which are electronically controlled. Both external lens elements feature a water and dust repellent Aqua-Dura® coating.

The lens features an ARCA-SWISS compatible tripod mount which can be removed and inserted directly into a suitable mounting system without the need for a quick-release plate. There is also a lockable tripod clamp which allows the lens to be rotated seamlessly with 90 degree turns providing a physical lock

that can be felt. This enables quick changes between landscape and portrait orientations.

As mentioned earlier these new lenses offer a cheaper entry to Leica SL lenses than was previously available with those options falling to the Panasonic or Sigma L-mount equivalents. This is because these new lenses are not APO or Summilux variants which many of the primes lenses have been until now. They are also reported to be manufactured in Leica's newer Portuguese

factory so they miss out on the 'Made in Germany' badge that is quite important to the more, how can I say this, entrenched Leica customer.

The new Summicron-SL ASPH. 35 retails for £1,950.00/AU\$3,690.00. The Summicron-SL ASPH. 50 retails for £1,700.00/AU\$3,190.00.

The Vario-Elmarit-SL 100-400 retails for £1,910.00/AU\$3,590.00.



Sony is having a stab at electric cars and now we have Acer, a computer company making a break for the e-bike market with the announcement of their ebii AI-driven smartbike but don't worry, the AI here is not going to ride the bike for you.

The ebii is constructed of aluminium alloy and runs on a single-sided hub motor located at the front. One thing that immediately jumped out at me when looking at this bike was the front fork. Usually, bikes have two forks but the ebii strikingly only has the one. How this will effect the ride remains to be seen, but bike frame geometry is incredibly important for both comfort and performance of a bike so it seems like an odd choice given that bike manufacturers tend not to go with a design like this.

The bike features a range of safety features. Rear, front and side lights make you visible at night and the bike also has a built-in collision detection system that alerts the rider of oncoming cars or objects. There are also anti-theft features built-in with ebii automatically locking itself when your phone is out of range and GPS tracking positioning means you always know where ebii is. It will also send a notification if a potential theft is in progress via the ebiiGO app. The app is where users can plot their route, select ride mode, track rides and control the bike. A single charge which only takes 2.5hrs to 100% has a range of 110km

The ebii smartbike has no launch date or price as yet but is an interesting upcoming product from a manufacturer known for computing.



WHEEL

Announced on Kickstarter back in 2017 the original Wheel has been replaced by the Wheel 2.

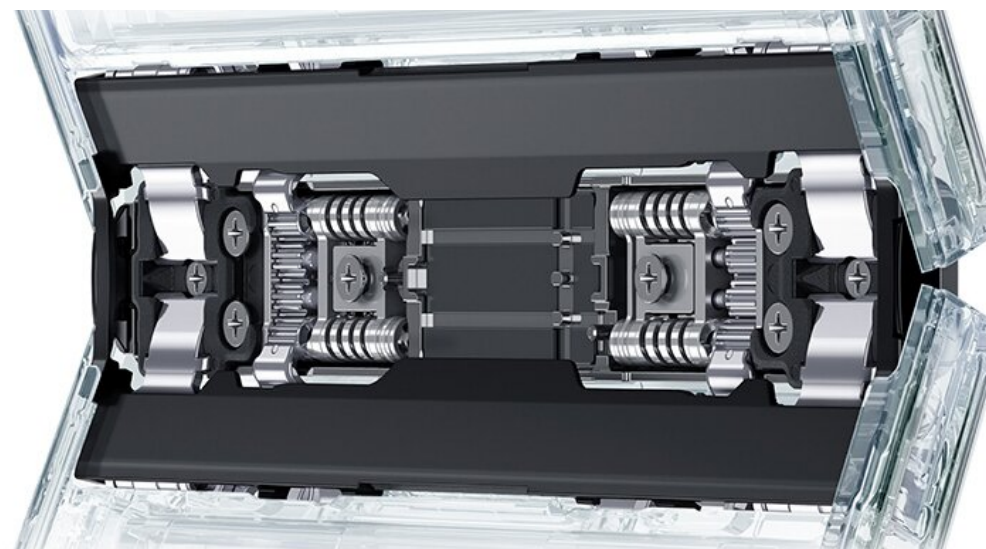
Wheel is a unique turntable that can be used in a vertical position and rotates the record counter-clockwise. One thing that is immediately apparent is the lack of a tonearm. This is because Wheel reads the vinyl record from the opposite side, the reason it rotates in the opposite direction than usual. Wheel hides the delicate electronics from “dust and accidents”. The double linear frictionless tonearm and preamp is designed and specifically tuned around the Audio Technica AT95E cartridge. The tonearm is continuously monitored and adjusted to ensure less strain on the stylus, cantilever and record.



Wheel 2 uses a magnetic lock system over the stick lock of the previous model. Before the record is played, Wheel 2 scans the tracks and displays them as well as the current position of tonearm on the curved line LED display. Wheel 2 is also able to playback 7-inch records unlike the previous model that was restricted to just 12-inch. Gone is the stick control of the original and replaced with the “smart slide track” touch control which runs alongside the display.

Wheel 2 is available to order for £1,794.00 or €1,999.00. There is also the Black Wheel 2, a more premium offering made of black materials, brushed metal and an AT Nude Shibata cartridge available for £3,499.00 or €3,799.00.

OPPO FLIPS



Oppo announced their folding flip phone last month which caught my eye over the weekend, so I thought it deserved a quick mention. Especially given that it features a cover display that is larger than the one on the Samsung Galaxy Flip 4, and at a more striking vertical orientation which looks like it has a better use case than Samsung's.

Oppo have stated that the phone's hinge has been independently certified to withstand 400,000 folds and unfolds at room temperature. That's equivalent to opening and closing the phone 100 times a day for 10 years. The battery is another huge improvement over other equivalents with a capacity of 4,300mAh providing all day batter life.

The camera co-developed with Hasselblad features 50MP main camera which is backed by a Sony IMX890 and a f/1.8 lens. The selfie camera is 32MP utilising a Sony IMX709 sensor. The camera's colours have been tuned by Hasselblad and it even features an XPAN mode for capturing a wide cinematic frame. A nod to the highly sort after (and very expensive) Hasselblad XPAN 35mm film camera.

The Oppo N2 Flip launched at this month available in Moonlit Purple or Astral Black starting at £849.00/AU\$1,499.00.