



Minor Updates

AIR



Without much fanfare, and a simple selection of press releases, Apple have updated a range of their product lines starting with the iPad Air.

The new iPad Air gets an upgraded Apple M3 chip, which doubles the performance of iPad Air over the previous model (which was equipped with the Apple M1 silicon). It is also significantly faster than previous models that were equipped with the A14 Bionic by up to 3.5x. On the whole, iPad Air with M3 has 35% faster multi-core CPU performance and up to 40% faster graphics than the M1 model. As a result of moving to M3, iPad Air gains hardware accelerated ray tracing for the first time. For GPU intensive workflows the M3 provides 4x the performance. The Neural Engine in M3 is also significantly improved over the previous M1 model, offering 60% improved performance in AI heavy workloads.

iPad Air's upgrade opens up Apple Intelligence features like Clean Up tool for removing distracting elements from images: and Image Wand in the Noters app for turning rough sketches into higher quality pictures. It can even gather

context from surrounding text and create an image to complement. Users also gain access to a Siri that is more conversational, which they can type to. Image Playground and Writing Tools with ChatGPT integration are also new. This integration does not require users to create an account, nor does OpenAI store requests and users IP addresses are obscured.

The new iPad Air can be paired with a new Magic Keyboard, which features a larger built-in trackpad, and 14 function keys that include brightness keys, and volume controls. The keyboard also features a USB-C port that can be used for pass through charging, freeing up the port on the iPad for connecting other accessories.

The new iPad Air comes in a range of colours: Space Grey, Blue, Purple and Starlight and is available in 11-inch and 13-inch screen sizes, with high resolution Liquid Retina displays. The 13-inch model can reach 600 nits brightness. Storage options start at 128GB and can be configured up to 1TB.

The new iPad Air with M3 is available to buy now starting at £599.00/AUS\$999.00 for the 11-inch model, and £749.00/AUS\$1,349.00 for the 13-inch model. Cellular models are available for an additional £150.00/AUS\$250.00.

STUDIO

The Apple Mac Studio gets its hardware update with an upgrade to M4, as well as Apple's most powerful chip, the M3 Ultra.

These upgrades make the Mac Studio the most powerful computer Apple has ever made. Mac Studio's Thunderbolt ports have been upgraded to Thunderbolt 5 for exceedingly fast data transfer rates of up to 120Gb/s. It can drive up to eight Pro Display XDRs at full 6K resolution and even attach external PCIe chassis for those that rely on expansion cards. There is also a 10Gb ethernet port, an HDMI, as well as an SDXC port available.

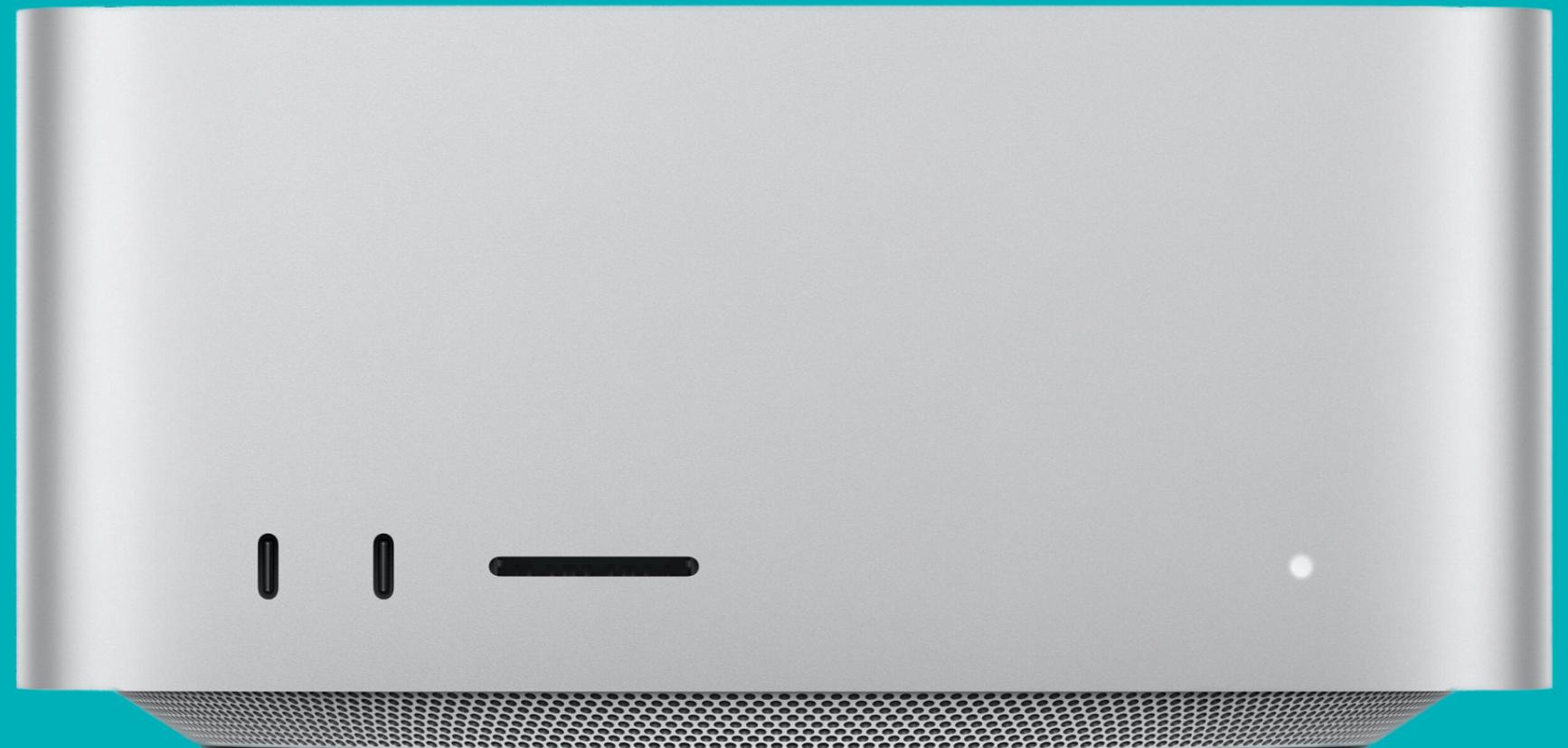
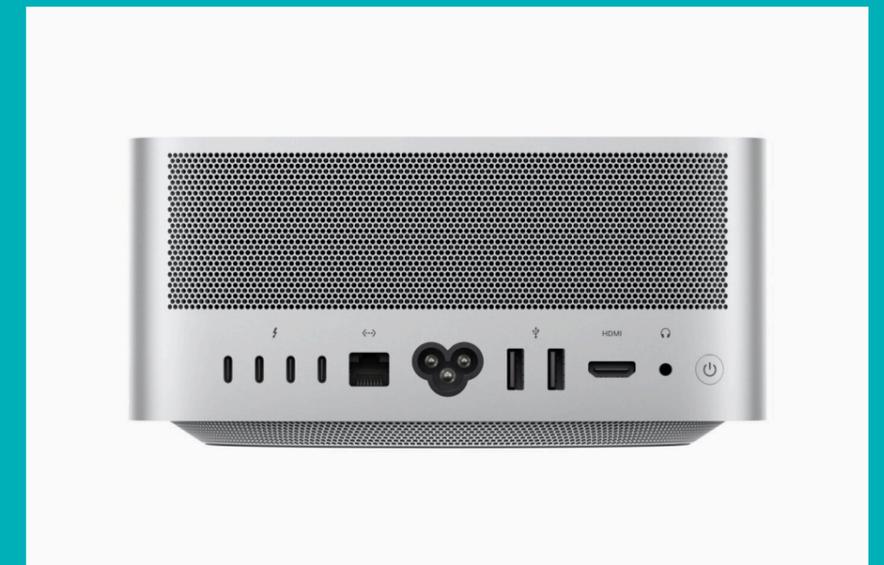
The Mac Studio comes with the M4 Max chip as standard. This is the fastest CPU core on the market, offering class leading single core performance. The base model comes with a 14-core CPU, 32-core GPU, and the 16-core Neural Engine. It also features 36GB of Unified memory. The M4 Max version can be configured up to a 16-core CPU, with a 40-core GPU. This upgrade unlocks the capability to configure up to 128GB of Unified Memory. Users can expect incredible performance with 1.6x faster image processing in Photoshop and 1.2x faster ProRes transcode in Compressor, compared to Mac Studio with M1 Max.

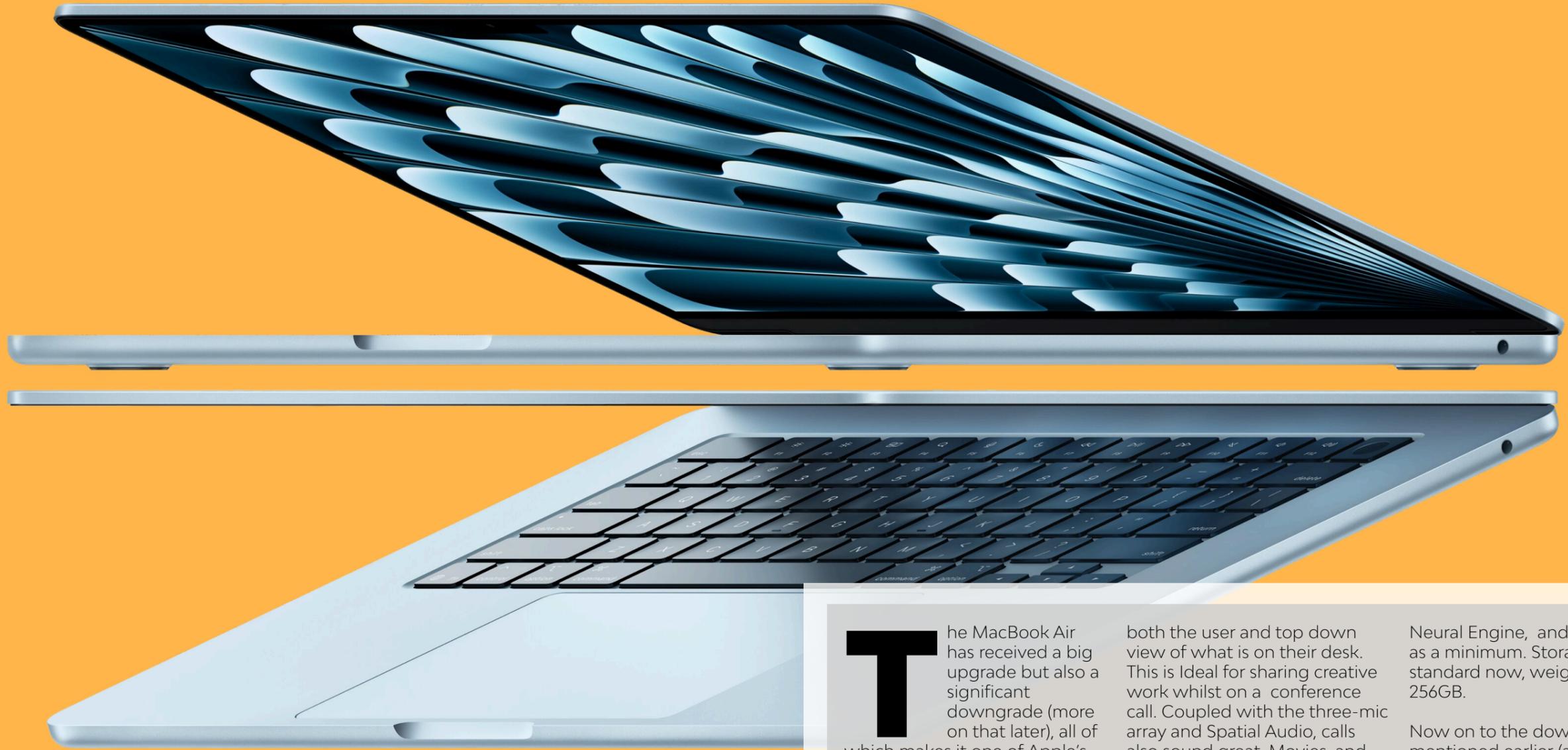
The M3 Ultra system is where things get a little crazy. M3 Ultra utilises Apple's UltraFusion packaging, linking two M3 Max

chips over 10,000 high-speed connections with high bandwidth and low latency. This essentially allows the two chips to act as one, bringing together 184-billion transistors. But what does this equate to? The performance uplift on M1 Ultra is up to 2.6x and the gap with the 16-core Intel Xeon equipped Mac Pro is even greater, with Apple stating a 6.4x uplift. Of course the current Mac Pro is still on the powerful M2 Ultra, so Mac Pro users probably don't need to worry too much.

M3 Ultra features an up to 32-core CPU, with up to 24 of those being Performance cores - 50% more than M1 Ultra. Alongside the CPU is an up to 80-core GPU and 32-core Neural Engine. Memory architecture allows for bandwidth of up to 8,000GB/s! Speaking of memory, the M3 Ultra Studio starts with 96GB of Unified memory and can be configured up to 512GB! Storage can be configured up to massive 16TB. These upgrades do push Mac Studio into a highly professional space, with a total cost of £14,299.00/AU\$22,149.00 but for those wanting a highly powerful system that will last for years, the M4 Max system is still incredibly capable.

The Mac Studio is available to order now starting at a cost of £2,099.00/AU\$3,499.00.





A4

The MacBook Air has received a big upgrade but also a significant downgrade (more on that later), all of which makes it one of Apple's most compelling new launches in recent years.

For starters, MacBook Air is upgraded with Apple's M4 chip, making it a powerhouse of a system in an incredibly light package. The new model is now 2x faster than the previous M1 model in intensive workflows like video editing, and up to 23x faster than the previous Intel-based MacBook Air. Battery life is also vastly improved, lasting up to 18 hours on a single charge.

Another big upgrade for MacBook Air is the new 12MP Centre Stage camera that features improved video quality and Desk View which keeps

both the user and top down view of what is on their desk. This is ideal for sharing creative work whilst on a conference call. Coupled with the three-mic array and Spatial Audio, calls also sound great. Movies, and TV Shows also sound good with Dolby Atmos which has a three-dimensional soundstage that dwarves the competitors' speakers. Displays and speakers are something Apple never seem to fall short on!

Support for external displays has also been improved with the new M4 MacBook Air now able to support up to two 6K external displays, in addition to its own Liquid Retina Display.

The base configuration for MacBook Air is also pretty impressive, much like the base Mac Mini that was launched last year. Users can expect to receive an M4 with a 10-core CPU, 10-Core GPU and 16-core

Neural Engine, and 16GB RAM as a minimum. Storage is pretty standard now, weighing in at 256GB.

Now on to the downgrade mentioned earlier (although this downgrade is actually a positive). Apple have reduced the price of the entry level MacBook Air to £999.00/ AU\$1,699.00 for the 13-inch model, and £1,199.00/ AU\$2,099.00 for the 15-inch, and for education users the price is lowered further. This makes the MacBook Air a really great offer, which is bound to be Apple's best selling laptop.

The new MacBook Air is available to order now in a range of colours: Sky Blue, Silver, Starlight and Midnight.

BF

Sigma are going from strength to strength and it looks like 2025 may be their biggest year yet, starting with the new Sigma BF camera and a set of 9 lenses to accompany it.

The BF is a very small and compact camera. It is also quite different to a lot of cameras on the market. The name itself comes from a Japanese Poem called 'The Book of Tea' with the BF standing for 'Beautiful Foolishness' - a line from the poem, meaning simply let go of worries, and relish the modest pleasures of simply being. The minimalistic design is striking. It is a solid slab of aluminium, but it's compact stylish look packs in a full frame 24MP back-illuminated sensor. A big surprise given it's smaller than many APS-C and Micro 4/3 cameras. Controls have been pared back to the bare essentials: a large shutter button, power button, playback, and option button, as well as a control dial and centre button, all within reach of the user's thumb. Oh, and they are touch sensitive. A status monitor displays the currently selected setting, allowing the 2.1m dot 3.2-inch touch display

to just focus on the subject. A simplified control system extends to the camera's user interface (UI) which also focuses on the essentials of photography, with quick access sub-menus, and placing less frequently used items in the menu. It's worth noting the touch display only allows for the moving of the focus point.

Sigma have opted to utilise internal memory only for the BF, which comes with a 230GB internal SSD. An SD card slot would have been nice, as I cannot help but shake the idea of the camera becoming a brick if anything goes wrong with that storage. There is also no hot shoe or cold shoe for connecting a flash or flash trigger, nor can one be connected wirelessly as the camera features no wireless connectivity. A flash would not work anyway, as the BF uses a fully electronic shutter.

Battery life is reported to be a little disappointing and Sigma themselves only rate it at approximately 260 images, making at least one additional battery an absolute must.

The Sigma BF launches in April in a black or silver for £1,969.00/ AU\$3,899.00.





(3a) Pro

Small smartphone brand Nothing have released a couple of new budget phones this month, which pack an array of advanced features into a price point that dwarves that of the Apple or Samsung. We are going to take a look at the more expensive of the two: the Nothing (3a) Pro. I say expensive, but it costs just £449.00/AU\$849.00.

Let's start with the display. Nothing (3a) Pro features a 6.77-inch AMOLED display that can reach a peak brightness of 3,000 nits and is even 120Hz. It is also HDR10+ certified and covers 1.07 billion colours. The phone is powered by Qualcomm's Snapdragon 7s, which provides a faster 33% CPU, and 11% GPU graphics improvement over the previous model. Battery efficiency is also improved, providing approx. 30 extra minutes of life.

The camera array is unique in it's design and features three cameras. The first 2 are an 8MP ultra-wide (15mm equiv.); a 50MP Periscope OIS camera (70mm equiv.) with a 3x optical zoom, and up to 60x ultra zoom. This is by way of a flagship new periscope with a prism and horizontally stacked lens array, which also enables a macro mode. The third and main camera is a 50MP shake-

free camera (24mm equiv.) featuring Dual Pixel Autofocus. Around the front is a 50MP camera that supports AI-powered stabilisation and Night Capture enhancement. The phone features photographer-level controls, including portrait modes, burst-shot, and a zoom indicator. Presets can be saved, shared and easily swapped within the interface and the Nothing Gallery stores all photos and is now a native app within Nothing OS3.

There is a new Essential Key and within Nothing OS is the Essential Space. One press of the button captures what is on the users screen; a long press enables voice recording; and a double press launches Essential Space. Powered by AI, it organises what is captured and suggests actions. For example, long press and tell the phone what is going on and it will intelligently organise a to-do list providing scheduled times for the tasks. Essential Key also works in conjunction with the camera. Take a picture and use the essential key and the phone will transcribe what it sees, saving it for later. The Glyph system has been updated and lights up with notifications; provides a visual countdown when a timer is set; and even flashes to music.

The Nothing Phone (3a) Pro is available to order now.