

Google Nexus 7

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Whats Hot

- Hackers post 450K credentials pilfered from Yahoo. Credentials posted in plain text appear to have originated from the Web company's Yahoo Voices platform. The hackers say they intended the data dump to be a "wake up call"
- Alarm for Apple as Russian hacker publishes way to get in-app purchases for free. The process is potentially damaging for Apple's IOS developers whose main revenue comes from paid upgrades. Users just have to download security certificates from the hackers website and change a setting on the devices wi-fi connection. The hacker, who calls himself ZonD80, also posted a video on YouTube showing what to do



Hailed as this years Best of Breed

Is the Nexus 7 the new top dog?

The Nexus 7, built by Asus with close oversight from Google, is the best Android tablet and the best seven-inch tablet. If you have already convinced yourself that you want either of those, this is the one you want. It's nice to be able to say that so con-

cretely! But where the best seven-inch, or even the best



Google Nexus 7

Android tablet falls in the overall tablet market is the more important question

WHAT'S NEW

This is the first Nexus-branded tablet, which, like the Nexus line of smartphones, means Google was closely involved in its development to ensure the best, purest Android experience. It's the first device to come stock with Android 4.1, better known as Jelly Bean, which has a bunch of new software features. It is the same size and price as the Kindle Fire, its most clear-cut

competitor. It's not the *first* tablet with NFC but it's the first tablet anyone's ever heard of with the feature.

WHAT'S GOOD

Hardware: The hardware is great; at 12 ounces it's almost half the weight of the (somewhat hefty) Wi-Fi-only New iPad, and I really like the back panel's material, which feels both leathery and rubbery (now im-

aging a dark basement lab in which Google scientists splice the DNA of a rubber tree and a cow. Green light flashes. A robotic cackle is heard). The buttons are in reasonable places. It uses a standard microUSB port for charging and syncing, unlike many of its Android (and Apple!) competitors. Here's a weird one: I *love* the choice to leave out a rear camera. Rear cameras on tablets are stupid! They never take good pictures and

Hailed as this years Best of Breed

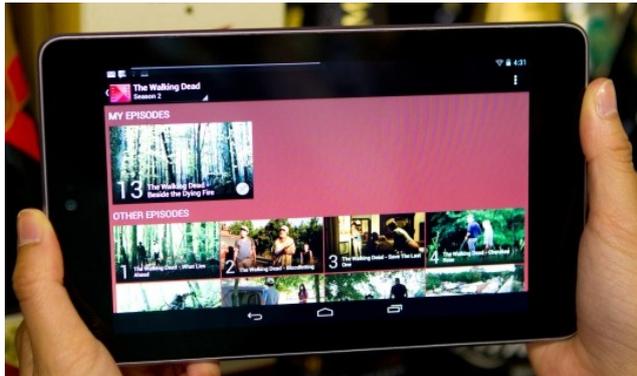
you look like an idiot when you try. There's a front-facing camera for video chatting, though.

And the screen is very good; leagues better than other 7-inchers like the Kindle Fire or Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.0. Not as pixel-dense as the new iPad, but it's a great screen. It's much more comfortable to read books on than an iPad, which always feels a bit unwieldy as a book-reading device to me.

Software: Jelly Bean is mostly like Ice Cream Sandwich (version 4.0). The major changes are called Project Butter, Google Now, and Google Play. Project Butter is an initiative to fix one of Android's biggest problems: it doesn't track your finger very well. There's consistently been a lag and a slightly unnatural flow to the touchscreen interface that makes it feel clunkier and slower than Apple's iOS. It's kind of rough that Google had to come up with an initiative name to fix something so basic, but they mostly have; tracking on Jelly Bean is much improved.

Google Now is a dashboard-like app that isn't really like anything else on any other platform. You tap the search bar or hold the home button to get there. It's like a very fancy search app; you can search with voice (and voice has been improved to Siri-like levels of understanding) or text, but below that are several little "cards" that constantly and naturally update to show you things you want to know, like weather, traffic, public transit schedules, sports scores, and

more. Tap the search bar, and it shows you when your nearest subway train is leaving, or what the weather is where you are right then. We all know that Google knows more about us than our significant others and parents combined, but this is using it for good. It is really,



Watching Movies

really great, and will be on all Jelly Bean phones as well.

WHAT'S BAD

There are at most a handful of apps designed for Android tablets, and none are particularly good. There's no good Twitter app, no good Facebook app, few games, no fun utilities. When you use an Android tablet, you're using the same apps as on your Android phone, just...bigger.

So, yes, this thing can do all of the things that an iPad can do, but aside from reading books, it does none of them in a way that is anywhere near as pleasurable. Apps designed for phones *work*, but not well; there's too much empty space, they look awkward, they don't take advantage of the larger screen size. And there are definitely no apps that suggest the 7-inch form factor can do things

a 10-inch tablet can't. People wondering what you sacrifice when you move \$250 down from the iPad to the Nexus? This is a large part of it. iPad apps feel fun and futuristic, design-y and cool. The Nexus can display a Twitter feed, a little bit bigger than your phone can

THE PRICE

\$200 for 8GB, \$250 for 16GB, both with Wi-Fi only (no 3G or 4G here). Neither have expandable memory. It's kind of low, but also extremely cheap, so, you know. Get an Rdio/Netflix/Hulu subscription.

THE VERDICT

The Nexus 7 is the best of its breed, but it also doesn't give me any evidence that the breed is one that really holds all that much promise. Aside from reading books, I think it's pretty clear that a 7-inch tablet is not preferable to a larger one like the iPad or the upcoming Microsoft Surface. It's like comparing a moped to a car. Both get you from point A to point B, and it's not bad for what it is, but they're not really at the same level as far as capabilities go.

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