iPad Mini Review Roundup: Quality Tablet, But Non-Retina Display Disappoints

Since launching last week [1], Apple's iPad mini [2] has made quite an impression on consumers, selling out just three days after it became available for pre-order online [3].

But what was the consensus among critics?

A select few reviewers were lucky enough to prod, poke and play with the tiny tablet before the public could get their hands on it.

Overall, they say the 7.9-inch mini boasts the entire iPad [4] experience — albeit in a smaller, more manageable one-handed tablet — but disappoints with its non-Retina [5] display, which lacks the crispness of other Retina-enabled Apple [6] devices. Another sticking point: the mini's high cost compared to its competitors (it starts at $329).

Here are some choice quotes from early reviews:

CNET [7]: "If you want the full, polished Apple tablet experience in a smaller package, the iPad Mini is worth the premium price. Otherwise, good alternatives are

available for less money."

All Things Digital [8]: "In shrinking the iconic iPad, Apple has pulled off an impressive feat. It has managed to create a tablet that's notably thinner and lighter than the leading small competitors with 7-inch screens, while squeezing in a significantly roomier 7.9-inch display."

USA Today *[9]*: "Despite a few quibbles and strong competitors in the space, the Mini is a splendid choice for folks who held off buying an iPad because it was too large or too expensive."

The New York Times *[10]*: "By pricing the Mini so high, Apple allows the $200 class of seven-inch Android tablets and readers to live (Google Nexus, Kindle Fire HD, Nook HD). Those tablets also, by the way, have high-definition screens (1,280 by 800 pixels), which the Mini doesn't. But the iPad Mini is a far classier, more attractive, thinner machine."

Engadget *[11]*: "This isn't just an Apple tablet made to a budget. This isn't just a shrunken-down iPad. This is, in many ways, Apple's best tablet yet, an incredibly thin, remarkably light, obviously well-constructed device that offers phenomenal battery life. No, the performance doesn't match Apple's latest and yes, that display is a little lacking in resolution, but nothing else here will leave you wanting."

The Verge *[12]*: "The iPad mini hasn't wrapped up the 'cheapest tablet' market by any stretch of the imagination. But the 'best small tablet' market? Consider it captured."

TechCrunch *[13]*: "As someone who is used to a "retina" display on my phone, tablet, and even now computer, the downgrade to a non-retina display is quite noticeable. This goes away over time as you use the iPad mini non-stop, but if you switch back to a retina screen, it's jarring."

The Telegraph *[14]*: "When it comes to tablet-specific apps, the iPad is still some way ahead. You won't find the amazing Touch Press apps, such as Shakespeare's Sonnets or The Waste Land, on anything other than an iPad, for example."

The Loop *[15]*: "If there was one thing I was surprised with, it would be that the iPad mini doesn't have a Retina display. It surely gives Apple some room to upgrade the device if they want to next year, but that's the only thing I would really add to the mini."

Fox News *[16]*: "Using the mini with one hand opens new possibilities: reading books and articles while holding a pole on the bus or subway, for example."

Slash Gear *[17]*: "Not the fastest tablet, nor the cheapest, nor the one that prioritizes the most pixel-dense display, but the one with the lion's share of tablet applications, the integration with the iOS/iTunes ecosystem, the familiarity of usability and, yes, the brand cachet."

The Guardian *[18]*: “The only way Apple could improve on this product would be (as some people are already agitating) to give it a retina screen and somehow make it lighter.”

Time *[19]*: “Even though this screen isn’t state of the art, it’s O.K. If you’ve ever laid your eyeballs on the ultra-smooth text rendered by the Retina iPad, its text will look fuzzy by comparison, especially at teensier type sizes.”

Bloomberg *[20]*: “The most striking thing about the mini is in how thin and light it is. It is really thin and light. Crazy thin and crazy light, even.”

Do you plan to buy an iPad mini? What features are you looking forward to?

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