

Sony's \$200 Smartwatch Works with Android Phones

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New York (AP) — Sony says its new computerized wristwatch will sell for \$200 in the U.S. and will work with a variety of Android phones.

Sony's SmartWatch 2 hasn't gotten as much attention as Samsung Electronics Co.'s Galaxy Gear, but it's cheaper and compatible with a broader range of phones. The Gear costs \$300 and currently works only with the company's Galaxy Note 3 phone.

Unlike the Gear, however, Sony's watch doesn't let you make phone calls directly through the wristwatch. You can answer calls using the watch, but you need a Bluetooth wireless headset linked to the phone if you don't want to hold it to your ear.

Sony Corp. said Tuesday that the watch is available immediately through the company's physical and online stores. Other online retailers will also sell it.

As more people own smartphones and tablets, consumer-electronics companies are creating a new category of products to give consumers more ways to stay connected — and to spend money. Qualcomm Inc. also plans to release a smartwatch in time for the holidays, while Apple is widely believed to be developing an iWatch.

The company said its smartwatch is designed to perform common tasks such as checking texts and email, liking Facebook posts and getting calendar reminders. Reply capabilities will be limited; you can respond to a text from a list of emoticons or preset messages, for instance.

"The average smartphone user reaches for their device more than 100 times per day to check text messages, read emails and social network notifications and of course, to check the time," Ravi Nookala, U.S. president of Sony Mobile Communications, said in a statement. "SmartWatch 2 makes these core tasks easier, and does much more with apps available, for everything from productivity to fitness and games."

SmartWatch 2 is designed to complement a phone — specifically those running Android 4.0 or later. Sony promises three to four days of battery life between charges, compared with about a day for the Gear. The display measures 1.6 inches diagonally, the same as the Gear.

Separately, Sony announced the U.S. availability of two new phones:

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- The Xperia Z Ultra is a larger version of its Xperia Z waterproof smartphone. It has a 6.4-inch screen, among the largest out there. A standard version will retail for \$650, while a faster, 4G LTE version will sell for \$680.
- The Xperia Z1 is a 5-inch phone that sports a massive 20.7-megapixel camera and is capable of attaching better lenses. That retails for \$670.

The phones won't be locked to a specific wireless carrier, but they won't work with Verizon or Sprint's network. Sony did not announce plans for locked, subsidized versions that require two-year service agreements.

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