Buyer Beware

By the time this column is in print the much anticipated launch of Apple's iPhone will have occurred and some tech hungry consumers will have invested $500 to $600 for the latest electronic "must have" gadget.

On June 29th Apple's iPhone went on sale at precisely 6:00 pm, not a moment sooner or later. The iPhone was introduced for the first time six months ago at MacWorld by Apple's Steve Jobs. Up until the day of the launch, analysts were split over whether the first-generation mobile phone and MP3 player would be able to satisfy the expectations set by the computer makers marketing blitz. Apple has set a worldwide sales target of 10M for 2008 and is hoping that the success of its iPod music players will carry over to cellular handsets. Many analysts feel that for a first-generation product, and the first mobile phone for Apple, it will deliver the level of functionality and performance that consumers have come to expect from the company.

On the other hand, skeptics warn that buyers should think twice before plunking their hard earned dollars down on a device that may not live up to its hype. As with most first-generation products there will be kinks that will need to be addressed. Here's just a few to consider if you're still thinking of making the leap. First, AT&T is requiring buyers to sign up for a 2-year contract and has yet to announce the service fees it will charge iPhone customers. Second, the phone is shipped with a lithium-ion rechargeable battery, which is sealed in a case. The company says that the battery will last up to five hours of talking, video watching and surfing the Internet. However, it remains to be seen if the phone can live up to those claims. In addition, rechargeable batteries have a limited lifespan and can be charged only a finite number of times before it will need to be replaced. Then what? Does it go back to Apple or AT&T? The touch screen interface could be problematic, i.e., will it work when it gets wet? Will it scratch?

The real proverbial fly in the ointment here is that the iPhone lacks 3G capability. For some reason Apple decided to not allow the iPhone to work on AT&T's fastest 3G wireless network. Instead they opted for its slower “EDGE” network. According to Apple's finance chief Peter Oppenheimer, the company is "very much sold" on the slower network because it is more widespread in the U.S. I guess I can see their reasoning there; however, that decision may determine whether or not Apple will

reach the goals it has set for this product. Over-the-air music and video downloads at EDGE data speeds may prove to be too frustrating for first-generation buyers, especially given the high cost of the phone and projected cost for service. If this does happen, it won't be for long. Apple always seems to be ahead of the curve. I'm sure they used the last six months to right all the wrongs and will have a second-generation iPhone product out just in time for Christmas.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/30/2014 - 6:41am*):
http://www.wirelessdesignmag.com/product-releases/2007/07/buyer-beware