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Wednesday, 23 March 2011

Why I'm Getting an iPad 2

(But you don't need to)

By **Ctein**

Last summer I wrote "Why I Needed an iPad (and You Might Not)," which explains why the iPad is an invaluable tool for a traveling photographer like *moi*. Well, as soon as the pipeline refills, and who knows when that will be, I plan on moving to an iPad 2 (missed getting one on the opening day by 20 minutes, dagnabit). But, I think most if not all of you can safely ignore it.

There are three reasons I'm buying the new iPad 2:

1. I think this is the wave of the future and, as a writer and reviewer, it's a technology I want to stay on top of. There are also some iPhone camera apps I'm anxious to write about, like SynthCam, and the built-in camera will let me test those out, regardless of its lackluster specifications.
2. Space and weight are really at a premium in my shoulder bag. I'm right up at the absolute limit of what I can port about. The iPad 2 with its Smart Cover/stand is half the thickness and half a pound lighter than my current iPad plus its shell/stand.
3. Paula is really hot to buy my iPad, so I'll save a good part of the cost of the iPad 2.

I'd be very surprised if any of these reasons would matter enough to most of you. (Especially number three, seeing as Paula only needs one iPad.)

All the other improvements of the new iPad 2? Pretty much irrelevant.

More or less doubled processor power is nice, but honestly I haven't lacked for horsepower in my current iPad, with the exception of trying to watch HD movie files. I'm told the new iPad 2 will handle those better, but I do this maybe six times a year when I'm on an airplane. I bet it happens even less for you folks. In the meantime, anything oversize that I want to watch on my iPad, I run through Handbrake to reduce it to a manageable file. An inconvenience, to be sure, but such a minor one that I'd not be willing to throw away hundreds of dollars to avoid it.

Video-out is nice if you do presentations. I don't. How many people do? Remember that the iPad itself will almost always have a better quality screen than what you're projecting with. Unless you're showing to groups, you're better off just handing the client your iPad to look at.

If you've already got an iPad, there's little reason for you to buy into the second generation. If you haven't seen the need for an iPad, there is little in the iPad 2 which is likely to seduce you. For that matter, if you're ready to take the iPad plunge and you haven't yet, you're going to be able to buy used iPads at attractive prices—there are an awful lot of people on the same upgrade path I'm on who will have them to sell.

Will I get the iPad 3? Maybe, maybe not. I'm sure it will have its own set of cool new features, but whether any of them will matter to photographers is another matter entirely. We are not exactly the main audience.

That's my take on it: Save your money.

Ctein

Ctein's regular weekly column on TOP is published on Wednesdays.

Posted on Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 09:25 AM in Computers, Ctein | Permalink

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Comments

As someone who has been in the computer industry since 1974 I can tell you that you have violated the two rules of computer products, software and hardware.

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1. Never buy the first version of anything. Products are generally untested and makers assume they let early users find problems or weaknesses in the product.
2. Never buy consecutive versions. The time line between two consecutive version is short, usually under a year. You're better off waiting two years before buying the next version.

Buying the first and then the second version you have paid double for the iPad. The second version is really what the first version should have been.

Now just wait TWO years before getting the next version of the iPad.

Posted by: John Krill | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 09:52 AM

Did you think of looking at the new Macbook Air instead of the iPad 2?
More money however it does come with its own cover and is perhaps better than the iPad2 (or 3?)

Posted by: Bryce Lee | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 10:01 AM

Ipad2 looks more like Ipad1.5 or Ipad1gs in Apple terms. Other than the rumour about "Wife say no but Apple say yes", I do not have any reason to upgrade.

I am watching when iPad would have a better back camera though. I wonder whether if one can take photo with full screen like this, would I take better picture. You are talking about a size of live view screen larger than a 4x5. It is sure more convenience than plugging a HDMI screen to a Nex 3/5.

Posted by: Dennis Ng | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 10:05 AM

Agreed in general. One potential reason to upgrade is if you use apps (perhaps niche market apps) that are very processor intensive. Andy Ihnatko mentions in his Chicago Sun-Times review that the AutoStitch app completed his tests in 52 seconds on the iPad 2 and 205 seconds on the original iPad after cold boots. Autostich is an iPhone app (homepage here) so hasn't been optimised for the new A5 dual-core processor. ☐That's an impressive gain.

Posted by: Bahi | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 10:12 AM

Thanks for pointing out SynthCam. What a great little app! Any other suggestions along these lines?

Posted by: Curtis | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 11:09 AM

Well, I think many people actually need to make presentations. Just think of all the lecturers in photography, arts, etc.
I have definitely been waiting for improvements in this respect.
Btw, is Paula interested to buy another iPad 1?

Posted by: Thomas(PD-JKT) | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 11:34 AM

A suggestion - consider the Macbook Air 11. I was weighing the usefulness of an iPad2 as a photographer tool, and for my use it's not there yet. Not designed to be used for heavy I/O for storage and backup - the primary reason for me to carry a computer while traveling.
I ended up with the Air 11, and have to say it's the most elegant computer I've ever owned. Small, excellent screen (slightly larger than iPad), with a real keyboard, 2 USB 2 ports, instant on with the SSD drive, runs OSX, and its a snappy performer. I wanted the iPad2 to work for me, but it didn't add up.

Posted by: Shaun O'Boyle | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 11:50 AM

Dear Ctein,

Can you tell me if you are still using Air Display and if you have found a simple way to profile the ipad as a monitor? I am seriously considering buying one instead of a 'real' calibrated monitor. (For one thing, I think the price is a lot better, and there seem to be these apps...)

Will

Posted by: Will Frostmill | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 12:21 PM

Wow! It's a short column, Ctein only writes once a week, and it seems that people don't read what he says, such as this: "If you've already got an iPad, there's little reason for you to buy into the second generation."

Two of the first three comments point out that, to paraphrase them, "If you've already got an iPad, there's little reason for you to buy into the second generation."

Even the subtitle notes: "(But you don't need to)".

Posted by: Marc Rochkind | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 12:33 PM

I've had the iPad since the day v1 was released, with no regrets whatsoever. Best reason to own one IMHO? Travel — I'd MUCH rather slip the ipad into my bag than a laptop. Great on the plane (watched many movies on the ride to Japan and back and didn't even use half the battery), great in hotels which all have wifi these days.

And I don't even use mine for any photography-related purposes.

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Posted by: Joe | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 01:01 PM

Dear Shaun and Bryce,

You did not read the column I linked to in my very first sentence, now, did you?

(Nor, for that matter, my column two weeks ago.)

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 01:32 PM

I'll add my voice to vote for the Macbook Air. The new one has a respectable disk size at 256GB and enough memory at 4GB. It's small, light, the battery lasts forever, it seems, and it's a real computer - I can run Lightroom or Photoshop anywhere I want. Its screen might not be quite as good as the iPad, but for critical work I'll use my iMac at home. I love mine.

Posted by: Robert Chapman | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 01:54 PM

Oddly, last year I decided to buy an iPad at around Easter time this year. Two events happened in one week: Ctein's first review, and in particular his considered approval for the wonderful colours and screen, and secondly an unexpected boost to my annual bonus (overall still modest, but nevertheless still pleasant). So I threw caution to the wind and bought an iPad 1. Thanks Ctein, I think.... ;)

I'm not displeased. iPad 1 works very well for my purposes. I have subsequently bought the camera connection kit for use on holidays.

Posted by: James | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 01:54 PM

Dear John,

Only since 1974? Why, you CHILD, you [VBG].

I'm only paying 1.5X 'cause Paula is buying my old one. Also, I needed an iPad last year, as my previous column explained. It's always cheaper and better to wait... But there's no value in waiting once you need something.

FWIW, my typical computer lifetime is six years or longer. On the other hand, I spend a lot more on my typical computer than my net cost of buying a new iPad. So what I'll do in the future, I have no idea, yet. But, like you, I have noticed that I am Breaking The Rules. At least this once. It'll be interesting to see if it's a pattern or happenstance.

~~~~~~

Dear Will,

Oh definitely, it's still my most serious reason for having this gadget. I was able to adequately profile my iPad under Air Display with my ColorMunki, but it was a bit hinky. Profile Mechanic Monitor couldn't do it at all. I've mentioned this to the developers of Air Display; they say it's something they can work on.

I also just got a new display app called AirScreen (http://en.ennowelbers.info/node/39), but I haven't had a chance to check it out thoroughly. Looks like it might work more reliably and have a higher frame rate than Air Display, but it also looks like I lose the touchpad capabilities. Have no idea how it profiles.

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
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Posted by: ctein | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 02:15 PM

Dear Bahi,

Thanks for pointing me at that review. Andy has it exactly right in just about every respect (and I'm not just saying that because I came to the same conclusions nine months ago... oh wait a minute, I probably am).

The beefed-up graphics processor and memory *may* prove to be significant. Not just because of AutoStitch, although that's most provocative. According to the developers I talked to at Mac Expo there have been some roadblocks to putting high-performance photo apps on the iPad. Mind you, this is just what they've told me, I haven't investigated myself, so if I have any of this technically wrong I hope readers will correct me.

Two issues that got mentioned to me were handling large images and handling raw files. As I understand it, there are some obstacles to handling raw data in apps, which is why photo apps are generally working with JPEG's (a real limitation for me). My impression was that most of the limitations are software/firmware/OS limitations that Apple could correct for developers, but they might be related to the limited GPU power and memory of the iPad1.
~~~~~~

The image size is a more difficult problem. The GPU in the iPad1 can process a 2K by 2K tile, but if you want to work on a larger photograph it can't handle it in one chunk. One developer I talked to said they had tried to write Photoshop-oid apps that would let you do real serious image processing on the file sizes you would get out of most digital cameras, and they just couldn't make things run quickly, reliably and stably; apparently handling tiling within the constraints of the iPad1's limited memory was a toughie. So a beefed-up GPU and more RAM may mean that we will see iPad2-specific photo apps that are considerably more versatile and powerful.

pax \ Ctein
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Posted by: ctein | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 02:20 PM

I agree in general. Whoever has an iPad should skip the iPad2 and consider the next one instead. The rule of skipping every other gen applies here. iPad is a 'cool' product but a limited one and pretty much a toy for most professionals.

Posted by: A. Dias | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 02:29 PM

Do any apps allow viewing of photos transferred from a camera at 1:1 ?? Apple seems to have deliberately blocked this most basic function.

The ipad would be a handy tool for a quick review in the field, but not if I can't even see my shot at full resolution.

Posted by: luke | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 03:41 PM

Dear Ctein,
You wrote: *I was able to adequately profile my iPad under Air Display with my ColorMunki, but it was a bit hinky.*
Oh wow. I have a bad feeling that 'a bit hinky' in Ctein terms is 'mindbogglingly difficult and/or annoying in ordinary human being terms. Also, buying a $500 calibrator is a bit expensive, at least for me. I'll have to think this one over carefully.

Will

Posted by: Will Frostmill | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 04:59 PM

Ctein,

One thing I am wondering about is does the iPad2 have the same fantastic screen as the original iPad. There was a question posed to you as to why you would ever buy a first gen anything, but I would say that many times the first gen product is actually built with better components then subsequent generations. For example look at the Sony Playstation 3. While the first PS3 consoles were bigger and had smaller harddrives, they had a bunch of additional functionality that subsequent generations do not - such as the ability to play SACDs, or even PS1 and PS2 games. Evidently Sony found that it was not profitable to continue including this functionality due to the extra cost of the components - most likely they had to cut something out to lower their price to remain competitive while still turn a tidy profit. After buying a newer generation PS3 with the big hard drive, I quickly set out to find an older version that could play SACDs and my old games. You know what - it actually cost more than current geenration PS3s because of the fact they it could these things that subsequent models couldn't.

My concern with the iPad 2 goes along these same lines. Since there is increased competition in the tablet world, and considering Apple made some upgrades such as the processor - did they sacrifice the high quality of the screen to do these upgrades while not increasing the unit price? For all intents and purposes most consumers (which in this case you are not a member of) probably do not SEE the difference between the iPad display and the LCD screen of their Dell Inspiron - the high quality of the iPad screen may be considered overprocessing to Apple, since as a whole the screen is not deriving additional value to the majority of their customers.

I may be completely wrong about all of this, like I said it is just something I am concerned about - and until I here it is the exact same screen, I am calling my friends with iPads and trying to entice them into buying iPad2s, so I can buy their old iPad (which up until a month ago worked perfectly well, but now is too slow ;))

Posted by: Mark Johnson | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 05:07 PM

I think we can raise our quality of life by reducing several 'needs' such as bringing gadgets which at the end more like a burden than a help.

A good reference regarding this issue is 'To Have or To Be from Erich Fromm'

Thanks.

PS: I am also in high-tech sector but try to minimize gadgets in my personal life.

Posted by: Vincent Ismail | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 06:37 PM

Yes, but will it run "Angry Birds" any better?

Posted by: David Brookes | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 07:15 PM

Well, just a voice from the dark, but I think the iPad, though I do not own one, but have played with them a lot, is a revolutionary product. I've just discovered that my iPhone, can access my desktop computer, wireless, and play music through my stereo, that is stored on the computer ... soon the ipad will be able to access the big hard drives that back up everything ... and the need for the middleman desktop will disappear. Soon

Posted by: Bron | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 07:35 PM

Correct, did not read your proffered link.
However like you use the Nacbook Pro; sold the 27 inch iMac recently, too big and awkward.
Thought it would solve one problem and its existence created many more problems.

Besides these days my photography is still colour slide film based. Have a Nikon D40 for those times a quickie image is required and then discarded.
As to the Macbook Air (Heir?) suspect a waiting period for maybe the third or fourth generation might be wise.
.

Posted by: Bryce Lee | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 10:31 PM

Hmmm...

Maybe anyone who wanted an iPad 1 but waited until now should wait some more and get an iPad 3? Surely they have demonstrated that they can do without an iPad for a long period of time?

Posted by: Mani Sitaraman | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 10:49 PM

"Surely they have demonstrated that they can do without an iPad for a long period of time?"

I've done without one for 54 years and 28 days now. I'm sure there are others who can beat that record, though.

Mike

Posted by: Mike Johnston | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 11:16 PM

Well, our iPad 2 (16GB WiFi) should be here tomorrow. The current iPad being used by my wife (32GB 3g) goes to me. After almost a year of use as an e-reader, casual gaming, and streaming video she decided that she didn't need as much space but did want the video mirroring. She is a librarian and teaches some basic computing classes (getting grannies online) and basic origami. The increases RAM, processor and video should help with all but the reading

I'll get rid of my MacBook and Nook as the iPad can replace both for what I do these days. Since my everyday camera is now an E-PL2 and I'm shooting more Jpegs, I'm going to try out Photogene for the little bit of on-the-go processing I might need and I can use the iPad for a little back-up storage.

Posted by: Jeff | Wednesday, 23 March 2011 at 11:35 PM

luke: Photosmith might be what you want, if it ever gets out of beta.

Posted by: Kathy Li | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 01:59 AM

Dear Will,

Not difficult but, yes, annoying. Calibration doesn't work reproducibly. Do not ask me why; I don't have a clue. But each time I ran the calibration routine, I got a slightly different result. With Profile Mechanic, it was always wildly, insanely wrong; something was clearly broken. With ColorMunki, it varied a little bit from run to run. Sometimes it actually looked worse than uncalibrated iPad; most of the time it looked better so I just did eight or 10 times and picked the best-looking one, which was distinctly more accurate than running the iPad uncalibrated.

Problem is, of course, that I have no idea what would happen if you ran some other calibration hardware/software product -- might work better than ColorMunki, might work worse than Profile Mechanic (although that's hard for me to imagine).

I would point out that calibration is not an absolute necessity, especially in the field. It's not like I can pack my Epson 3880 with me in the shoulder bag. A studio-quality uncalibrated monitor is still plenty useful. WYSIWYG, after all, is a total lie; even on my well-calibrated monitors at home, less than half the time the first print I pull off the 3880 is exactly the way I want it.

~~~~~~

Dear Mark,

Yes, it has exactly the same fantastic screen (24 bit IPS technology for anyone who cares; there was a very lengthy discussion of different display types in the comments to my previous iPad column). People are reporting that their iPad2 looks slightly different from the original iPad, but not by much. Which doesn't necessarily mean slightly worse. Could equally mean slightly better or just sideways. Some folks are reporting that the new display is slightly “warmer” which would be an improvement in my book, calibration or no.
~~~~~~

Now, all bets are off when Apple moves to the rumored higher resolution screen in a later generation. I will definitely look before I buy that one. I mean, it would be very stupid for Apple to degrade the screen quality... But companies have been known to do stupid things on occasion.

Unless you really need the latest/greatest, you're still better off trying to entice your friends to buy iPad2's. You might even succeed. After all, a fair going price for an iPad1 is half of retail, and that effectively means you get one at half price and they buy a new one at half price. Could be enough to tip the scales.

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
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Posted by: ctein | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 02:10 AM

Off-topic:
Is there something similar to "SynthCam" for Android phones?

Thanks!
Erich

Posted by: Erich | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 07:34 AM

did you get the 16, 32 or 64gb version?

Posted by: steve | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 09:37 AM

Dear Ctien;

Good to see you have a sense of humor after a long winter in Minn.

Posted by: John Krill | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 12:29 PM

I've found the iPad2 screen to be brighter (on the same brightness setting) and slightly bluer than the iPad1. Read someone online found the same thing.

Posted by: Eric | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 02:55 PM

Dear John,

Ummmm, why do you think I'm in Minnesota???

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 06:14 PM

Good luck! I'm currently looking to get the Nook Color and jailbreak it into an Android pad for half the price of the iPad.

The tablets will take an ever increasing share of the portable computer space, just like many people will ditch desktops for reasonably equipped largish laptops.

Posted by: Al Patterson | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 06:29 PM

Second thought would be to agree with those recommending the MacBook Air 11.6 inch, a very portable (though expensive) device. Combine that with a largish smart phone or a sub $300 7 inch tablet, and many bases are covered.

Posted by: Al Patterson | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 07:00 PM

Well I did it. I couldn't wait for my friends to get their iPad2 so I could buy their iPad, I went out today and got a new 32gb wifi only iPad 1 at Verizon for $400. I love it - my Lensworks look great on it :)

Posted by: Mark Johnson | Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 10:05 PM

Dear Ctein,
Thank you for the details, that's quite helpful.
Will

Posted by: Will Frostmill | Friday, 25 March 2011 at 02:46 PM

I find it strange that people complain about the size (thickness) of netbooks, claiming that the iPad is much thinner, and then enclose it in a cover that triples its thickness to be equal of any netbook, and thicker than the Air Book. But you don't need to upgrade to v2 and its smart cover, just throw away the case, put on a screen protector (0.1mm or less) and leave it at that.

And Mike, there are several people who have lived all their life without a camera of any sort. Would you LIKE to do that? Sure one can live without an iPad, but why would you?

Posted by: Ilkka | Sunday, 27 March 2011 at 08:46 PM

"And Mike, there are several people who have lived all their life without a camera of any sort. Would you LIKE to do that? Sure one can live without an iPad, but why would you?"

Because I spent all my money on a view camera I don't need.

Mike

Posted by: Mike Johnston | Sunday, 27 March 2011 at 09:21 PM

Dear Ikka,

I only find it strange when people concatenate all comments to make it sound like ONE person has expressed all sorts of contradictory points of view.

But that's just me.

Personally, I can't abide the screen overlays-- I can see the subtle degradation of image quality. But I've got super-fussy eyes; a lot of people are just fine with them.

In any case, as explained in my first column, it ain't really about size, weight or power, it's about getting a truly superior screen.

Once Apple starts putting 24-bit IPS displays in all their portables, the decision equation will change radically. No idea when that will be-- we've been waiting for it thru at least three generations of machine, now. But one of these days...

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Monday, 28 March 2011 at 01:41 AM

Love love LOVE our iPad! Although it's not for everyone, it definitely serves it purpose for us.

Posted by: Stephen Lane | Monday, 28 March 2011 at 09:17 PM

Ctein, sorry I am late in joining the commentary, but would you mind giving your opinion on whether the Ipad would be useful in reviewing images taken out of the camera? Say, at night, after a

shoot, when

going to buy

expensive, if

Posted by: **JMR** |

The commen

there is time and as part of a ro
one of those reviewers anyway,
not more so. Thanks.

Friday, 01 April 2011 at 01:50 AM

nts to this entry are closed.

utine process? I was
and they are just as