



Phone wars

Due for a new quality smartphone? Jon Mamonski road tests the giants for you

Over time, four smartphone makers have taken the high ground in Australia. Telsyte Australian

Smartphone and Wearable Devices Market Study 2018 shows that Android phones have the lion's share at 53 per cent and iPhones have the remaining 47 per cent making the higher priced models very popular but which phone is better for you?

Let's take a closer look at the top model of the biggest makers and find the best value. The best phones made by the top makers are:

- Samsung Galaxy Note 9
- LG G7 ThinQ
- Google Pixel 3 XL
- iPhone XS max

What is important to you? Is it the weight or size of your phone or is it

battery life or the camera?

Size counts

Depending on the size of your hands, today's bigger phones will either be ok or awkwardly large. If you have big hands, the 6.5-inch screen on the iPhone XS Max will suit you nicely. For everyone else, the other three are better with the LG G7 at 6.1-inches, the most comfortable.

What you see

Screen resolution is important for reading those text messages and watching videos. The iPhone XS Max has the least resolution in this group and the LG G7, the best.

How heavy?

The iPhone XS Max as can be expected is the heaviest and the LG G7 the lightest.

Best photos

On paper they are all similar but virtually

all the road tests show that the Google Pixel 3 XL is the best right now so if your phone priority is the camera, the Google is for you and there's free cloud storage for your pics at Google.

Battery low

Battery size helps but its not the only indicator. Battery standby time is better and Google Pixel 3 XL is the least at 5 days whereas LG G7 is best at 15.6 days.

The engines

All four phones have similar system chip and graphic chip performance. Nothing to separate them here.

The cost

This is where the rubber hits the road. The most expensive by far is the iPhone XS Max at \$1959 and best value

Is the LG G7 ThinQ with a street price of \$709. Is the iPhone better? Only if you're an Apple tragic.



TESTED

SMART TELEVISIONS

So much has happened to change TV viewing recently that it's time for you to catch up as our tech guru, Jon Mamonski brings you up to speed. When you're not out in the sunshine or just want to put your feet up and enjoy a great new series, your TV should be your best tech friend. But where do you start?

How Close? How big?

"If you sit so close to the television, your eyes will go square!" Do you remember your Mum shouting that during Saturday morning cartoon sessions? Your mum was wrong about sitting too close because the perfect viewing distance for high definition TV's, is a lot closer than she would have allowed. With today's vibrant UHD picture, HDTVtest's "TV Viewing Distance Calculator" suggests you take the diagonal size of your telly and sit about 1.5 times the distance from it, so if you have purchased a 55" UHD TV, the perfect viewing distance is 2 metres from the screen. In the end, the distance you sit from your TV is a personal choice.

New TV must-have's

- ★ UHD
- ★ Smart TV
- ★ HDR

The resolution of your new TV is Ultra High Definition (UHD or better known as 4k). This is the current standard. Don't worry that there's no Australian free-to-air TV channel with 4k yet – it's coming and you don't want to miss out. There's plenty of 4k Blu-Ray movies available, TV series and documentaries on Netflix and YouTube right now. The previous standard was 1080p, better known as HD or high definition which is now out of date and few of these sets are now made.

A Smart TV accesses your Internet for

streaming services like Netflix, YouTube, Foxtel and Stan as well as scores of specialty channels. If you store your movies on a home computer or media server, your new Smart TV should stream them too.

HDR means High Dynamic Range. Your mobile phone camera probably has it already and it handles bright and dark scenes with better clarity than a standard TV. All movies and many TV series are now made with HDR so, your new TV must have it.

How much?

Let's look at the 55-inch range as that is the most popular. All the well-known brands make these with the "must-have's" you have just read about. The better brands with LCD-LED screens are all similar in price, around \$1000 and the picture quality across these brands is good so its down to the design and tech smarts built in.

If you want the best possible 55-inch picture, then its OLED (Organic LED) or QLED (Quantum dots) for you. Samsung QLED's, LG and Panasonic's OLED's begin at around \$2599. If price is no object, then it's the wall mounted LG OLED Wallpaper Signature W8 now priced at \$7,995 and yes, it's worth it.



LG W8 65-inch Wallpaper Signature OLED TV

Picture ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★
Remote ★★★★★ Smart TV ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★ Price from \$ 7995

This highly awarded OLED TV gets 7 stars for Picture because organic LED is simply the best screen you can get. Why? – each pixel emits its own light, unlike LED that needs to be back lit. The result is pure black and pure colour 4K resolution. The screen is an impossibly slender 4mm thick hence the title 'Wallpaper' and is available in both 65- and 75-inch models. LG AI ThinQ with Google Assistant offers an enhanced interactive experience by employing Natural Language Processing (NLP) to deliver intelligent voice-activated control via the remote. The soundbar also carries all the smarts and does deliver Dolby Atmos 4.1 surround sound.



Samsung QLED Q9 65-inch TV

Picture ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★
Remote ★★★★★ Smart TV ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★ Price from \$ 4996

Either hung on the wall or on its own stand, Samsung's Q9 is state-of-the-art quantum dot display with over a billion colours and gets Six Picture stars from me. Ultra Black Elite uses a special low reflection technology on the film covering the display and the panel itself which minimises light and One Clear Connection lets you store your devices out of sight by connecting them to the One Connect Box. For gamers, it senses what you're playing and adjusts the screen capacity automatically – very clever. This Samsung's finest TV to date, also in 75 inch.

continued >



PANASONIC TH-55FX600A UHD LED TV

Picture ★★★★★ **Sound** ★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★★★ **Price** from \$1195

Japan's Panasonic is a revered pro and consumer TV technology maker and the FX600 series delivers a 4K HDR10+ experience and features Panasonic's unique Hexa Chroma Drive colour management and optimised backlight control. The attractive design features an ultra-thin panel, housed within a stylish frame with adjustable pedestal feet which is might handy if you don't have a wide furniture base to put it on. The My Home Screen 3.0 navigation is a breeze and is one of the most intuitive on the market.



Samsung Series 7 NU7100 4K UHD QLED TV

Picture ★★★★★ **Sound** ★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★★★ **Price** from \$1195

The world's biggest TV maker makes its presence felt at this price point with the Samsung NU7100 4K Ultra HD LED LCD Smart TV that has 8.2 million pixels and PurColour technology to provide crisp and clear visuals with vibrant colours. Compatible with HDR10+ content, the NU7100 4K TV delivers exceptional image detail in very dark and bright scenes. The Smart Hub to let you quickly access various streaming services, including Netflix and YouTube from one place and lets you control and monitor paired smart devices through a single convenient interface.



JVC SMART LED TV LT-55N775 55"

Picture ★★★ **Sound** ★★
Remote ★★★ **Smart TV** ★★
Set-up ★★★ **Price** from \$845

There are other bargain-basement 4k TVs out there but sticking to trusted brands like JVC or Sony is a good idea if you are looking to spend less than a grand. No HDR in this TV. The operating system is Android OS, that you will find in other major brands like Sony. Wi-Fi built-in TV connects to your home wireless network right out of the box and the USB port provides for your favourite photos, music and videos. Smart local area backlight dimming based on video content provides greater contrast and deeper black levels. HDMI - CEC/ ARC 3 HDMI ports allow you to take control of all HDMI connected devices with one remote that supports ARC and simplifies your TV and AV receiver connection. XinemaSound 2D by JVC gives you reasonable sound without external speakers.



LG 55" 55UK6540PTD ULTRA HD SMART AI

Picture ★★★★★ **Sound** ★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★★★ **Street Price** \$1199

LG is *Choice* magazine's Best TV brand three years running and its not hard to see why. This 55-inch model ticks every box with a great HDR picture, an AI ThinQ intelligent remote you can talk to and activate your TV functions and an easy to navigate Web OS operating system.



HISENSE 55" SERIES 7 MODEL NO. 55P7

Picture ★★★★★ **Sound** ★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★★★
Set-up ★★★★★ **Price** from \$ 1195

Lots of tech has gone into the picture quality from this Chinese TV giant including HDR Plus along with smooth edge-to-edge slim bezel design lines so it's a pleasure to look at. There's a white designer series as well. The clever remote lets you boot quickly into Netflix from scratch. If you have video gamers in your household, the game mode makes for a high-quality gaming experience. Hisense have packaged a great set of features into a thin svelte design at a very attractive price point.



TCL X4US 55" UHD Android LED TV

Picture ★★★★★ **Sound** ★★★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★
Set-up ★★★★★ **Price** from \$1438

Chinese TV behemoth, TCL brings Quantum Dot technology to give a better picture. A Samsung QLED – it's not, but the TCL is \$600-700 less and it's a step up from your average LED screen. With Android TV, your favourite Netflix, Stan and Amazon content is always front and centre and the HDR Premium produces good detail images with accurate reproduction of light and dark shade. With Local Dimming's precision lighting control and brightness enhancement greatly increases the contrast ratio. Partnering with one of the audio industry leaders, Harman Kardon have designed this TV's built-in sound system – its surprisingly good but it's not Dolby Atmos or the full surround sound you may want. The edgeless, one-piece unibody design makes it thin enough to wall mount.



SONY X75F Series 55"

Picture ★★★ **Sound** ★★★
Remote ★★★★★ **Smart TV** ★★★
Set-up ★★★ **Price** from \$998

Highly-regarded Japanese brand SONY brings its experience to this mid-priced 4k model and manages to squeeze it in under \$1000. With 4K X-Reality PRO, every image is upscaled closer to true 4K quality for clarity. Enjoy smooth and sharp details even in fast-moving sequences with Motionflow XR. This innovative technology creates and inserts extra frames between the original ones. Low-resolution Internet video, catch-up TV and other heavily-compressed audio files don't always sound so great. With Digital Sound Enhancement Engine (DSEE) technology, lost frequency components (especially high frequencies) are restored for natural sound with a more spacious feel. SONY's 4K HDR handles a variety of HDR formats, including HDR10 and Hybrid Log-Gamma. The OS is Android for streaming your favourites.



UPDATE

HISENSE TV NOW DOES OLED

As we go to print, Hisense Australia has just announced the launch of its first ever OLED TV, now available at major retailers around Australia. Bolstering the company's existing range of premium televisions, the Hisense OLED TV is a welcome addition to the fleet.

The Hisense OLED is packed with the technologies designed to optimise image quality, including 4K Ultra-HD, Wide Colour Gamut, High Dynamic Range and a 200 Smooth Motion Rate. The result is a vibrant and vivid display of colour surrounded by deep blacks, creating enhanced contrast.

The Hisense OLED boasts a super slim, bezel-less design that makes the screen appear limitless. This sleek and slim aesthetic, paired with the TV's wide viewing angle, ensures that the brightness and image remains consistent no matter where the viewer sits. The Hisense OLED is available in both 55-inch and 65-inch models, with RRP's of \$3499 and \$4999.

GADGET UPDATE



Ultra-thin viewing

Dell, the world's number one monitor maker has introduced the 27 USB-C Ultrathin screen, which has HDR (High Dynamic Range) and is barely 5mm thick at its upper edges. Because it has USB-C connections, you can turn it into a laptop monitor and dock - delivering data, a display signal and up to 45W of power through one cable.

You are getting an IPS panel with 99 percent sRGB color coverage and if you're a gamer it has AMD FreeSync to eliminate screen artifacts. You can buy direct from Dell for \$799.

All weather earphones

Jabra is a key maker of ear pieces and with the Elite 65e model, takes on the outdoors while giving you quality sound.

The Elite 65e gives you up to eight hours of continuous playback with the active noise cancellation feature switched on; and thirteen hours of playback with it off. It will take calls from your phone too.

There's an IP-54 rating so they are protected against light splashes and dust and supports Google Assistant, Siri and Amazon Alexa pending which assistant you have in your phone, so you can call for your music as you go. If you're like me, you like tweak the sound and the Jabra app has a built-in equalizer so you can. Street price from \$299.



Keyboard for all your devices

If you're struggling to type that lengthy message, assignment or story on your tablet or phone, the Logitech K780 keyboard is just the ticket. A fully-equipped, beautifully finished computer keyboard with numbers pad, it also works perfectly with smartphones and tablets. Enjoy comfortable silent typing, switching easily between all the devices you enter text on. Works with PC, Mac, Chrome OS, Android and iOS. Typing is silent, smooth and familiar with the Logitech PerfectStroke key system. It has a solid build with large, carefully crafted, concave keys, a convenient numbers pad, and all your favorite shortcut keys. There's a powerful wireless connection with a 10m range and 128-bit AES encryption between the keyboard and the connected device. Available everywhere for around \$78.

Best Wi-Fi is a complete mesh

What's happened to improve Wi-Fi lately? A whole new technology called 'mesh'.

Mesh Wi-Fi systems consists of a main router that connects directly to your modem and a series of satellite modules or nodes, placed around your business or house for full Wi-Fi coverage – especially good for restaurants, B&B's or offices where you want blazingly fast internet over a wide area. Try 223 megabytes per second.

Netgear's Orbi Pro routers have FastLane3 Technology, made up of Tri-band Wi-Fi and an optimised antenna design. The Orbi Pro Tri-band Wi-Fi System includes an AC3000 router and matching satellite engineered to cover a site of 1,750 square metres, and up to 3,500 with two add-on satellites. With setup and management features that make it easy to add Orbi Pro satellites to cover larger areas, Orbi Pro delivers enterprise-class WiFi and advanced router features with the network performance and reliability. Street price for Router and satellite is \$649.



Better photos than your phone

Just how much better than your phone are today's cameras? Yes, they have changed and are now light, do great 4K video and take mighty fine photos in all light or dark situations – something that most phones struggle with.

The Panasonic LUMIX GX9 shoots vibrant, true-to-life, high-quality images with excellent resolution, high contrast and impressive colour reproduction.

The 20.3-megapixel Digital Live MOS Sensor drives the maximum performance of the lens and the Venus Engine renders high-precision yet natural images.

Best of all you can switch between 27 available lenses to suit what you shoot. Street prices from \$1199.



Save your stuff

You're on a trip and your Camera SD card is full – what now? Worse, you switch to taking pics or video with your phone but it's running flat. Now there's help. The Western Digital My Passport Wireless SSD is an external hard drive that has a built-in SD card slot, wireless capability and an integrated battery to back up your media without needing an external power source or a computer. As a rugged device it can take abuse like bumps and drops but not water or serious dust. The WD My Passport Wireless SSD features solid state drives rather than spinning hard drives, which makes it much faster and much more reliable. It has a 6,700 mAh battery to power it up the device or act as a charger for your phone.

New releases

The team at Torquay Books review titles perfect for summer reading

Preservation

Jock Serong

Text Publishing \$29.99



1797. On a beach not far from the isolated settlement of Sydney, a fishing boat picks up three shipwreck survivors, distressed and terribly injured. They have walked hundreds of miles across a landscape whose features – and inhabitants – they have no way of comprehending. They have lost 14 companions along the way. Their accounts of the ordeal are evasive. It is Lieutenant

Joshua Grayling's task to investigate the story. Gradually he comes to realise that those 14 deaths were contrived by one calculating mind. And as the full horror of the men's journey emerges, he begins to wonder whether the ruthless killer now at large in the infant colony poses a danger to his own family.

A Keeper

Graham Norton

Simon & Schuster \$32.99



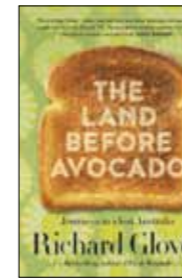
Elizabeth Keane returns to Ireland after her mother's death, intent only on wrapping up that dismal part of her life. There is nothing here for her; she wonders if there ever was. The house of her childhood is stuffed full of useless things, her mother's presence already fading. And perhaps, had she not found the small stash of letters, the truth would never have come to light.

This compelling new novel confirms Graham Norton's status as a fresh, literary voice, bringing his clear-eyed understanding of human nature and its darkest flaws.

The Land Before Avocado

Richard Glover

Harper Collins \$29.99



'It was simpler time'. 'We had more fun back then'. 'Everyone could afford a house'. There's plenty of nostalgia right now for the Australia of the past, but what was it really like? In *The Land Before Avocado*, Richard Glover takes a journey to an almost unrecognisable Australia. It's a vivid portrait of a quite peculiar land: a place that is scary and weird, dangerous

and incomprehensible and, now and then, surprisingly appealing. Most of all it will make you realise how far we've come – and how much further we can go.

Mutiny on the Bounty

Peter Fitzsimons

Little Brown Book Group \$49.99



The mutiny on HMS Bounty, in the South Pacific on April 28, 1789, is one of history's truly great stories – a tale of human drama, intrigue and adventure of the highest order – and in the hands of Peter FitzSimons it comes to life as never before. *Mutiny on the Bounty* is a sprawling, dramatic tale of intrigue, bravery and sheer boldness, told with the accuracy of historical detail and total command of story that are Peter FitzSimons' trademarks.



PROUDLY INDEPENDENT

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