

iPad

I'm typing this on a shiny, new iPad and despite what you might think or have heard to the contrary, it is a rather pleasing experience.

It certainly beats hauling about my rapidly disintegrating laptop and might even allow me to send e-mail unlike that old work horse. However even that will probably be best done at one of Edinburgh's free WiFi hotspots due to my current appalling internet speed at home (I love paying for broadband and receiving poorer speeds than I did on dial-up during the 90's), but I digress.

It seems fitting to make a review of the iPad the first thing I type on its screen, so let's do just that.

One sentence review: it's a big iPod Touch. And I mean that in the best possible way. If you have used the Touch or an iPhone, then you're going to be right at home with this little machine. The user interface is similar, but not identical allowing for added features such as landscape and portrait orientation, even on the home screen, something I must confess to yearning for ever since picking up the first iPhone. Icons have more room to breath thanks to the larger display and make it far less likely to 'fat finger' the wrong app than on a handset. Some commentators have criticised the amount of bezel surrounding the iPad (the border around the screen) but I for one welcome it. Being a person who had to move the phone icon on my iPhone because my thumb kept hitting it, I appreciate the room this affords me in resting my hands whilst typing this very article.

Something I've been very impressed with, especially after some initial comments is how well apps that aren't specifically optimised for the iPad perform. There are some that don't translate as well as others, but most that I've tried out have

worked great. Being a games blog though, let's stick with the game side of this.

If there is one genre that could really make a comeback on the iPad, it is that guilty pleasure of mine that is the interactive movie. Games such as Dragon's Lair and Space Ace look beautiful on the larger screen, and the touch controls feel better than even an old arcade stick. It even makes the largest control scheme make much more sense than it did on the smaller iDevices, feeling like a game of Simon especially in easy mode; hitting the right button as it lights up. Other laserdisc classics such as Cobra Command feel just as at home on the iPad, again the controls feeling much more responsive. However, some titles that are more reliant on tilt controls don't translate as successfully. When I loaded up the Atari classic, Adventure it was barely playable with the square you control reacting way too sensitively to be playable.

Games that rely on pixel art look particularly nice when doubled up to be full screen on the iPad. Vay, one of the first RPGs released in the app store looks beautiful. Its pixel art looking very sharp. I would also argue that Flashback plays far better than the iPad optimised version of Prince of Persia.

Due to the aforementioned internet service provider at home, I haven't had a chance to download many iPad exclusive games, but expect some individual reviews coming in the not too distant future (ISP depending).

It has been a source of speculation since the announcement of the iPad, however I truly believe it is a valid gaming platform. There are already some great looking and playing titles out there, and some of them are playable on the smaller devices too. Does it make the iPod Touch et al. irrelevant? Not in the least. Going back to my iPhone after using the iPad makes me look at my 3G in a way I haven't since I first laid eyes on the original iPhone. The fact that so much can be done

on such a small screen is astounding to me once more and with the iPhone 4 on the horizon, things are looking very bright for Apple's touch device market. However for anyone that found these smaller machines a little cluttered or too small to use easily, the iPad is certainly worth your consideration.