

Setback for Nokia music service

Andrew Parker

Nokia is facing a setback at the global launch of its music service in the UK later this month because the country's big four mobile operators are not planning to sell it.

Vodafone, O2, Orange and T-Mobile are not expecting to use their high street stores to offer Nokia's handsets featuring its unlimited music download service in the run-up to Christmas. This would be a setback for Nokia, the biggest mobile handset maker, which is beginning an ambitious strategy of putting services like music on to phones. It underlines tensions between Nokia and the operators.

Nokia's Comes With Music service was unveiled last night at a global launch party in London.

Two Nokia handsets featuring the service, which offers consumers the ability to download as much music as they want over a one year subscription period, go on sale on October 16 in the UK.

However, Nokia's long-awaited 5800 mobile, which is its first touchscreen , smartphone, is not one of the two launch models for the service as it will not go on sale in the UK next year.

The UK is the only market where the Comes With Music service will be available this year. It will expand into continental Europe and Asia next year.

In the short term, Nokia is likely to have to rely on Carphone Warehouse, the mobile phone retailer, to be the UK distribution channel for its Comes With Music-enabled handsets. Nokia will also use its London shop and website.

The two Nokia handsets featuring the service that go on sale in the UK with Carphone later this month are the 5310 and the N95.

The 5310 will be available on pay-as-you-go deals. The N95 will be tied to monthly , contracts with the operators, although Nokia said Carphone had not yet provided pricing details. The cost of the operators' contracts will be influenced by their commercial arrangements with Carphone for subsidising handsets. Many mobiles tied to monthly contracts are given free to consumers.

It remains unclear how many operators will agree to provide network coverage for the Comes With Music-enabled 5310 and N95 from October 16.

Nokia said: "We will have the N95 Comes With Music as a contract offer. We are optimistic we will have several operators on board by the end of the year."

The operators - Vodafone, O2, which is owned by Spain's Telefonica, France Telecom's Orange and Deutsche Telekom's T-Mobile -declined to comment.

Arquivos complementares:

Touchscreen phone lacking a licence to thrill devotees

Rob Minto

The latest addition to the smartphone range is not exactly cutting edge, says Rob Minto

The wait for Nokia's touchscreen phone is almost over.

Other handset makers have released touchscreen devices, such as Apple with the iPhone and Samsung with the Omnia, but Nokia is the biggest operator in the handset market, and this is potentially the key phone for 2009.

Being the biggest does not mean it is the best.

Nokia has dragged its heels before on phone releases, with their clamshell-style handsets chasing rivals Motorola and Samsung in 2004 and disappointing customers.

Fast-forward to 2008, and it has happened again. The Nokia 5800 XpressMusic is late and a little underwhelming. Certainly for UK customers, who will have to wait until after Christmas to get their hands on it, and also for those who may be getting one before the end of 2008.

The problem is not the interface. It is that we have been here before. It is comparatively light, has good battery life and is relatively stylish.

But looking at the 5800, it was reminiscent of those scenes in old James Bond films, when Q shows 007 the latest gadgets which now seem rather passe. Sweep your finger to scroll? Done that before. Apps, pictures, video? Tick. Ejector seat? Perhaps not. But many of the features in the range of touchscreen smart-phones are beginning to blur into one.

That said, there are some key differences to the iPhone, which is what this device will be most closely compared with. The iPhone uses an electrical touchscreen, which allows that "pinch" to zoom in and out.

The 5800 uses a resistance-based screen, which means that there is no pinch. Instead, you can use the built-in pen to scribble text much like a Palm device, which may appeal to those with tired thumbs. But unlike the G1 from Google and X1 from Sony Ericsson, which are to be released soon, there is no pull-out qwerty keyboard.

With no physical keyboard, the 5800 may lack appeal to business users, unless they are used to handwriting-style input as an alternative.

You can also use the plectrum that comes attached to the phone, which I thought made it look rather childish, but is apparently to emphasise that it is a music phone.

In which case, why has the default start screen got no music player button? The player is one of five options on a separate menu.

Instead, the home screen shows your four top contacts, where you can see your recent activity with them - texts, calls, e-mails - as well as view their online activity from sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on, which is very neat. Putting contacts up front in this way might be a genius move.

For all the talk about applications, phones are still about communication. As Q once said: "Here's your cell phone. Talk here, listen here."

Fonte: Financial Times, London, October 3 2008, Companies & Markets, p. 22.