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Review Date November 15, 2010

Samsung Mesmerize (U.S. Cellular)

●●●●● EDITOR RATING: **EXCELLENT** 0 COMMENTS

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MSRP **\$199.99**

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PROS

Fast. Brilliant screen. Very good camera and video playback.

CONS

Voice dialing not very accurate. U.S. Cellular only in 26 states.

BOTTOM LINE

The Mesmerize, Samsung's Galaxy S phone for U.S. Cellular, is the carrier's top smartphone.

BY SASCHA SEGAN Our readers' best-beloved smaller wireless carrier now has two world-class Android smartphones. Samsung Mesmerize, the U.S. Cellular's model in the Samsung Galaxy S line of Android-powered phones, is good enough to draw customers away from rival Verizon Wireless. It's also a bit better than the rival [HTC Desire](#) (\$199, 4.5 stars), making the Mesmerize our Editors' Choice for smartphones on U.S.

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U.S. Cellular, the nation's sixth-largest carrier, covers parts of 26 states and regularly gets high marks in our [Readers' Choice awards](#). The carrier recently launched the "Belief Project," a set of new customer-service standards and bonuses including a loyalty reward program, coverage protection, free battery swaps, and other goodies.

Hardware and Phone Performance

The Mesmerize is essentially the same hardware as the [Samsung Fascinate](#) (\$199, 4 stars) on Verizon Wireless, but the software builds and U.S. Cellular's service plans are different enough to draw consumers away from Verizon's model. To recap, this is a slim, black-slab phone at 4.9 by 2.5 by 0.4 inches (HWD) and 4.1 ounces, with a 4-inch, 800-by-480 super AMOLED touchscreen and a 5-megapixel camera on the back. The phone's black plastic body is easy to hold, and if you've never seen the colors on one of Samsung's Super AMOLED screens before, then they'll really knock your socks off.



[VIEW ALL 6 PHOTOS IN GALLERY](#)

Like the Fascinate, the Mesmerize is a very good voice phone. It's nice and loud, and voices sound clear. The speakerphone is of a decent volume. Transmissions sound good; there's a bit of background noise, but voices come through clearly. You get a ton of side tone, which is the echo of your own voice in your ear that prevents you from yelling into the phone. The handset also paired easily with our Aliph Jawbone Icon Bluetooth headset. The Nuance voice dialing works over Bluetooth, which is great, but I found it horribly inaccurate. Battery life was positively spectacular with almost 8 hours of talk time in my

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The Mesmerize connects to the Internet using U.S. Cellular's EV-DO Rev A network and 802.11 b/g/n Wi-Fi. I had no problems hooking up to our WPA2-protected corporate network. The Mesmerize also works as a 3G hotspot on U.S. Cellular's network, so you should expect speeds around 1Mbps. The additional service plan costs \$25 per month. According to Samsung, the phone will also link up with the company's Kies PC software eventually. That's a neat Samsung app which lets you sync contacts and calendars locally with Outlook—a rare feature on Android phones.

Mesmerizing Software

The Mesmerize, like the Fascinate, runs Android 2.1. An upgrade to version 2.2 is coming soon, Samsung says. Like all the Galaxy S phones, Samsung has laid its TouchWiz UI layer over Android. That gives the phone a somewhat different look than other Android devices, along with a better phone book, a better Microsoft Exchange client, deeper connections to social networking services, and a few custom apps.

However, the Fascinate became controversial because Verizon replaced Google search on the phone with Bing. That isn't the case here—and, of course, Verizon's other bloatware isn't on the Mesmerize either. U.S. Cellular did add a few apps, but they're relatively low-key. For example, there's a Telenav-based GPS navigation app (which found my location quickly and accurately) and a contact book backup.

Otherwise, the Mesmerize runs more than 100,000 apps, and it does so brilliantly. The Galaxy S's 1GHz Samsung Hummingbird CPU is faster than the processors in the HTC Desire and Motorola Droid X, and is at par with T-Mobile's latest HTC myTouch HD. In any case, it's first rate.

Media and Conclusions

Like all Galaxy S phones, the Mesmerize is an excellent media player. Samsung's music app shows album art, and it played all of my unprotected music files (including OGG format) flawlessly—both over wired and Bluetooth headphones. Video files of up to 720p resolution played smoothly, with virtual surround-sound in wired headphones. YouTube streamed HQ videos over Wi-Fi that were razor-sharp and butter-smooth in my tests. The phone has 1.5GB of free internal memory and comes with a 16GB microSD card, which fits into a slot under the back cover.

The Mesmerize has a very good 5-megapixel camera—at least very good for a camera phone. Both outdoor and indoor images were sharp, with good color balance. I had occasional problems with blur in low-light conditions. The phone records 720p HD video at 30 frames per second, although video recorded in low-light areas gets noisy.

The Mesmerize outpaces both Verizon's Fascinate and U.S. Cellular's HTC Desire, though your choice between the three will be a matter of taste. U.S. Cellular's friendly service plans and less carrier interference in the software make the Mesmerize more appealing than the Fascinate. However, your decision between the Mesmerize and Desire will depend on whether you like Samsung's TouchWiz or HTC's Sense UI. But you can't deny that the



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Mesmerize has a better camera, a faster processor, and a larger screen than the Desire, which make this excellent Android phone our Editors' Choice for U.S. Cellular.

Compare the Samsung Mesmerize with several other mobile phones side by side.

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BY SASCHA SEGAN

LEAD ANALYST, MOBILE

As lead analyst for PCMag Mobile, Sascha Segan has reviewed hundreds of cell phones, PDAs, and ancillary gadgets in nearly five years with the PCMag Digital Network. He is also a columnist for PCMag.com and...

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