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Review Date July 22, 2010

Samsung Vibrant (T-Mobile)

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REVIEW
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VIEW ALL 6 PHOTOS IN GALLERY

PROS

Fast. 1-GHz processor handles graphics well. Bright screen. PC syncing options. Great photos and videos. Free, full copy of Sims 3 included.

CONS

Media store not ready yet. No voice dialing over Bluetooth. No tethering.

BOTTOM LINE

The Samsung Vibrant is T-Mobile's super-phone, and it delivers a lot of power on some really inexpensive monthly plans.

BY SACHA SEGAN The Samsung Vibrant is easily the best smartphone for T-Mobile, and it's a super-phone on par with the rest of the major carriers' offerings. This bright, entertaining Android-powered device is a great platform for Web surfing, movie-watching, and enjoying life online. All of

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these factors have also made the Vibrant our new Editors' Choice for T-Mobile smartphones, and one of the Phones With the Best Battery Life.

COMPARE SIMILAR PRODUCTS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Samsung Vibrant (T-Mobile)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HTC HD2 (T-Mobile)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	T-Mobile myTouch 3G		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nokia E73 Mode (T-Mobile)	
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T-Mobile was the first carrier to get a Google Android phone—that would be the **T-Mobile G1** (\$179, ●●●●●)—but their unfortunate dalliance with Google on the doomed **Nexus One** (●●●●●) left them without a high-end Android phone for a while. Nonetheless, they've been getting along with several good midrange Android phones and the **HTC HD2** (\$199.99-449.99, ●●●●●), which has terrific hardware but a dead-end Windows Mobile OS.

 **VIEW ALL 6 PHOTOS IN GALLERY**

Enter the Samsung Vibrant. The Vibrant is part of Samsung's Galaxy S lineup, a sextet of Android super-phones scheduled to appear on six different U.S. carriers over the next few months. The Vibrant was released within days of the **Samsung Captivate** (\$199.99-499.99, ●●●●●), AT&T's finest Android phone. T-Mobile's entry is similar to but different from its AT&T-based sibling.

Hardware and Phone Performance

The Vibrant is a pretty non-descript black slab phone. It has rounded corners and a somewhat greasy-feeling black plastic back, but as a 4.8 by 2.5 by .4 inch (HWD), 4.16 ounce slab, it will quickly blend into any stack of black slab smartphones. That is, until you turn the screen on. Like the Captivate, the Vibrant has a brilliant 24-bit, 800-by-480, 4-inch Super AMOLED screen. That gives it deep blacks, hyper-saturated colors, and images that really pop.

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Under the hood, the Vibrant has Samsung's ARM Cortex-A8-class 1 GHz Hummingbird processor, which promises improved graphics performance over competing devices. Our benchmarks agreed. On four publicly available benchmarks (BenchmarkPi, Softweg, CaffeineMark, and Linpack) Hummingbird came out faster than the Qualcomm Snapdragon in competing phones like the [HTC Incredible](#) (\$299.99, ●●●●○) and [HTC EVO 4G](#) (\$299.99, ●●●●○), and neck-and-neck with the TI OMAP chip in the [Motorola Droid X](#) (\$299.99, ●●●●○). In Qualcomm's Neocore graphics benchmark, the Hummingbird really flew. Most Android phones get 24 to 32 frames per second on Neocore; the Droid X gets 44.4. The Vibrant zipped through 55.4 frames per second, promising a top-notch gaming and video experience.

The Vibrant connects to T-Mobile's and foreign 3G networks, as well as to 802.11 b/g/n Wi-Fi networks. The phone also has Bluetooth 3.0, which sounds exciting but doesn't offer any real-world advantages over version 2.1 of Android. Unlike AT&T's Captivate, the Vibrant doesn't work as a PC modem.

The Vibrant, like the Captivate, is a decent but not extraordinary voice phone. RF reception is average; the phone has a tendency to display fewer bars of signal than competing devices, but that didn't seem to affect its ability to complete calls. Sound in the earpiece is excellent—loud and clear, and the speakerphone is also loud and sharp. But transmissions through the microphone, while they lack background noise thanks to the Audience voice processor, sounded hollow and echoey at times. The Vibrant paired easily with our [Aliph Jawbone Icon](#) (\$99, ●●●●○) Bluetooth headset, but couldn't do voice dialing over Bluetooth. That's annoying.

Battery life was very good, with more than seven hours of talk time and more than a day and a half of average use. The power-sipping Super AMOLED screen probably helps contribute to the relatively long battery life.

Software and Media Performance

The Vibrant runs Android 2.1 with Samsung's TouchWiz 3.0 extensions; an upgrade to Android 2.2 is coming soon, according to Samsung. TouchWiz improves the Android experience in a few meaningful ways, most notably by folding Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Microsoft Exchange pretty nicely into the overall experience. The Captivate's calendar merges Google, Exchange, and Facebook events, and the address book brings everyone together, letting you swipe over from a contact card to send a message to someone by various means.

The Vibrant has an unusual range of text-entry modes. There are two different styles of touch keyboard, two (slow but entertaining) handwriting recognizers, a T9 keypad if you want really large buttons, and Swype. It's good to have options, and one of these will fit you.

Samsung's home screen widgets are a notch below HTC's but better than stock Android. The Twitter and Facebook widgets are largely useless because they don't auto-update more than once an hour; nobody wants hours-old Tweets. But the Rolodex-style graphical buddy list is quite nice, and Daily Briefing combines weather, stocks, and news.



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T-Mobile added some software but kept things pretty low-key. Unlike on the Captivate, for instance, you can side-load apps that aren't downloaded from the Android Market. T-Mobile also included a full copy of the movie "Avatar" and, awesomely, a copy of Sims 3. The Sims 3 game may be the best program I have ever seen a carrier pre-load on a phone. It's a real 3D game that takes full advantage of the Hummingbird processor, and it's a full copy, not a teaser. T-Mobile's TeleNav GPS program gives driving directions for \$2.99/month—more expensive than Google's free beta navigation system (also included), but far cheaper than AT&T's \$9.99/month AT&T Navigator.

The Vibrant is T-Mobile's best phone for media. The phone ships with a somewhat mysterious stub for Samsung Media Hub, a promised music-and-movie store which will have big-name content when it launches later this summer. You don't need Media Hub to enjoy the full media experience here, though it does help to have a Windows PC, not a Mac, as the Vibrant's syncing software only runs on PCs. In fact, I couldn't even get my Vibrant to show up on a Mac in Mass Storage mode (although it showed up on two Windows machines just fine.)

There's a lot of room for media on here: 16GB of internal memory, plus a slot behind the back cover for a microSD card up to 32GB. Our Vibrant came with a 2GB card installed, and our 16GB SanDisk card worked fine.

You have two ways to sync media to the Vibrant, other than dragging and dropping. The phone syncs perfectly with Windows Media Player, but there's also [Samsung Kies](#), a very rich Windows-based app which lets you sync calendars and contacts locally with Outlook, upload and download your messages and media to the phone, and reformat videos so they can be played properly.

Samsung's hacked Android music player is a major improvement over Google's original, adding some visual effects, an equalizer, and a Cover Flow-like album art display to the usually dull Android music player. T-Mobile also includes Slacker, which is otherwise a free download.

Even without reformatting through Kies or WMP, the Vibrant plays an unusually wide range of video formats. Along with the usual standard-def MPEG4 and WMV video, I was pleasantly shocked to find that H.264/AAC and XVID videos played, even high-def 720p files, and that there seemed to be an option for simulated 5.1 surround sound.

Camera and Conclusions

I found the Vibrant's flashless, 5-megapixel camera takes even better photos than the Captivate's, even though the two use the same sensor. Perhaps the different back cover plays a role, with slightly different plastic over the lens. In any case, I got sharper images on the Vibrant, closer to the iPhone 4's pictures. The video mode was also excellent, taking 720-by-480 videos at 30 frames per second.

The Samsung Vibrant is a great Android phone for T-Mobile users. It's an especially compelling device when you consider T-Mobile's inexpensive service plans: pay for your

phone up front or on a monthly installment plan, and you can get 1000 minutes plus unlimited messaging and Web for only \$69.99. That's an amazing \$35/month savings over the competing AT&T plan—\$840 over two years.

The **T-Mobile myTouch 3G Slide** (\$179.99-429.99, ●●●○○), **BlackBerry 9700** (\$199.99, ●●●○○), and **Nokia E73 Mode** (\$69.99-299.99, ●●●○○) remain good alternatives for folks looking for physical keyboards, and the myTouch 3G Slide runs most of the same apps as the Vibrant. But none of those phones have the Vibrant's amazing screen or media abilities. The HTC HD2 does, but we just can't recommend Windows Mobile 6 phones any more. That makes the Vibrant the best buy and our Editor's Choice for a T-Mobile smartphone.

Benchmark Test Results

Continuous Talk Time: 7 hours 22 minutes

[Compare the Samsung Vibrant with several other mobile phones side by side.](#)

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BY SASCHA SEGAN

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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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