

COMPUTERS

Hands-On With Stream TV's Surprising, Open Source-Friendly Tablet

By Sam Biddle on September 1, 2010 at 12:00 AM

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If anyone unseats the iPad, the victor might be the one that *doesn't* try to beat Apple at its own game. We checked out Stream TV's eLocity Android tablet first-hand, and this plucky contender may put up a serious fight.

To say that the eLocity A7 isn't going directly head to head with the iPad isn't to say that it's not out to impress. The solidly built 7-inch tablet is powered by NVIDIA's beefy, dual core Tegra 2 processor, will run Froyo out of the box and is capable of outputting a plethora of formats at 1080p via an included HDMI cable. Eye-catching stats. When the eLocity team stopped by our offices, they were sure to tout its media muscle, showing off some truly impressive HD content stored on the diminutive tab, through either 4GB of internal storage or microSD. DivX trailers, ripped Blu-ray movies, H.264 – video playback was crisp and smooth both onscreen and hooked up to a TV (though the eLocity itself has only a low-res 800×480 display). Gaming performance shined as well, using either screen controls or accelerometer, and particularly impressed on a coupled HDTV.



But the eLocity isn't (only) a video player. Tablets are supposed to be computers (of some sort), and what might give Stream TV an edge in the rest of the touchscreen battle royale is their emphasis on the software side of things. To be frank, even Froyo is still lagging behind the pure polish of iOS, and the interface experience on the A7 isn't as smooth or, for lack of a better word, enjoyable. But Stream TV's got a trick up their sleeve: open source. Company reps say they will be releasing the source code to the software and interface elements they pack atop Froyo, encouraging the community to tinker with them as it pleases. The Tegra 2 guts are impressive on their own, but paired with a strong open source community, could really be the start of something exciting far outside of Apple's walled-off topiaries (though reps maintained, of course, that the A7 will be friendly enough for users keen on the intuitive Apple experience).

The eLocity A7 will be available for pre-order after September 6 and should be shipping "by Black Friday" (November 26). It's Wi-Fi only for now, though Stream TV is looking for a carrier for a 3G data version.

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