

THE APPLE BARREL

the **JOURNAL** of the **HOUSTON AREA APPLE USERS GROUP**

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App Showcase + Tips and Tricks

Saturday, November 18

CenterPoint Energy Community Center

7001 Fifth Street, Bellaire, TX 77401

9 am - 1 pm

Early iPhone X Reviews
Praise Screen, Face ID

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Taking Responsibility
for your Digital Life

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The Apple Barrel
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Annual membership is \$35 for regular members, and \$10 for

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by Phil Booth, 2017 HAAUG President

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Apple made a splash the first week of November with the release of the iPhone X to generally great reviews by folks that got preview units. FaceID works as the company said. The phone brought lines back to the Apple Store like the release of earlier iPhones. Again, the reviews of the unit were very positive. Apple seemed to run out of the initial production run with promised delivery dates extending into late December or early January 2018.

Apple announced its fiscal fourth quarter revenue of \$52.6 billion and earnings of \$10.7 billion. Apple earned \$2.7 dollars per share of stock. All of these numbers were significant increase over the last quarter of 2016. The introduction of the iPhone 8, iPhone 8 Plus, and Apple TV 4K were factors in the increase in revenue. Services accounted for \$8.5 billion. The holiday quarter is looking good with strong initial demand for the iPhone X. If you are interested in getting deep into Apple's results I would recommend going to SixColors.com. Jason Snell always does a great job in breaking down Apples quarterly results.

Well, I can finally go to bed at a normal hour as the Baseball Season wrapped up with the Astros winning their first World Series. The games between the Dodgers and Astros were some of the most dramatic I have witnessed. Houston seemed to take the club into its heart and for the first time we were not disappointed. This was a great season.

A big HAAUG thank you to Dave Hamilton for his great presentation at the October meeting. Hamilton is a member of the Mac Geek Gab podcast team and The Mac Observer. The presentation gave us some little used tips and tricks for using the Mac and iOS. It was a great meeting.

Well I did it; I installed High Sierra on my 2013 iMac. I was holding off until members of the club with more smarts than me tried it out. The change in the startup drive format to APFS was the one factor that held me back. I took the precaution of bringing my startup drive backup up to date, then installed the new OS. I borrowed some bandwidth from my office and downloaded the installer and used a utility called DiskMaker X to build an installer on a thumb drive. The process went as usual with no hiccups. I got a little nervous as the progress bar marched very slowly across the screen, but I am writing this with Microsoft Word running under macOS 10.13.1.

Club and Meeting News

App Showcase + Tips and Tricks

Saturday, November 18

CenterPoint Energy Community Center

7001 Fifth Street, Bellaire, TX 77401

9 am - 1 pm

	CenterPoint Energy Community Center
9:00 am	Mac 101 and Fundamentals, iOS Jonathan Magnus and Rick Roberts
9:30 am	
10:00 am	
10:30 am	
11:00 am	App Showcase + Tips and Tricks Panel Discussion
11:30 am	
12:00 pm	
12:30 pm	
1:00 pm	
1:30 pm	
2:00 pm	

Special Interest Groups

Mac 101 and Fundamentals with Jonathan Magnus: The SIG for basic to advanced Mac topics.

iOS with Rick Roberts: Discuss all things iPhone, iPad, iPod, iTunes, and iCloud.

Special Interest Group and Ad Hoc Meetings: Groups are welcome to use the casual spaces to meet on other topics. Scheduled SIGs take precedence. If you have an idea for a SIG, email the HAAUG SIG Coordinator at SIG_Coordinator@haaug.org!

Join the HAAUG Board of Directors!

We will soon be asking for members to volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors. Please consider putting your name up for a leadership position. For more information, talk to any board member at a meeting or send an email to president@haaug.org.

Meetup Group

The Houston Area Apple Users Group is now on Meetup.com! Click here to visit our group's Meetup page and join. We will of course continue to publish all meeting news on our website at haaug.org, to our Facebook group, and all other outlets as usual; this is simply an additional way to market our organization to the local community. If you are already a HAAUG member and join the Meetup group we will mark your dues as paid on the Meetup website, so you won't have to pay HAAUG dues twice!

HAAUG Website Updates

If you haven't visited the [HAAUG website](http://haaug.org) recently, stop by and check it out. Learn more about the organization, get up-to-the-minute news and updates, and browse the Apple Barrel archives, dating back to 1996!

Submit Your Content to Apple Barrel!

Have you tried a new Mac or iOS application? Found a neat accessory for your iPhone? Want to share a cool tip you've come across? Write about it, and send your column to editor@haaug.org. You can help make the Apple Barrel a better publication while providing valuable insight and opinion to your fellow HAAUG members.

Taking Responsibility *for your* Digital Life

Our August meeting featured Lee Hutchinson of ArsTechnica, who discussed tactics for safeguarding our online activities and maintaining a degree of operational security. For the full content of Lee's presentation, click the slide deck below.

Our thanks to Lee for a great presentation!



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Taking Responsibility For Your Digital Life

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Early iPhone X Reviews Praise Screen, Face ID

by Josh Centers of TidBITS

This year, Apple gave us a double dose of iPhone. After the release of the iPhone 8 and 8 Plus in September, the iPhone X is now here (see [“Apple’s Late 2017 Collection: A Roundup of Reviews,”](#) 26 September 2017) and is in short supply, despite its premium \$999 price tag.

Before kicking off this review roundup, I’d be remiss to not mention the [controversial media strategy](#) at play here. Apple severely limited its review units to traditional outlets — most had the iPhone X for just 24 hours before Apple lifted the media blackout. Instead, Apple gave priority to a handful of moderately popular YouTubers, with only a few U.S.-based writers getting the iPhone X for a full week before publication:

- Steven Levy of [Wired](#)
- Nicole Nguyen of [BuzzFeed](#)
- Lance Ulanoff of [Mashable](#)
- Matthew Panzarino of [TechCrunch](#), who took his iPhone X to Disneyland, which is both a great conceit for a review and a great excuse to expense a vacation

Because they have the most hands-on experience with the iPhone X outside of Apple, I’m going to focus on their reviews, though I read many more before writing this roundup. I found that they were mostly in agreement about the pros and cons of the iPhone X.

Additionally, I’m organizing this roundup by feature rather than by reviewer. The iPhone X is largely similar to the iPhone 8 and 8 Plus, with a few crucial differences: it lacks a Home button, it features a “super Retina” OLED display, it uses facial recognition instead of fingerprint recognition for authentication, it has a slightly tweaked dual-camera system, and its display features a distinctive “notch” that holds various sensors the phone requires. I’ll focus on these differences, bringing together commentary from different reviewers.

The Learning Curve -- The biggest change about the iPhone X is that the iconic Home button is gone, replaced by Face ID and a

series of new gestures. With those comes a learning curve — how did that work out for reviewers?

“I’ve been living with the iPhone X for a week, and I’ll say right off the bat: This phone isn’t for everyone,” Nguyen announced. “Once I learned the new finger choreography, using the new xOS was fine. But for the first day or two, I was a hot swiping mess.”

Matthew Panzarino said: “Day one of using an iPhone X is profoundly strange and cumbersome in a lot of ways. If you’ve spent years whacking a home button you’re not going to be able to break down those memetics in a couple of hours. I had to get used to swiping up, across, down and up again instead of tapping the button, double tapping the button or double tapping and swiping.”

Lance Ulanoff also struggled. “You don’t realize just how many features rely on the home button until it’s gone. For as much as I love the iPhone X, using it in those early days was like interacting with an iPhone via funhouse mirror. I’d been schooled on where things moved, but had a nasty habit of bumping into mirrors as I forcibly retrained my digits and mind,” he said.

But that awkwardness doesn’t last forever. Panzarino added, “Anecdotally, I got the phone on a Monday and until Saturday I was still stabbing the home button to go home. Today, a week later as I write this, I swiped the home button on my iPhone 7 to try to unlock it. So give it a week or so to acclimate.”

Steven Levy fell into the same camp as Panzarino: “I knew I’d mastered the gestures when I found myself trying to use them on my iPad. Oops. My finger no longer drifts to the home button, but pathetically swipes upwards, to no avail. And now there’s that awkward moment when I expect the iPad to unlock itself when the camera looks at my face.”

We’ve had the iPhone X for just a few days now, and we can confirm that while there is more of a learning curve than with previous iPhone models, you will indeed

pick it up quickly. Adam Engst felt that he had more trouble when Apple moved the Sleep/Wake button from the top of the iPhone 5 to the side on the iPhone 6.

That said, the gestures may prove more difficult for inexperienced or tentative users. I wouldn’t give an iPhone X to my mother or my four-year-old son and expect them to be able to use it fluidly. Mashing a visible button is more intuitive than remembering where to swipe on a screen. Apple is aware of this concern, and iPhone X purchasers are being offered [free online training](#).

The Notch -- Much of the discussion around the iPhone X has focused on the notorious “notch.” Apple likes to brag that the iPhone X is “all screen,” which is true, except for a 1.5 by 0.25-inch (3.8 by 0.6 cm) indentation in the top of the screen that contains the front-facing camera, Face ID sensors, speaker, and mic. Despite the hubbub, the reviewers weren’t bothered by it.

Panzarino put it bluntly: “In use, I have to say, the notch is just zero problem for me. I don’t give a rat’s ass about it. I know I’ll probably catch heat but I’m not carrying water for Apple here. I think it is absolutely a compromise but, after using Face ID and the True Depth camera for other stuff, I am willing to deal with it.”

But he did caution, “If, however, you use your iPhone for data entry or browsing or whatever in landscape, the True Depth camera is going to be bang in your way, especially if it’s on the left. No getting around it. If that bothers you, don’t get an iPhone X. But even if you think it’s going to bother you I’m not sure it actually will once you spend a few days with it.”

Ulanoff was a bit less optimistic. “I’d be lying if I said I never noticed the notch. It cuts into full-screen apps, movies, and photos, but, after a little while, I stopped fixating on it. I guarantee that some people will hate the notch and rail against it, and it’s fun to imagine how the stoic Jony Ive, Apple’s Chief Design Officer, might’ve lost his cool when he first saw the notch. The complaints will, I suspect, mostly be from people who do not own or use an iPhone X.”

iPhone X (continued)

Nguyen was less bothered by the notch than the other half of the phone. “Whatever. I don’t feel strongly about the notch either way, but it’s really the other end of the screen that feels awkward. It’s when the keyboard, in any app, is on screen (which, for me, is most of the time): There’s all this dead space on the bottom, where Apple could have put common punctuation, frequently used emojis, or literally anything, but instead left it blank. Other full-screen apps on other phones put navigation or other design elements in that area, and it doesn’t look crowded or crammed. It looks fine. It’s puzzling why Apple didn’t put something more useful down at the bottom, or why it didn’t add a row of numbers or emojis up top and push down the keyboard to make it more thumb-accessible.”

However, she correctly points out that many apps have not yet been updated for the iPhone X and thus have the same screen area as an iPhone 8. “This, I expect, will change, as developers update their apps for X compatibility. But, as it stands, the X doesn’t feel like the ‘future of the smartphone’ when I open some of my most-used apps. It feels like I’m looking at the same slab of glass I’ve seen for the last decade.”

Overall, the reviewers seemed to agree that the notch was worthwhile because, without it, there would be no Face ID. We’re again in agreement — none of us have found the notch overly bothersome, and it fades into the background in most apps that can leave the time and status icons on either side of it.

Face ID -- The reviewers all agreed that Face ID, the facial recognition system that replaces Touch ID on the iPhone X, is incredible. Or as Nguyen said, “Simply put: Face ID is really f---ing impressive. But that’s because it’s invisible.” She relayed a story about setting up Face ID with a swollen eyelid and how the system was able to adapt to her facial changes as the swelling subsided.

Panzarino applauded the ease of setup and its security. “Face ID works really well. First, it’s incredibly easy to set up. You choose to enable it and then rotate your nose around

the points of a clock twice. That’s it. Second, it worked the vast majority of times I tried it, it never once unlocked using a picture of myself or another person’s face and the failure rate seemed to be about the same as Touch ID — aka almost never. As hoped, it’s definitely faster than the first generation of Touch ID, though perhaps slightly slower than the second gen.”

He also applauded how adaptable Face ID is. “I used it bare-headed, with a hat, with other hats, with glasses, without glasses, with glasses and hat — all of the basic permutations. The only times it wouldn’t work at all is if I had my nose and mouth covered — something that Apple has said from the beginning was a deal breaker. For those of you in cold climates who wear face coverings, start practicing pulling that scarf down to unlock. The nice bit, of course, is that you don’t have to worry about gloves that don’t allow you to unlock your phone.”

But he cautioned that it doesn’t work with some sunglasses. “I eventually found a pair of sunglasses of mine that it could not penetrate. Apple says that the IR spectrum around 940nm is crucial to Face ID’s ability to function, so sunglasses that block this are an issue. That’s because the light spectrum that it uses is completely invisible to the naked eye. If you unlock in the dark it works perfectly, but no one sees anything coming from the phone — just for the record.”

Ulanoff praised Face ID’s speed. “I pick up the phone and swipe my finger up from the bottom edge of the screen. In the time it takes to do that, the iPhone X’s Face ID system has already read my face and approved it as the one registered with the phone. Is it faster than unlocking the iPhone 8? Close, but, if so, only by milliseconds. However, unlike pressing and holding the home button, accessing my iPhone X feels like a single gesture. You can, of course, still use a PIN code, which you’ll need when you turn on the phone, since Face ID won’t work after a power-down.”

And fear not, Face ID is hard to fool, as Ulanoff discovered. “I did try to fool Face ID. I took a photo of my face with the iPhone 8 and presented it to the iPhone X TrueDepth Camera. It didn’t respond. I also tried using

a short video. Again, nothing,” he said.

We haven’t had time to make Face ID jump through so many hoops, but it has worked well for us too. The one caveat comes from Adam Engst, who discovered that Face ID requires that the iPhone X be at least 6 inches (15 cm) away from your face. Since he’s quite near-sighted, when he’s not wearing glasses or contacts at night, he has to bring the iPhone X closer than that to read it, at which point Face ID doesn’t work. His workaround is to re-lock the iPhone X, move it further away, and unlock again so Face ID can kick in.

The Screen -- The iPhone X is the first iPhone with an OLED screen, and it occupies more of the face of the iPhone than any previous screen. It’s also the first instance of what Apple calls a “Super Retina” screen — we assume Apple is referring to the fact that it boasts a whopping 458 pixels per inch, compared to the iPhone 6/7/8 Plus screens, which were the previous record-holders at 401 ppi. OLED displays are known for superior colors, richer blacks, and better power efficiency than LCDs, but tend to suffer from burn-in and color-shifted off-axis viewing. The reviewers seemed more impressed by the screen than any other feature.

Levy summed it up, “The biggest change stares you in the face: that screen, that screen. I love the larger displays of the iPhone Plus line and Android units like Google’s Pixel 2 XL, but the phones are too frickin’ big. They are bulky in my pocket, and making calls is like holding a frying pan to your cheek. The iPhone X is a big screen in a compact form factor — Cinerama in a phone booth. Though the device itself is only slightly bigger than the standard iPhone 8, its screen is roughly the same size as that of the iPhone 8 Plus. When you take into account its “Super Retina” capabilities (another Barnum-esque name concocted by Apple’s marketers), that screen will persistently reassure buyers that emptying their wallets for an iPhone X wasn’t folly. I found the display a noticeable, and greatly pleasurable, advance over my “old” iPhone 7, whether watching *The Big Sick*, streaming a live football game, or simply swiping through Instagram.”

iPhone X (continued)

Nguyen also praised both the OLED screen and the more efficient form factor. “Ultimately, the most striking thing to me about this phone isn’t the Face ID, 3D-face scanning tech, or the new OLED display. It’s that it’s got the 8 Plus’s screen size — and two-lens camera — in a form factor that’s much better for smaller hands and pockets. The biggest phone is no longer the best. Apple has typically reserved its best features for its big, bulky “Plus” phones. The X changes that. For the small-handed (like me) or those who wear women’s pants, which have the dumbest, shallowest pockets, the X’s size is the real killer feature.”

Apple’s OLED is terrific, but Panzarino pointed out that it still suffers some of the typical OLED flaws. “The one area where this display falls prey to standard OLED gripes is in off-axis viewing. Apple tells me that it has done work to counter the drop in saturation and shift to blue that affects OLED screens traditionally. I can tell you that, compared to other OLED screens, you have to get further ‘off of center’ to see a real shift in color, holding the phone 30 degrees or more off of dead on. But it is still there.”

Despite that caution, Panzarino still praised the screen. “From the front-ish though? Woof. It’s good. At a brightness of 640 nits, the view-ability is insane in the sun — much, much better than the iPhone 8 LCD. It’s hard to capture via photograph to be honest (though we tried), but in person you’ll be impressed by how easy it is to use in direct light. . . . That, coupled with the True Tone tech, makes images look better and brighter on the iPhone X than any other Apple device, iMac included.”

Ulanoff also sang its praises. “You have never seen such bright, touchable colors or inky blacks on an iPhone handset, nor have you ever seen an iPhone screen hug the virtually bezel-less edge and corners of a device the way the iPhone X does. Those corners of the screen are all curves — a first in iPhone history. Do not let Apple iPhone 8 owners hold their screen next to the iPhone X’s, unless you want to see grown-ups cry,” he said.

We noticed the difference in screens first when using iOS 11’s new Quick Start fea-

ture to set up the iPhone X from an older iPhone. But I wasn’t blown away by the screen until I played “Mad Max: Fury Road” in its 4K HDR glory. Wowza.

Cameras -- Finally, although the cameras in the iPhone X aren’t significantly better than those in the iPhone 8 Plus, the reviewers still came away with favorable impressions.

If you’re a photo buff, I highly recommend reading Panzarino’s review in its full glory so you can see all the great Disneyland shots he took. He was especially impressed with the telephoto lens and front-facing camera, saying “As I bummed around the park testing the iPhone X, I found myself defaulting to the 2x mode a lot. This allowed for some great sharp captures inside rides at a zoom that simply weren’t possible before. I’ve gotten lucky a handful of times with phones in the past, but never with a telephoto lens. The train vignettes, Pirates and other rides are so incredibly dark and dramatically lit that they’re a huge stress test for a zoom lens on a phone. The results were very impressive.”

He also pointed out an interesting way in which the iPhone X improves on the iPhone 8 Plus. “The one other big addition to your camera bag on the iPhone X is the TrueDepth camera on the front. This selfie upgrade allows for Face ID to work, but also enables Portrait Mode for selfies. The effects are the same as on the back dual-lens system, but with the accurate depth map provided by the dot projector, Apple is able to do it with a ‘single’ camera.”

Nguyen also praised the improved telephoto lens: “The difference in the X is that its telephoto lens has a better f/2.4 aperture (vs. f/2.8 in the 8 Plus) to let in more light. It also has optical image stabilization, which reduces blur from hand shakiness, on its telephoto lens. (The 8 Plus only has stabilization on the wide-angle, and the X has it on both.)”

Ulanoff shared similar sentiments but pointed out that Apple isn’t alone in making a good smartphone camera. “The iPhone X rear dual camera is the best camera I’ve used on a smartphone. It takes excellent wide and 2x optical zoom photos in a wide variety of conditions. However,

increasingly, the playing field is leveling out as Samsung lowers the color saturation to a more real-world vibe, Portrait Mode becomes more common, and upstarts like Google prove they can learn from everyone else and start off strong. No one will be disappointed with the iPhone X’s photographic capabilities, but be prepared to get in more than one argument about which smartphone has the best camera. I still prefer Apple’s, though.”

We haven’t had time to test the iPhone X’s cameras in any real way, so we won’t try to expand on the reviewers’ opinions in this category.

Summing Up -- In short, the iPhone X’s early reviews are outstanding, and our experiences so far match up pretty well. The iPhone X is an amazing device, but it’s aimed at those who are willing to pay top price for the latest technologies. The \$999 price is most often quoted, but that’s for only the 64 GB model without AppleCare+. Spring for the 256 GB model and add AppleCare+ and tax, and your bill can exceed \$1400. Ouch.

We do recommend AppleCare+, despite its \$199 price tag. As noted in “[Even iPhone X Repairs Are Expensive](#)” (30 October 2017), repairs for the iPhone X will be costly without it, and given all the new technology it uses, it’s more likely that something will go wrong than in a well-tested design like the iPhone 8. The glass back is a mixed blessing in that regard — it makes the iPhone X less slippery than the aluminum-backed iPhone 6 and 7, but it stands [little chance of surviving even a short drop](#) onto a hard surface if it does slip from your hand.

Chances are, if you want an iPhone X, you already ordered one. But if you’re on the fence, have the money to burn, and don’t mind a bit of a wait, it’s a worthwhile upgrade from even an iPhone 7. On the other hand, sticking with the tried-and-true iPhone 8 this year until Apple and third-party developers work out any kinks is also an entirely rational approach.

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Membership Benefits

Monthly Meetings

This is where the excitement begins. On the third Saturday of each month, members of HAAUG meet for a day filled with activities, including presentations by major software and hardware vendors, special interest group (SIG) meetings, raffles, and much, much more. Swap Meets are held twice each year, in January and July.

Social Media & Internet Presence

The HAAUG web site at <http://www.haaug.org> is the place to go for up-to-date information on what we are doing. In addition, there is a [HAAUG group on Facebook](#), where people can go to interact with fellow HAAUG members on topics of interest related to Apple and its products.

Club Magazine

Club and industry news, meeting information and special member offers are published in our monthly newsletter – The Apple Barrel, which is available to members on the HAAUG website in Adobe PDF format.

Mentor Program

The HAAUG Mentor Program puts people with hardware, software, system or network problems in contact with volunteers who can provide solutions. Contact with the mentors can be made through the HAAUG Hotline, e-mail, or at the monthly meetings.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

People with common interests, including Macintosh and OS X basics, iOS, Internet, games, educational computing, databases, publishing, graphics, desktop video, programming and more gather for in-depth discussion, product demonstrations, tutorials and general knowledge sharing.

HAAUG Hotline

Call the HAAUG Hotline at 832-305-5999 for the latest meeting information and to leave voice mail for officers.

Lots of Fun & Friendships

HAAUG is a not-for-profit volunteer group founded in 1978, three years before there was an IBM PC. Approximately 200 members enjoy the benefits of HAAUG. We range from beginners to experts, but we all know the secret to making our computers more valuable: a HAAUG membership!

Learn more about the benefits of HAAUG membership at www.haaug.org.

Join by Mail

Please print out and complete the following form. Send a check or money order payable to HAAUG and mail it to the address shown below. Dues for regular members are \$35 per year. Student memberships are available for full-time students at a high school, community college or university for the rate of \$10 per year.

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Do you know someone who would be willing to join HAAUG? Y | N

Would you be willing to volunteer in HAAUG?

