

Asus' next ROG Ally will be the ROG Ally X

The Asus ROG Ally was the first true Steam Deck challenger; while I'd argue it fell a little short, it legitimately improved the state of affordable Windows handheld gaming with its plugged-in performance boosts and smooth variable refresh rate screen. Now, Asus is beginning to reveal its successor: the ROG Ally X.

Don't call it an Ally 2: when it ships in the second half of the year, the Windows-based Ally X will have the same AMD Z1 Extreme chipset and the same 7-inch 48–120Hz VRR screen. It's not quite like the Steam Deck OLED, where Valve got AMD to revise its chip for better battery life and stability and added a larger, brighter, gorgeous new OLED panel with improved response time and slimmer bezels.

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But the newly black-colored handheld *will* have a substantial battery life improvement, Asus SVP Shawn Yen tells *The Verge* – because Asus will cram a substantially larger battery pack into the Ally X's revised shell. "We're not looking at 30 to 40 percent more capacity," he tells me. "We're looking at way more than that."

Asus won't talk specific specs today. Instead, Yen asks me how much battery life I'd realistically like from a revised handheld. I say I'd want to double the worst-case battery life to three hours since I'm currently seeing maybe 1.5 hours in intensive games. "It won't disappoint your worst-case scenario," he tells me.

Yen says battery life has been the single biggest request since launch; Asus has seen how the community sometimes straps giant external batteries to their handhelds, even though the Ally theoretically had room inside for a larger battery pack.

“When we launched [the original Ally], we didn’t have such a clear understanding that the battery might be something people desire more than a lighter-weight device,” he admits.

Battery isn’t the only change Asus is talking about today; the Ally X is about addressing many of the community’s top priorities for how to revise the original. “We think about battery and storage, graphics and memory, ports... our goal is to fit as many of those as possible into a device like this,” says Asus senior product manager Gabriel Meng.

Again, no specs today, but Asus says the Ally X should now have more than its current 16GB of RAM so that you can allocate lots of it to the GPU without impacting the rest of the system. It should have a longer M.2 2280 SSD slot, so buyers can more easily find and purchase larger SSD upgrades than the current M.2 2230 allows.

The Ally X should also be even more repairable, with redesigned joystick modules that are more interchangeable – and upgradable, I imagine, if Gulikit steps up? While I didn’t get to see it for myself, Asus says the handheld will be slightly heavier due to the larger battery, with revised grips, and slight tuning to things like the D-Pad, joysticks, and triggers.

Above: a video showing the inside of the original ROG Ally.

And, while Asus still won’t admit that the Ally’s SD card reader ever had any fault, tells me it’s the same exact SD card reader it uses in its laptops, and says it doesn’t believe any issues actually had to do with overheating, the Ally X will have a rearranged motherboard layout that sounds like it’ll move it away from the system’s vents. “We don’t

want people to think that's what we *had* to do," Meng says of moving the SD reader. "We had to move things around the board to make them fit."

Asus says the Ally X's improvements will come at a cost; unlike the Steam Deck OLED, which largely replaced Valve's LCD model at the same price points, the Ally X will start at a higher price than the original. The original 2023 ROG Ally will also continue to stick around and may see discounts.

As far as a ROG Ally 2 goes, Asus agrees that it has a similar philosophy to Valve: it wants to build a true successor when it can offer a significant performance boost, not just an incremental one.

And while Asus doesn't plan to sell an aftermarket battery upgrade for original Ally buyers it has a big software update coming for those buyers as well: Armory Crate SE 1.5 is not only a very fresh coat of paint and navigation improvements – it'll finally let players share their button mappings for various games with other Ally owners.

Asus tells me it still believes in Windows. While Meng says, "We are very open-minded to looking at other solutions," and that the company does have conversations with Valve, Asus says it has philosophical and logistical reasons to stick with Microsoft's OS, including a desire to have the "inclusiveness of all different game platforms" instead of relying on Steam. I'll tell you about some of the logistical reasons in a future story.

Asus says it'll formally announce the ROG Ally X on June 2nd.

<https://www.theverge.com/24152945/asus-rog-ally-handheld-gaming-pc-2024-revision>