Samsung’s rumored Galaxy S21 phone lineup is starting to make sense

The crush of new hardware to review and discuss is beginning to wind down, but there are a few more gadgets to talk about over the next week. Believe it or not, though, it’s also time to start talking about 2021’s consumer tech. No, not CES, but Samsung. The company is widely expected to hold its Galaxy S21 event in January instead of the usual March.

How come? I don’t have any good guesses, but I think I’d be skeptical about COVID-related reasons. Samsung can move remarkably fast in bringing new products to market, but I bet its flagships are planned much earlier than things like the Galaxy S20 FE.

Since our perception of time has become cattywampus, I do want to remind you that Samsung’s Galaxy S20 and S20 Plus were two of the best Android phones released this year. (The S20 Ultra not so much.) Samsung was early out of the gate with 5G, had excellent battery life, few problems, and in general felt wholly under-appreciated by people who pay attention to gadgets here in the US.

I only bring it up because the timing of the next version is likely to accelerate the trend of taking Samsung phones for granted, since they’ll be eight months old by the time the next iPhones come around.

In any case, today we got a cache of details on the specs of the Samsung Galaxy S21 from Max Weinbach at *Android Police*. Most of the details aren’t especially surprising – Qualcomm

will continue to make new versions of its chips and Samsung will do the same with Exynos. The screens will continue to be huge.

> *There are three S21 models expected– a standard, a Plus and an Ultra. According to* ***Android Police****, the S21 will have a 6.2-inch display, the Plus will be 6.7 inches and the Ultra will reportedly have a 6.8-inch display.*

One notable rumor is that the Galaxy S21 Ultra model will support the S Pen. The S21 Ultra apparently won't have a silo for the stylus, though – users will need to figure out another way to carry it, likely in a case.

Meanwhile, Weinbach tweeted that Samsung's 2021 lineup will include the S21 line, two Z Folds, and a Z Flip – implying that the Folds would also have S Pen support. That last part is not really a surprise as Samsung said that it wanted to add stylus support to the Fold 3 at the launch of the Fold 2. Samsung also said that it would continue to bet heavily on foldables and 5G.

Notice what device isn't on that list? The Galaxy Note. It's led to speculation that Samsung will retire the Note line and instead have its high-end devices be the Fold and the S21 Ultra. There is a lot of overlap between Samsung's Galaxy Notes and Galaxy S phones, so this wouldn't be the wildest idea. The Note is also beloved, however, and I'm not sure asking people to buy a separate stylus is likely to endear them. Then again, if you want a stylus, where else will there be to really go?

The Note has been in a lot of odd positions over the last few years. It went from being the absolute flagship that led with specs to exploding and being recalled to being just another version of the Galaxy S line but with a stylus.

In 2020, Samsung began to redefine what its flagship, halo

devices would be, focusing on the Fold and the new Ultra phones. In 2021, I think that will become even more clear. I just hope that Samsung will find a way to bring the cost down on its folding phones.

I also hope the Note line continues, though, even though we don't particularly need it to be the most powerful Android phone anymore — we just need a place to put the stylus.

Electric vehicle prices are going up

 Harley-Davidson's new electric bikes look incredible — but they won't be cheap. "Cheap" is a relative term in the e-bike world, but Andrew Hawkins is right that a range between $3,400 and $5,000 is definitely not on the low end of the market. However, if these bikes run as well as they look, they could be worth the cost.

> *Are those good prices? It's hard to say without any time in the saddle, but when combined with the specs and part listing for each bike, it seems to indicate that these will be well-crafted machines that definitely deserve a much closer look. They are certainly more expensive than popular brands like VanMoof, Rad Power Bikes, Sondors, and others. But they will be competitive with major bike makers like Specialized, Giant, and Trek. And the Harley-Davidson badge has an inherent value among some customers on its own.*

 Tesla reportedly won't sell the $35,000 Model 3 anymore.

> *Musk's plan to make a $35,000 Model 3 never really came to fruition, thanks to the company's well-documented "production hell." Today, the Model 3 Standard Range Plus starts at*

> *$37,990, the Long Range starts at $46,990, and the Performance starts at $54,990.[…] This is not to say that Musk has completely abandoned his plan for an affordable electric car. Thanks to the company's new "tabless" battery cells, as well as changing the materials inside the cell, Musk said Tesla will be able to "halve" the price per kilowatt-hour, which will make electric cars roughly the same price as combustion engine ones, Musk said during the company's recent battery event. That should allow it to sell an EV for $25,000.*

 Here's how much Rivian's electric truck and SUV will cost when they come out in 2021.

> *Special "launch" editions of both vehicles will come first, starting with $75,000 for the R1T truck and $77,500 for the R1S SUV. Both will come with 300 miles of range. A 400-mile battery pack for the R1T will be available in January 2022, Rivian says. […] These prices represent a slight increase over what the company originally announced back in 2018.*

Apple reviews and news

 Apple macOS 11 Big Sur review: a long time coming. Glad to hear it is going well for Monica Chin, whose review is great. It's still worth checking on any big and important apps you currently depend on, though. Overall I don't mind the visual changes, but they tell me that the Mac would be just fine with a touchscreen. It doesn't have to be a complete overhaul of the entire system, it just needs to be an option for some quick things. I hope Apple stops being so obstinate about this someday.

> *Apple really seems to have ironed out the numerous bugs that popped up during the surprisingly rough beta period, and the final release is quite stable without any major problems.*

> *There also aren’t any hugely disruptive changes like Catalina’s removal of 32-bit app support.*

 Apple responds to privacy concerns over Mac software security process. This whole situation has highlighted the worst of Apple’s tendency not to communicate technical details as clearly as it ought to. I’m glad Apple has cleared it up and I’m ecstatic that it will allow users to opt out. That’s how the Mac should be.

> *In its updated support document, Apple makes clear that security checks it makes when authenticating software do not include a user’s Apple ID or device identity. The company also says it’s stopped logging IP addresses associated with the Developer ID certificate checks. “We have never combined data from these checks with information about Apple users or their devices,” writes the iPhone-maker. “We do not use data from these checks to learn what individual users are launching or running on their devices.”*

> *However, something about these complaints do seem to have registered with Apple, as the company says it’s changing how it handles these checks in the future. Over the next year the company says it will roll out a new encrypted protocol for developer ID certificate checks while adding “strong protections against server failure” – that is, protections against the issues that stopped apps from opening last week. Finally, users will also be given the option of opting out of these security protections all together*

Smart TV news

 Samsung’s new Smart Monitor is like a TV for your PC. A lot of people just want to use their monitor as their single display anyway, so adding smart TV apps to one makes sense!

 HBO Max is finally coming to Amazon Fire TV devices.

> *The looming question hanging over the announcement is whether this means a deal with Roku, the other major streaming aggregator on which HBO Max is currently absent, will be announced soon. Both WarnerMedia and Roku have publicly said many times they want to work on a deal as quickly as possible.*

 Hulu with Live TV increasing its price to $65 a month. Another over-the-top TV service with a price hike.

 SpaceX Crew-1 team harnesses the Force by bringing Baby Yoda with them to space.

https://www.theverge.com/2020/11/17/21570706/samsung-galaxy-s21-phones-leaks-rumors