

The Humane AI Pin is a bizarre cross between Google Glass and a pager

reader comments

79 with

- The Humane AI Pin. It has a magnetic back, so it sticks to your clothing like a name tag.
- It comes in white, black, and white and black.
- Normally there would be clothing in the middle of these two pieces.

Not since Magic Leap has a “next-generation” hardware company been so hyped while showing so little. Everyone in the tech world has been freaking out about this new pocket protector thing that wants to “replace your smartphone.” It’s called the “Humane AI Pin.” As far as we can tell, it’s a \$700 screenless voice assistant box and, like all smartphone-ish devices released in the last 10 years, it has some AI in it. It’s as if Google Glass had a baby with a pager from the 1990s.

It’s a voice assistant box, so that means it has a microphone and speaker. There’s no hot word, and it’s not always listening, so you’ll be pressing a button to speak to it, and you’ll get a response back. There’s also a camera, and because you’re expected to mount this on your clothing at chest level via a magnetic back piece, you’ll be creepily pointing a camera at everyone the whole time you’re using it. It claims to be “screenless,” but it has a pretty cool 720p laser

projection system that seems to function as a fine monochrome screen that projects a smartwatch-like UI onto your hand. It shows some super basic UI elements, like a circular media player or a scrolling wall of text. A few hand gestures, like tapping your fingers together, will let you interact with it.

Despite claiming to be able to replace a smartphone, the Humane AI Pin is going back to the Dark Ages and not supporting *any* apps. We've seen so many devices live and die by their app ecosystems, and the matter-of-fact quote from the presentation was, "We don't do apps." You'll be locked into whatever features and services Humane has built into the Android-based "Cosmos" OS. So if you want to play music, it needs to be from Tidal, a service with 0–2 percent market share, because that's who the Humane people have partnered with. It's unclear if there is any other third-party functionality other than that. Humane's "Cosmos" page shows logos for Slack and then logos from Microsoft and Google, which could mean anything.

Advertisement

- With no screen, the poor AI Pin can only communicate to the outside world via a cryptic light show.
- Some more lights to keep track of.

Not having a screen, or at least not prioritizing the laser projector screen, means you'll be doing a lot of work to understand what the pin is trying to tell you. There are two different lights on the device—a front one and a top one—that each blinks five or six different colors that all communicate some kind of state, so that's 11 color/location combinations to keep track of. Without a touchscreen, input is also an esoteric affair, with seven tap or swipe gestures you can perform on the front of the pin for things like answering a phone call and changing media tracks. Rather than just seeing and tapping things on a screen, the interaction guide reads like you'll be learning a second language. As much as it looks

like a pager, a one-line text output on top of the device would have gone a long way for status communication.

As for the hardware specs, this is an aluminum and glass box that runs some kind of eight-core, 2.1 GHz Qualcomm processor. It comes with 4GB of RAM and 32GB of storage. You keep it on your shirt with a magnetic clip that goes on the inside of your shirt, and while this back part is a low-profile magnet, there's also a "battery booster" back that is fatter and will wirelessly transfer electricity through your shirt. With no power-hungry screen, this is probably very light on battery usage. It comes with a battery booster and an exact copy of the AirPods charging case, which will store and charge the main unit.

I suspect the processor model is not listed because it's a cheap one. It's hard to know exactly how much processing the AI pin is doing. The spec sheet mentions "accelerated on-device AI," but the presentation says AI responses are "streamed," so presumably, it's not doing much voice processing. They also save a ton of processing power by not needing to keep up with a high-fidelity display. Considering that the cheapest Apple Watch is surely faster than this, must pay for an expensive display, and still comes in at \$300, it's hard to see where the \$700 price tag comes from.

<https://arstechnica.com/?p=1982491>