Who is Apple’s rumored OLED iPad Pro for?

Earlier this year, there were enough rumors about imminent new Apple products to make for a big spring event, but the company instead announced its new M3 MacBook Airs via press release — and new iPads haven’t shown up since. Today, Mark Gurman writes in his *Power On* newsletter for *Bloomberg* that the big spring iPad update, which includes new OLED iPad Pros, is due on May 6th — about 19 months since the last one.

But why upgrade? My 2021 model still feels like new, and I know at least one person who says the same of the 2018 iPad Pro. Unless it does more than what’s been rumored, which is precious little at this point in the grand scheme of things, it narrows who it’s for to just the very specific subset of people who like iPadOS a *lot* and would shell out for a good, contrasty OLED screen. But what if it just embraced the fact that it’s essentially a laptop with a touchscreen?

That could steal some thunder from the Pro since not everybody cares that much about OLED or high refresh rates — a bigger screen is arguably worth more than fancy display technology. The iPad Pro is an ultra-portable productivity device, and a fancy Magic Keyboard reinforces that idea. But for now, it has one USB-C port and runs iPadOS, which still feels limited, despite multitasking features Apple has added, like Stage Manager.

The 12.9-inch 2022 model is already $1,099 for 128GB of storage and 8GB of RAM. The same money will get you a M3 MacBook Air with 256GB of memory, a bigger screen, a built-in keyboard and trackpad, and an operating system with four-decades-and-counting of software ecosystem support and

evolution behind it. The next iPad Pro may be even more expensive. You'd really have to like iPadOS to pick the former over the latter.

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Federico Viticci, who's known for being an iPad power user, said recently that using macOS in a virtual display alongside visionOS apps (which presumably included some iPad apps) "felt powerful and flexible in a way that iPadOS hasn't made me feel in a while." That was in a fun *MacStories* article last month about his experience making a bizarre FrankenPad out of an iPad Pro and a headless MacBook.

At $3,500, the Vision Pro is no immediate threat to the iPad Pro, but Viticci's story highlights the tablet's vulnerability. Even if iPad productivity isn't your bag, it's great for casual, personal content consumption. If the Vision Pro can take that job over, then the iPad really needs something fresh. One thing Apple could do is make the iPad Pro a true hybrid.It's already a great secondary display for my MacBook Air.

Apple has shown in the past few years it's willing to give people a little bit of what they ask for by returning HDMI and SD card ports to the MacBook Pro. I say bring that energy to the iPad. Give it one more USB-C port and — while I'm here asking for things that probably won't happen but would be awesome if they did — let it dual-boot macOS and iPadOS.

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