

# Soulful Feeling

Samsung's next flagship handset is their U900 (Soul). With a slick metal finish, silky smooth slider and 5 Megapixel camera, it's a highly featured product that they say also provides the ultimate in minimalism.

Samsung has high hopes for the U900; so high that it will be supported by their largest marketing budget for a single handset - ever.

Continually reinvesting for growth, Samsung is now firmly in second place, both in our mobile market and globally. Sales volume has increased considerably, breaking away from the next couple of vendors. And in a true Korean spirit, the company is still hungry for more.

### Look & Feel

Moving back to the U900, it's a stylish slider, feeling more like a premium object than just a gadget. The use of genuine metal adds a feeling of quality. This gives the U900 a slightly weighty dimension - like a premium watch or expensive pen.

Samsung say they were looking for the cool, solid, textured feel that metal provides.

A minimalist look is achieved through smooth, shiny surfaces when the phone goes to sleep. On opening, a bright screen and coloured lights bring it to life.

At only 12.9 mm thick it can be classed as slim, but Samsung believe that their U900 is more than just a stylish handset. Rich features on the inside give it depth and utility.

### Buttons & Controls

Something relatively unique about this product, is what Samsung call a 'magical touch window'. Similar in concept to a laptop scratchpad, it provides touch control. But the U900's magical window goes a step further, offering a wide range of options in a context-sensitive way. Up to five different icons appear in the magical window, and change according what you're trying to do.

Take for example when in camera mode. The window provides shortcuts to photo light, exposure, timer and macro controls.

If you're using the phone's calculator, options to add, subtract, multiply, divide and tally are shown.

Play controls display when listening to music.

In regular idle mode, options shown are music player, phonebook, internet, create message and main menu.

When moving around the main menu, four directional arrows appear, with OK (enter/return) in the middle - enabling general scrolling in that mode.

The unit gently vibrates each time you move around to provide feedback and indicates presses have been made.

Amber is the default colour for magical window icons but can be changed if you like. Icon shadows can be adjusted in colour as well.

Swapping preset shortcuts according to personal preference is also possible. We replaced the internet shortcut with one linked to the phone's alarm for example.

Samsung say they've made their U900 easier to use, as context-sensitive shortcuts make it more 'intuitive'.

### Calls & SMS

A loud ringer makes alerts chirpy and it plays MP3 tones for both calls and messages.

The U900's keypad is pretty tactile, meaning fast SMSing. Fonts are large and easy to read.

One area that could be improved is having full screen photo caller ID, rather than just displaying a tiny thumbnail. Hopefully a running change will render caller photos much larger.

### Camera

Even though our sample wasn't a final version, its camera performed pretty well. Have a look at our shootout on pages 20-24 to see for yourself.

Imaging abilities stem from a 5 Megapixel camera with auto focus, face detection and image stabiliser.

As mentioned in other Previews, face detection is becoming a common feature in camera phones. It makes sense because camera phones are usually used around people, so why not make faces look clearer?

Another imaging enhancement is what Samsung calls a WDR optimiser, which adjusts shots suffering from harsh light conditions.

For after-hours fun, a LED (not Xenon) flash helps illuminate scenes at night.

### Entertainment

A nice music player is included, with track info shown as part of an active desktop when on standby. Tracks can be rated to help sort by preference. An ICEpower amplifier by Bang & Olufsen is also integrated for better sound quality.

And when you get bored with listening to your own music collection, an FM radio inside provides greater diversity.

Samsung has pre-installed ShoZu - which makes uploading photos to Facebook and blogs a lot easier.

### Connections

One of the faster 3.5g products around, this handset is no slouch when connecting online. Perhaps the equivalent of Mercedes SL Roadster - built stylishly solid, but capable of reaching high speed.

There's a web connect icon by default on the idle screen and full size web pages can be viewed using a robust browser.

Bluetooth is another way of connecting, with a microSD slot working with up to 8 Gig cards in our tests.

### Impression

Primarily aimed at stylistas and professionals aged in their mid twenties to thirties, the U900 is aesthetically pleasing, feels good to hold and comes with a wide range of features.

Samsung will be spending up in promoting the product, which should gain awareness and help grow a reputation for being a leader in mobiles.



Actual size



(Left) Here's a sample photo taken with the U900 in macro mode. It's a 5 Megapixel shot that can be printed at the width of this magazine page. Other sample photos taken with the U900 can be seen on pages 20-24.



We simulated the effect of Samsung's Wide Dynamic Range (WDR) capabilities here. In the before shot at the top you can see the results with no adjustments of a picture taken with strong backlighting. Samsung are implementing WDR technology into the U900 and the results when taking the same shot should be similar to the lower photo.



See how the magical touch window brings up calculator icons, acting as context-sensitive shortcuts, helping multiply the numbers above.



And here, camera shortcuts appear in the magical touch window when taking a photo.



Or music controls when playing tracks. The U900 is intuitive, matching shortcuts with what you're doing.



Five different options generally appear in the magical touch window. Here, when in the main menu, they're just scroll keys and OK in the middle.



Or direct access to ring tones, phone book, alarm clock and compose message. The default icon colour is amber as above.



You can change icons' colour if you wish. Notice a colour slider bar on the phone screen. You can change magical window icons to any of these colours.



And on screen is the option to change magical window shortcuts around. We replaced a web shortcut with one to the alarm clock.