

Review: LG Watch Urbane Has Great Design, Missing Features

By **Swapnil Bhartiya** - May 19, 2015



Being an early adopter of anything and everything Linux, I was quick to order the LG Watch Urbane available on Google Store. It was the most expensive watch around, there were no detailed review design.

A reluctant buyer

Initially I never planned to buy a smartwatch as I didn't see it anything more than an accessory. One thing that sold me to LG's Urbane was the design. I am a watch wearer and love my Seiko my Seiko. Since I've never used a smartwatch I did want to give it a try.

The first look

I should not be talking about the packaging of the device... but this was one of the best looking packages for a Linux-powered device. The moment you see it in the box you know you want to wear it.

The hardware

I like the 'watch-like' design of Urbane, but it's a matter of taste. At least it doesn't look like an around your wrist. It looks like a watch.

The watch comes with a PPG (photoplethysmography) sensor to monitor the rate of blood flow

pumping action. This hardware powers the heartbeat monitor of the watch. It also has a 9-axis sensor on the screen when a user looks at the watch.

It's powered by a 1.2 GigaHertz Quad Core processor, 512 Megabytes of RAM and 4 Gigabytes of storage. It has a bigger 410 Milli Amp Hours (mAh) battery as compared to 205 mAh powering the Apple Watch. It has the best displays; its 1.3-inch P-OLED display with 320×320 pixel (245PPI) resolution. The display is made of Gorilla Glass 3.

The watch has a button, like the dials of a watch, which is used as an on/off switch as well as a crown. It comes with a 'genuine leather' strap. It's the standard 22mm strap so unlike the Apple Watch, you can use it on your watch.

There is a built-in microphone which is used for input. It comes with Bluetooth and WiFi chips for connectivity.

iFixit did a [teardown of the watch](#) and found it to be a much more elegant, and easy to repair, than the glued down Apple Watch.

The software

Android has been ahead of Apple's iOS for a while and Android Wear is no exception. The watch runs on Android Wear. As usual, contrary to the Apple Watch, it puts the user in control of the device.

While there are zero third-party watch faces for Apple Watch, on LG Watch Urbane there are at least 100 watch faces. You can go to the Play Store and install as many watch faces as you want. As a result, you can choose a watch to suit your personality or the occasion. Going to the gym? Get the fitness watch face. Go to work or choose a sober one for the office.



It's all about swipes

It's all about gestures. When you swipe the screen from the top to bottom you access system s remaining battery and other settings. Other settings include changing it to the theater mode, w in a movie theater or any similar event enjoying a show. This mode not only turns the screen o so that your watch won't light up in the dark room every now and then. In the theater mode th tilt it or touch it once. There are many different settings to further enhance this feature. It's als while enjoying a movie or play, etc.

Another setting option is brightness boost. If you are outdoors and can't see the screen, you can boost the brightness, though it will devour your battery faster. I didn't have any problems reading the screen without boosting the brightness. I wish there was an ambient sensor like Moto 360 which would adjust the screen automatically.

Then there are system settings which will give you complete access to system settings including screen brightness, change watch face, restart or shut down the watch or restore to the factory settings.

When you swipe the screen from the bottom to top, you access the great Google Now cards and dismiss them by swiping to the right. This is where Android does a much better job than iPO/A from apps and email. I can see the status of Amazon orders and my watch vibrates the momer moment UPS delivers it to my door. It will keep you updated with events added to the Google C

If your order from Amazon has been shipped or delivered you will get a notification on your wa will buzz on your watch.

To access all installed apps you have to swipe from right to left. Here you will see all the apps t You can open any app by tapping on it once and to get out of the app, just push the dial once.

How to install apps

First of all when you start the watch for the first time it will ask you to pair it with a phone. You installed on the supported smartphone. The initial pairing will be done over Bluetooth so you ne smartphone. Once it is paired and synced to your device, you can start installing apps from you Android Wear app on your phone and search for the apps.

Different apps work differently. You can use the Amazon app to search for an item and place th without having to pull out the phone. You can do a quick Google search using Ok Google and ge where I found the watch to come in handy, for example if I were taking a walk and wanted to c question to my watch and it gave me the answer without needing the phone. The screen is big weather and sending out a quick message are a few things that the watch does great. I am wai watch so I don't have to use my phone to control the temperature in my home.

It's extremely easy to change watch faces. You do need your phone to install new watch faces.

on your phone and then install the desired watch faces. You can set the current face either from holding the home screen of the watch.

Battery life

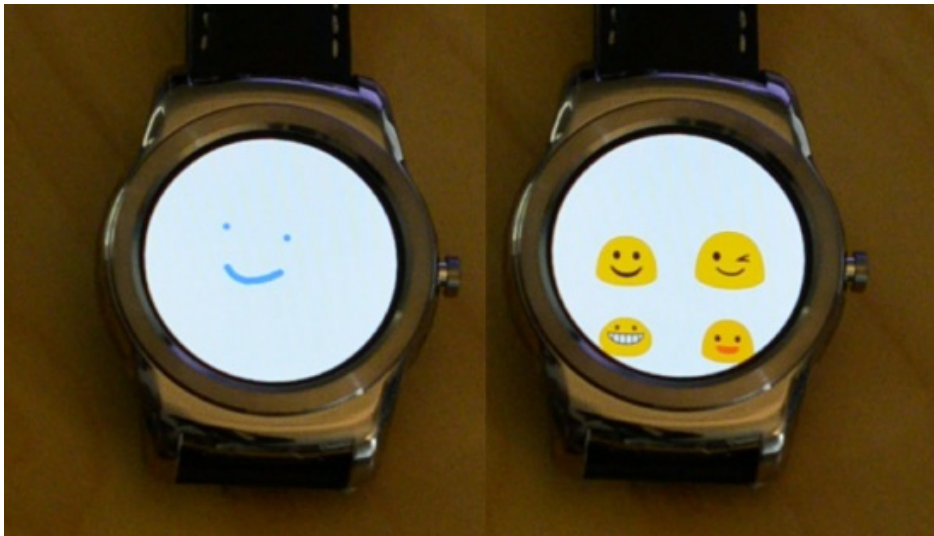
I was able to get more than 18 hours of battery life after some tweaking. Just make sure to rec limited them to calls, sms, messages and important emails. Notifications seem to be the biggest the screen.

What can it do

You can make calls, but the watch itself won't make a call; it will open the dialer on the phone. I have no problem with it, but in most cases I use Google Hangout for the calls and the watch c the cellular network or VoIP to make the call. That's where I am envious of Apple Watch as it ca watch. That's certainly what I would want from my Linux watch.

The camera app allows you to control the camera of your Android phone; a tap on the watch sc

Sending emoji was never this easy. You can draw and emoji on the watch using your finger, it v drawing! It works really well.



The fitness app allows you to monitor your heartbeats. There are two apps installed by default Pulse app. You can download third party apps as well.

You can play music on the phone, using the bluetooth headphones, or you can use it as a remo your phone.

You can quickly take notes by using the apps like Google Keep, and you can also manage Wunc these to be useless in a practical scenario because if I want to take down notes during a meetir

the watch, I would be silently keying it on my phone using a keyboard.

I can easily record the whole content of the meeting. There are many voice recording apps for

One cool app on the watch is find my phone, which will ring your phone if you can't find it. And a lot once you start using the watch as you won't be carrying your phone around.

What's Wifi doing on my watch

The latest version of Android Wear brings WiFi support to smart watches. It's a great feature. I can configure the wifi on the watch. It automatically pulls the wifi info from the paired device and connects without having to enter password. The wifi kicks in when you move out of the bluetooth range so you can get updates and notifications; you can continue to use the watch because it's using the network.

However, given that the watch can't do much on its own; you would rather not leave your phone at home. When you are away from the watch you can send messages using the device.

What it can't do

I was very excited about GPS navigation using the watch, but I was disappointed. I can search for locations and it opens the GPS on the phone and not the watch. I am not sure whether the watch can be used with Samsung 360 or Apple Watch. Not being able to make calls from the watch is another deal breaker for me.

It's not just Android watch

The limitations I pointed out are not limited to LG Watch Urbane, the reviewers of Apple Watch also point out what it still can't do. Hardcore Apple fans are suggesting to wait for the next version of Apple Watch. Google will up the game and stay ahead Apple, as they have so far.

Google I/O is coming up and I am looking forward to some major improvements to Android Wear compared to iOS due to its open-ness, more control to users and the power of Google Now. However, Google will move with their first Android Watch and there are some features that we certainly want in a smartwatch.

LG is planning to bring a more standalone smartwatch which will have built-in LTE and be able to make calls but it's not powered by Android. It's powered by LG's own proprietary OS and I am certainly not interested in proprietary technology.

I would rather see LG investing in Android Wear so users can not only benefit from the constant updates and software in Google Play Store, but also have the confidence that buying an Android watch from LG as LG may not be fully committed to it.

To buy or not to buy?

Let's be clear: currently smartwatches are mere extensions of your smartphones. You do need things. I totally get that one device can't replace the functionality of the other. A desktop is my than 90 percent of my productive hours on there. There are many things that my Nexus 6, Nex not expecting the watch to change that, but there are many tasks that can be easily performed have to pull my phone out, the more reasons there will be to invest in a watch which costs mor

In my opinion the LG Watch Urbane is like a knock on the door; it will tell you that someone is walk to the door and open it to greet your guest. Or, in other words, you will still need to pull y task.

Now the question is: Are you are willing to pay for that knock on the door?

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