

15 November 2007

By: Cosmin Vasile, Communications News Editor

[Nokia 6290 Review](#)

Powerful Symbian smartphone



Nokia strikes again with yet another reliable clamshell – Nokia 6290. Even if their handsets aren't so trendy, the Finnish telecommunication giant continues to impress through its solid terminals, which ensured Nokia the number 1 spot among the mobiles manufacturers over the years. The new Nokia 6290 cannot be reckoned as an improved version of an older model, even if it resembles some of the well-known handsets launched a few years ago. The bulky clamshell features a retro design and is packed with the latest technologies. Many of you will wonder why Nokia is so persistent in NOT changing its devices' look after so many years. I believe the answer has to be found in yet another question. Would you change something that sells so good? Nokia 6290 has been launched in 2006 (November) and appeared on the market early in Q1 2007. The phone is available in 2 colors, Black and Light Blue, and can be bought for around USD 380\$. **Design** Measuring 94 x 50 x 20.8 mm (closed) and weighing around 115 grams (battery included), Nokia 6290 is in no way an eye-catcher. On the contrary, the phone is big, and if this wasn't enough, it is also a little bit too heavy. Nevertheless, Nokia fans will be happy to find that the phone scores very high in terms of performance and functionality. The bulky clamshell has all the goodies that you get in a multimedia oriented handset, starting with the stereo speakers found on both sides of the phone and continuing with the music controls placed right under the secondary display. On top of the clamshell, there are 2 ports covered by plastic stripes, the charger port and the 2.5mm jack port for headphones. The right side of the phone includes the miniUSB port and volume keys, while the left side features the microSD slot card and the PTT service key. The 3 music keys under the secondary display can be used to play music without the need to unfold the clamshell. The left key opens the music library, the middle one starts the music player and the right one opens up the FM Radio. These 3 keys have a secondary use if you keep them pressed for a few seconds. The left key starts a PTT call, while the right key opens up the vocal command feature. Above the small display, you will notice a small 2 Megapixel camera, flash included. The moment you unfold Nokia 6290 you realize that you've been keeping a 'mammoth' in your hand. Fortunately, this is the main reason that you'll find the keypad very easy to use, no matter how big your fingers are. Besides the usual Symbian key that will get you directly to the Main Menu, you will notice a Multimedia key right under the big 5-way controller. Otherwise, everything else is pretty neat, with the Reject calls button which can also be used to power off/on the phone (there's no dedicated power button) and a secondary camera for video-calls placed right above the main display. The clamshell feels pretty sturdy, but looks rather cheap because of the awful plastic used. The black version looks even cheaper than the blue light version, which might attract more buyers. The front part of the phone is made from a glossy plastic, while for the cover on the back, a rubberized plastic has been used. I find that unfolding the phone with only one hand cannot be done with ease and it's very uncomfortable. Overall, Nokia 6290 looks rather cheap, but wait till you start using it and then you can judge it. **Display and Camera** Nokia 6290 features an excellent TFT display that supports up to 16M colors and 240 x 320 pixels resolution. Far superior to most of Sony Ericsson's latest T650i and K850i models and on the same level with Nokia's 5700 Xpress Music, 6290's main display scores high in most of the benchmarks. The secondary display is also a strong point of the handset, supporting up to 262k colors and 128 x 160 pixels resolution. Perfectly visible in any environment, the main screen is one of the best that Nokia usually embeds only its high-end products. Those that are expecting high quality pictures will be disappointed to find that the phone's 2 Megapixel camera doesn't have anything to do with the rest of the phone. It seems less

than mediocre and only in exceptional light conditions will users be able to take some mediocre pictures. Night picture snapshots are out of the question, as the flash and the camera module are in no way fit for this kind of activity. The maximum resolution for pictures is 1600 x 1200 pixels, while movies can be recorded using 320 x 240 pixels resolution. You can choose to use either of the 2 cameras embedded, but the maximum resolution of the secondary video-call camera is only 320 x 240 pixels for pictures and 176 x 144 pixels for clips. Unfortunately, there's no way that you can use the camera without unfolding the handset. All options and settings of the camera's interface have been used by Nokia before in many of its mobile phones models, so there's nothing much to discuss. You have the White balance feature (Sunny, Incandescent and Fluorescent), Color tone (Sepia, Black & white and Negative), Night mode and Flash (On/Off). The camera module seems to be the main drawback of the clamshell because of the low quality of the snapshots. You can see below some pictures that have been taken in different environments using different settings.

Menu and Software Nokia 6290 clamshell runs Symbian operating system version 9.2 and is based on S60 3rd Edition Feature Pack 1. The Feature Pack 1 provides 3D graphics hardware support, over-the-air (OTA) firmware support, Bluetooth 2.0 with EDR support, Flash Lite 2.0, screen turning feature that permits the user to turn the screen to landscape or portrait mode (very useful for browsing the Internet), as well as a better organization of the file cache. The Alarm clock function has been modified, thus you are being able to use multiple repeating alarms, while the time limit for voice recording has been improved from 1 minute to 1 hour. This is one of the fastest and most stable phones that come with a Symbian operating system. If you are Symbian-freak than you'll be happy to find that Nokia 6290 won't freeze and it won't lag behind. For business purposes, Nokia included the WorldMate application, which comes with Clock, Weather, Map, Flights queries and Currencies. QuickOffice package will only let users read documents, but you won't be able to start you own documents unless you upgrade the application (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and that will cost you. The handset also features a File manager, and the Search tool which looks for the file searched on all the phone's memory (Messages, ToDo's, e-mails, calendar events, notes, contacts) and returns results very fast. The phonebook has almost an unlimited number of entries as all the contacts can be saved onto the phone's memory. Symbian OS and Java compatible third-party applications can be installed with ease on the phone through the USB connection, just check the requirements. Navigation on the Web can be a real joy because of the big display and 3G connectivity. Those that are Symbian fans or which are used with Nokia's operating system will be a little bit annoyed by the fact that Nokia has changed localization for some applications. There's no Office menu anymore, all related stuff (Calculator, Converter, Quickoffice, Clock, PDF reader) being moved to Applications/Utilities area. Furthermore, File manager has been very well "hidden" in Settings/Data manager area instead of Office. Overall, the interface has a very low learning curve, but it could be a little tricky for heavy Symbian users.

Communication Nokia 6290 features 3G connectivity for those in need of fast data transfer speeds, but also EDGE and GPRS class 10 technologies as a much cheaper version of the UMTS. Users won't have any problems with either of the connectivities as data transfer speeds are within the parameters: 327 Kbit/s download and 287 Kbit/s upload with 3G and 181 Kbit/s download and 84 Kbit/s upload with EDGE. The clamshell also includes Bluetooth 2.0 with EDR (Enhanced Data Rate) which should support higher data transfer speeds and Infrared. We managed to reach speeds of around 100 KB/s, which is more than enough for any user. Nevertheless, the lack of A2DP compatibility is a real setback, and frankly I don't understand how you can sell such a good multimedia handset that doesn't offer users the possibility of listening to music through a Bluetooth headset. The phone is fully compatible with POP3 and IMAP accounts and lacks T9 capabilities for those that are using text-based messages heavily. Furthermore, the quad-band phone has worldwide coverage and is GSM900 / GSM1800 / GSM1900 / GSM850 / UMTS network compatible. This will simply enlarge the market of the phone and will attract consumers all over the world. After Nokia

E65 and Nokia N95 this phone has the best in-call sound, but is a little bit weaker on signal reception.

Processor and Memory Nokia's 6290 smartphone runs a very good ARM11 family processor working at speeds up to 369 Mhz. Practically this is the same CPU that was been embedded in Nokia N93 model, a little while ago. And that's another reason to believe that Nokia 6290 approaches the high-end series through its performance. The clamshell comes with 50 MB internal memory, which can be expanded through the microSD slot card up to 4GB. I have tested the phone with a 4GB card by transferring some data through miniUSB cable and everything worked fine. This should be more than enough for a large music library and photo album.

Multimedia The 2 stereo external speakers placed on both sides of the phone gave me the impression that the clamshell is a multimedia oriented device. First music experience was quite good, speakers sound very good and don't have any distortions even at higher volume. Don't expect to hear any bass vibes 'cause you won't. If I were to compare it with any other Nokia handset I'd say that it's better than N70 and N73 Music Edition, and comes right after Nokia's 5700 Xpress Music. I got the impression that the phone can easily compete with some of the best Sony Ericsson Walkman series handsets, if only it had better headphones. Nokia Headset HS-47 makes the music sound crappy; fortunately, the clamshell features a 2.5mm jack port, so you can easily attach better headphones. Besides the standard equalizer (Classical, Jazz, Pop, Rock), audio settings include Bass boost, Reverb, Balance and Stereo widening (for external speakers). The sound is exceptionally good and almost nears Nokia's 5700 model in terms of music quality. A little more bass would've made the handset one of the best music phones manufactured by Nokia. The standard music player can run MP3, M4A, AAC and eAAC+ file formats, as for the video player, it is compatible with 3GPP and MP4 files. The Stereo FM radio can memorize up to 50 radio stations and is compatible with Visual Radio service. Overall, multimedia features of 6290 clamshell are among the best embedded in a Nokia mobile phone.

Battery The handset includes a medium capacity (Li-Ion 950 mAh) BL-5F battery. The talk time that I found on Nokia's site says that it should last about 3.5 hours in talk time mode (only GSM) and about 12 days in standby mode (GSM only). For a heavy user, this phone will need daily recharging, while for a medium user one recharge in 2 days will be enough. The phone has a great functionality, thus it can be used as an MP3 player or camera, and this will drain the battery even faster. Nokia 6290 is a medium "battery drainer", which means that it's less fit for business use.

Impressions If it wasn't the bulky and old design, Nokia 6290 could've been a huge success. The phone has great potential and it's a pleasant surprise for Nokia fans. I couldn't get used to it, but the phone offers great features, most of them only available on high-end handsets.

The Good One of the best multimedia terminals, Nokia 6290 embeds the fastest and most stable operating system. There are two main targets that this phone will fully satisfy: Symbian freaks and music lovers. The former will be simply amazed by the speed of the device, while the latter can start throwing away their dedicated MP3 player, 'cause this piece is better than most of these.

The Bad The phone has an ugly look, especially the black color which gives the impression of cheapness. Even if the phone is not expensive, I can't say that it's cheap either, so the fact remains. Besides the look of the device, I should mention that a better battery would've made this phone available for a wider range of targets (for example, for businessmen too).

Sales Package Contents Nokia 6290 handset
Nokia Battery BL-5F
Nokia Standard Charger AC-4X
Nokia Headset HS-47
512 MB microSD card included
User guide and quick guide
Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com