

25 March 2008

By: Cosmin Vasile, Communications News Editor



[Nokia N95 8GB Review](#)

Nokia's all time MVP

Last year, after reviewing Nokia's N95, I thought it will take the Finnish company a long time to surpass its performances. Fortunately for Nokia fans, N95 8GB, the sequel to the older N95, has been announced in a moment when the latter already conquered the mobile phones market, which didn't take too long at all. Sales of the device registered some of the highest numbers in Nokia's history and stocks of the device were replenished more often than Nokia expected. Anyway, the announcement was made just in time to arouse the interest of the mobile freaks, not too early, to enable N95 handset to sell until all the mobile market reached a certain level of saturation, but also not too late, to keep up the interest of the N series' fans. Nokia N95 8GB received a whole range of improvements compared with its predecessor, which made it a totally different device and not just an upgrade of the N95.

Announced in August 2007, Nokia N95 8GB has been made available 2 months later, in October. The moment N95 8GB hit the market, Nokia N95's price lowered with at least 20%, which made the 8GB the most expensive N series handset sold for about 1,000 USD. Lately, both devices registered another serious drop in price, and N95 8GB can be bought now for only 800 USD.

Design

Nokia's N95 8GB design kept the same dual slide form factor, but its screen got bigger and its color changed to pure black. In terms of weight, N95 8GB got fatter, weighing 128 grams (including battery), as compared with the N95, which weighs only 120 grams. The rest of the measures are the same in both cases (99 x 53 x 21 mm), but the 2.8" display of the 8GB version gives the impression that the whole handset is a little bit bigger than the standard version.

The sliding mechanism has been slightly improved and won't permit the phone to slide up or down when it's kept in a tight pocket. That doesn't mean that your N95 8GB won't slide by mistake, but at least the probability has been lowered considerably. The grip that powered on the camera by opening the protective lenses has been removed, thus the possibility to start the camera by mistake when you put your phone in your pocket has been totally eliminated. The layout of the external keys has been also kept the same. The right side of the phone gets all the external buttons, such as: volume control, camera and gallery buttons. The left side of the phone only features the infrared port and the 3.5 mm audio output jack.

There are also two stereo speakers that can be used to listen to the radio or to the music player. On the bottom of the phone we can find the miniUSB port and the small charge port (AC4 adapter). The only thing left is the usual power button which is placed on top of the device. The back of the phone bears the Nokia logo and the 5 Megapixel camera with flash that features Carl Zeiss lenses.

The keypad looks pretty much the same as its older brother's – N95. The 5-way control key is flanked only by two other keys: the menu key and the one that controls the multimedia features of the phone. Edging all three are the usual contextual keys found in any Nokia slider. All keys are visible in dark areas through the backlighting system. When you slide down the phone, you will be able to notice the music keys used for controlling the music or video player.

Unfortunately, the same problem that I have faced with the N95 model is still troubling me now: when you slide down the phone, the screen turns to landscape mode, but when you slide it back the screen won't revert to the usual portrait mode. The only possible way to revert it back is to slide up the phone and then back, which is kind of annoying. Overall, the phone looks stylish, but serious at the same time, thanks to its black color. Anyway, those that intend to buy the 'multimedia computer' do it for features mostly and not for its look.

Display and Camera

There are few handsets that feature such a good display as Nokia N95 8GB. If you previously owned the 'older' model, N95, then you will find they are both the same: TFTs supporting 16 Million colors and 240 x 320 pixels resolution. Nevertheless, there is a 0.2" difference in size between the 2 devices, in the favor of the 8GB version. Even if small in size, the difference is huge in quality, especially as the phone comes with the Spiderman 3 movie. Overall, except for the fact that it easily catches fingerprints, the screen is probably the best on the market. The images displayed look quite amazing, while the visibility maintains above average and is not affected by strong sunlight.

The 5 Megapixel camera placed on the back of the phone features Carl Zeiss lenses, flash and autofocus capabilities. The camera module is the same as the one embedded onto the N95 standard model. I believe the N95 8GB camera is second to none and it manages to surpass Sony Ericsson's K850i in some areas. For a more in depth comparison between the 2 camera monster phones, please check the Sony Ericsson K850i review that can be found [here](#).

For those that didn't have the chance to get their hands on a Nokia N95, I will highlight some of the N95 8GB camera features. Users can take pictures just as you would do it with a normal camera, click the button halfway until you spot the green square, which means that the camera is focused, and then you can push it to the end and take the picture. The maximum resolution supported is 2582 x 1944 pixels and users can choose to shoot in 5 modes, as seen in the screenshots.

The Carl Zeiss lenses are doing a great job and users will be particularly thrilled to take shots, no matter if it's night or day. On the front of the phone, there is the secondary camera used for video calls, but also for taking self-portrait pictures (640 x 480 pixels max. resolution).

The camera functions are easy to use and intuitive, especially if you have used a digital camera before. Furthermore, the time that it takes to activate the camera has been lessened to 2-3 seconds, which is a great improvement especially when you need to capture something fast.

The camera lens protector has been removed, which means that you won't be able to activate the camera by mistake inside your pocket. Unfortunately, it also means that the camera won't be protected from scratches anymore. Movies can be captured in MP4 formats (VGA resolution at 30fps) and cannot be matched with any other handset in terms of quality (except maybe LG's Viewty). Overall, Nokia N95 8GB features one of the best (if not the best) camera module on the market in terms of performance.

Menu and Software

Nokia N95 8GB runs on Symbian 9.2 operating system with S60 3rd Edition and Feature Pack 1 interface. This Pack offers some improvements and adds some new features, like an alarm clock, vCalendar 2.0, support for 3D graphics and hardware acceleration, as well as screen turning. The repeated alarm clock offers users the wake up call whenever they want, so they won't need to buy third party applications for that purpose.

The Nokia N95 8GB comes with some of the Internet's most popular services including Yahoo! Search, Amazon's MobiPocket Reader or Flickr. The device also features widget support which enables users to customize the online content they can receive quickly on their Nokia N95 8GB. The QuickOffice applications are used for reading Word, Excel and PowerPoint files. Unfortunately, you cannot edit any files without upgrading the application, which can be done by buying the application from the Nokia Download Center.

There's also a PDF reader, a notepad, a Zip archiver, a calculator, a currency converter, a voice recorder and a barcode reader. Users will also be able to connect a keyboard to the phone by using the Bluetooth connectivity, through the Wireless keyboard application found under the Office category in the main menu. Lifeblog application is also available for bloggers that are looking to update their daily diary with pictures, videos and texts. The Phonebook can practically store an unlimited number of contacts, so don't be afraid to use it.

The Video Center can be accessed from the right key beside the 5-way control or by sliding down the phone, which will also turn the screen to landscape view. Visual radio, music player, lifeblog, web, gallery, maps or games can all be accessed from this multimedia center. Also, for those who are traveling a lot, Nokia Maps application has been offered for free to use with the built-in GPS receiver. Localization and tracking are made smoothly with no lags, better in performance than the standard N95.

The device is also compatible with Instant Messaging and VoIP applications, such as Gizmo. I had no troubles in sending IM's and making VoIP calls. Task manager is also displayed when you keep the Symbian key pressed for a few seconds, but you most certainly won't need to use it as the device is pretty fast no matter how many applications

you use at the same time.

Every flaw that made the standard N95 model unbearable to use sometimes have been corrected and N95 8GB offers a smooth and fast experience with no lockups or lags whatsoever. The device is fully compatible with any Symbian S60 3rd Edition applications, so you can easily improve the functionality of your N95 8GB by downloading some of these programs from our [database](#).

Communications

Nokia N95 8GB kept the same specifications in terms of communication as its N95 standard predecessor. The device is quad band GSM (850 / 900 / 1800 / 1900), HSDPA compatible and features GPRS class 11 (32 - 48 kbps), EDGE 32 class (296 kbps), High-Speed Circuit-Switched Data (57.6 kbps) and Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g. Tested on the EDGE and 3G networks, the phone performed a little bit above average as you can see in the screenshots. We have obtained the best results when testing the WLAN network speed. This proves that the phone can actually reach higher numbers on both EDGE and 3G, but was limited due to operator's network (Orange).

Other connectivity tools include Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP support, Infrared and miniUSB port for PC synchronization. When connecting the USB cable you will be able to choose between 4 modes: PC Suite, Data transfer, Image print and Media player. All 4 modes are intuitive and easy to use, so there is nothing more to tell. The phone can also be connected to a modem through the Infrared port, or you can choose to add the terminal to a public network and share some content.

The messaging options include SMS, MMS, audio messages and e-mail. It also supports POP3 and IMAP4 and SMTP email accounts, as well as "Push to Talk" and Instant Messaging. Basically, Nokia N95 8GB is a complete messaging tool and is only second to those QWERTY devices that offer an easier way to text.

The Internet browser is one of the best and the Web surf experience can only be surpassed by Apple's iPhone. The big display can be changed to landscape mode when using the browser and, because of the high amount of user memory, any webpage is loaded very fast. The same options and functions that you had into the N95 standard version are also present with this one as well.

No doubt about it, Nokia N95 8GB has a great signal reception and astonishing in-call sound. Even in noisy environments, you will still be able to speak on the phone with no hearing problems. The only drawback I found is the average signal reception when the device is set to 3G network, but it only shows in some areas and might depend on the network operator.

Processor and Memory

One of the latest multimedia computers from Nokia's N series, Nokia N95 8GB features an

ARM11 based processor running at 332 Mhz speed but with no Jazelle technology for running Java applications. The phone only features a Just-in-Time Java Compiler that will make your Java software start slower.

These are the same specs as those embedded into the standard model. Still, there is something that makes a huge difference and that is the user memory. If the standard model had only 64MB SDRAM, this time we have 128 MB SDRAM which is more than enough to run any number of applications (Java compatible or not) with no troubles. No more freezes, no more lags and obviously no more resets.

Even if you don't have the option to expand the internal memory of the phone (no more microSD slot cards), the 8GB storage space is more than enough for even the most heavy multimedia freak. You can install your 3rd party applications on the internal memory or directly into the user memory, as it won't make any difference – the phone will be speedy in both cases.

Multimedia

Nothing has been changed here except that you have a larger screen now to watch clips and movies. If you want a much bigger screen, there is no problem – use the TV-out cable. The Video center also enables users to connect to a web video archive just like a podcast. The main application to watch clips is the good old Real player, which is compatible with MPEG4, 3GPP and RealVideo formats.

To demonstrate the quality of the screen and the enjoyable experience of watching a movie on the go, Nokia offers the Spiderman 3 movie that comes into the internal memory of the phone. The format of the movie is .dcm and has a limited period of availability (60 days, I believe), after which you must buy it. The .dcm file is basically a DRM file used to protect music files downloaded from the Nokia Music Store. The MP3 player remained unchanged and supports a huge number of formats including: MP3, AAC, AAC+, eAAC+ and WMA.

Apart from the Default mode, the Equalizer features another 5 settings that can be used to change the sound experience: Bass booster, Classical, Jazz, Rock and Pop. When using the stereo headset that comes with the phone, the sound is pretty much the same as on the N95 standard version, only the speakerphone sounds a little bit lower. Changing the headphones is a must as the music experience improves considerably and the 3.5mm jack port enables owners to do that easily.

The 8GB storage space will probably 'urge' you to store a huge number of music files, but you will still have enough space to take some good quality pictures or shoot a clip. If you're bored and need something else for a change, you can activate the FM Radio, that can store up to 50 radio stations. The Visual Radio function lets you search automatically for any radio station in your town and memorize it. Unfortunately, the radio lacks RDS functions, but there are some Visualization options instead.

Battery

Nokia N95 8GB features a BL-6F 1200 mAh battery that has an official stated life expectancy of 6 hours in talk time mode and 280 hours in standby mode. Unlike the standard N95 version, this one makes it for the official numbers with ease. Finally, Nokia managed to put in a very good battery that is up to the level of the device that it powers. Paradoxically, the main drawback of the standard version has been turned into the main strong point with the updated 8GB version. There is no doubt about it, the BL-6F battery is one of the best that has been embedded into a Nokia handset.

Impressions

Nokia N95 8GB is everything that the N95 standard should have been. A complete tool that features everything that someone can expect from a mobile phone. Moreover, all these features are at the highest standards, which transforms the N95 8GB into something more than a mobile phone. This is the real 'multimedia computer' Nokia has been talking about all these years. The device simply proves to be the best product ever made by Nokia up to these days. Even if the future of the mobile phones is considered to be the 'touchscreens', I believe that Nokia N95 8GB is a much better choice for now and will probably be for a long time.

The Good

Besides some 'aesthetic' changes in design, the N95 8GB pretty much beats all the competition in terms of performance. The 2.8" display makes it more actual in an era when screens are starting to be the most important thing for a mobile phone or Pocket PC. The phone features the best module camera on the market (together with Sony Ericsson's K850i), the best display and one of the biggest storage space (8GB – together with Sony Ericsson's W960i). It's fast, easy to use and it has all the features you might think of.

The Bad

I don't believe that the N95 8GB is perfect but the ratio between bad and good is so favored to the latter that the negative things do not matter that much. Who would need a slot card for memory expansion when you already have 8GB of space at your disposal? Are you gonna stop using the FM Radio because it doesn't feature the RDS function? Are you gonna scratch your camera because it doesn't have a protective lens now? Don't think so. As a matter of fact, you probably won't notice all these minor things, as compared with all the powerful features that the phone possesses.

Sales package

Nokia N95 8GB handset
Nokia 1200 mAh battery (BL-6F)
Wired remote control
Stereo headphones
USB data cable

Charger (AC-4)
TV-out cable
User manual
CD software

Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com