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Orange SPV

If a phone is something you pull out of its packaging, charge up, and then start dialling numbers with, then the SPV from Orange -- the first Smartphone 2002 (formerly codenamed 'Stinger') device on the market -- isn't a phone. Instead of a 'phone book' and a simple SMS tool, it has Pocket Outlook. You can also browse full-colour Web pages with Pocket Internet Explorer. But you won't just plug it in and use these features – indeed, many people will never use these features. This is a shame, because once you have the SPV (it stands for Sound, Pictures, Video) set up, it really is rather neat.

Written by **Guy Kewney,** Contributor on Oct. 30, 2002

7.6/10   **Orange SPV**
              Very good

Pros

Feature-rich tri-band GPRS phone running Microsoft Smartphone 2002 operating system introductory £6 per month unlimited GPRS data service over the air configuration and backup.

Cons

Only available on Orange network no built-in Bluetooth uncomfortable convex keys.

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For example, to dial someone's number you (naturally enough) start entering the number on the keypad. But unlike any other phone, this is a computer. So, within three keystrokes, it will have a pretty good idea who you are calling. As you type the numbers, the phone shows a list of matching numbers -- but it also knows that you might be typing a name. My friend Jon came up in three strokes, but so did Jonathan and Jones. Picking one from the three was a simple down-click of the phone's mini-joystick. Nice -- but how did the numbers get in there in the first place? Simple: I synchronised the phone with my PC. Actually it was not simple at all -- it took hours of hassle. Here's why.

The SPV is locked to Orange's network, and seems to be unhappy with the idea of reading my Vodafone SIM card. It looked as though all the numbers on my old phone would have to be typed in again. However, I copied them all to my Pocket PC handheld (an HP Jornada 928 WDA) and then transferred them all to my PC via ActiveSync, where they were entered into Outlook. Then I installed the new version of ActiveSync on the disc that came with the SPV, and did another ActiveSync from the PC to the SPV. Simple. Not only do I now have my entire Outlook phone list easily accessible in my phone, but I also have my Outlook diary and my email. True, you can get most of these features in a device like the Jornada 928 WDA, which runs Pocket PC 2002 Phone Edition. It, too, can dial numbers from Pocket Outlook, and receive and send email. And it, too, can connect to GPRS mobile data. Information is more legible on a handheld screen the size of the Jornada's (or the O2 xda's), and many people will also find it easier to enter data on a handheld device. The beauty of the SPV (and of the other new Smartphone 2002 designs shortly to hit the market, from Sendo and Samsung) is that it can be operated one-handed. It's a phone, and phones have given us Tegic, Tg or T9 -- predictive text. Most people under 30 can use Tegic a lot faster than they can generate recognisable script using a stylus and character recognition software.

And if Orange, the exclusive reseller of the SPV, has insisted on dropping a clanger of SIM-locking its smartest phone, it has made up for it with a service called SIM Backup. This allows you to send all your phone numbers to Orange, who will store them on its servers. If you ever lose your SPV, drop it under the wheels of a car, or give it to a mugger in exchange for your life, then all is not lost. You can download your phone numbers from Orange's servers onto your new SPV. If you are prepared to spend the time you can back up most of the phone's memory to Orange – contacts and diary certainly, but probably not MP3s. You can play back a few songs in MP3 format, and even more in Windows Media Audio. It comes with a stereo headset for hands-free operation, which serves for music playback – or, if you're browsing a sound-tagged Web site, jingles.

As a phone, the SPV is pretty ordinary, after the quick-search phone book is filled. As a PDA, it's not bad -- but you do have to be prepared to learn how to use its functionality. Knowing Windows won't help much – Smartphone 2002 may be an offshoot of Windows, but there's there's no 'start' button, no taskbar and no pointer. What you do get is the phone keypad, a 'home' key, a 'back' key (which is also a delete key) and a joystick, plus two 'soft programmable' menu keys that can be configured to do different things by whatever software you're running. Even so, it doesn't take long to learn the new user interface. But the advantage of running a variant of Windows doesn't lie in usability: rather, it's the bonus of extra software availability. Converting Pocket PC software for Smartphone 2002 devices is straightforward. Expect a lot of useful stuff to be transferred quickly, including a host of games -- Doom, believe it or not, runs.

The SPV has its drawbacks. The keys are hugely convex, with almost illegible letters on them. There is Bluetooth, but only of a sort. Netcom's Jabra subsidiary will provide a plug-in Bluetooth headset to give a hands-free wireless connection. You can listen and talk, and even hang up a call -- but you can't do anything clever because it's purely an audio link. Microsoft didn't design Bluetooth into the Smartphone 2002 specification. There are excuses. When these phones were designed they -- like

all Pocket PC derivatives and all Symbian smartphones -- had two processors. One handles all the GSM processing (encoding the voice, handling the protocols and so on), while the other runs the operating system. And it was assumed by the designers that Bluetooth would be handled by the operating system side. But in fact, there's a huge delay due to the need to have voice input processed by the computer side before it's handed to the GSM side, and it turns out that you can't do this and still comply with the GSM standard. There is simply too much delay between speaking and your audience hearing your voice, and vice versa. A new design is needed, with a hardware shortcut to allow Bluetooth to go straight through to the phone side. That will come -- but not in this version of the design. So Jabra simply produced a wireless wire. Audio goes into a small pod via a short wire, which plugs into the audio socket. The pod turns this into Bluetooth codes and transmits them to the headset, which is small, neat and wireless. There's almost no delay at all, and, when it ships, it will give you hands-free wireless of a sort.
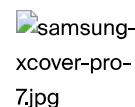
Raspberry Pi 4

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Raspberry Pi 400

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OnePlus Watch

5.7
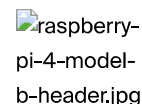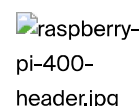
oneplus-watch-3.jpg

Samsung Galaxy Xcover Pro

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Normally, GPRS phones cost a fortune, but Orange has decided to launch this one with a loss-leader data service: all the data you can handle for £6 a month. There is a 'fair use' policy, meaning you're expected not to abuse it. We have tried to discover what happens if you do abuse it, but Orange has been strangely unforthcoming -- to the point where we suspect it hasn't yet upgraded its network to be able to track abuse of this sort. In other words, you can download an awful lot of data and it will cost you six quid a month -- and nobody can stop you for the time being. There are other neat features. There's 'over the air' configuration, where you connect to Orange and set up things like email. This is where you have to decide whether you want a phone or a PDA, because you really do have to sit down with the manual with this one. The killer application is likely to be multimedia messaging, using the add-on digital camera that connects via the SPV's SD/MMC slot. The ability to see who is sitting at their desk and the power to send and receive short messages via GPRS will be pretty compelling.

In summary, Orange's SPV is a slightly bulkier phone than most fashion-conscious owners will want, and it's certainly not for the technophobic. It's old-fashioned in one or two other ways, too: it has a reflective TFT screen rather than a transflective one, and lacks built-in Bluetooth. But compare it with something bulky like Ericsson's Symbian-based R380 or Nokia's 9210, and it seems both compact and usable. Coupled with the £6 a month data bargain that Orange has decided to offer (at least at first), and it's a bargain at £179 (including VAT and a voice contract). And until T-Mobile launches the Sendo Z100 in January, it's also the only Smartphone 2002 game in town.

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