# MOBILEWEAR:  WATCHES



Our October 2014 article looked at the advent of the newest wearable technology: the Smartwatch.  3 years on we can see how far sophisticated advances have come and which are the current brands to keep an eye on.  Believe it or not, *Microsoft* released the first digital watch in 1984, discontinued it in 2008 but the concept lived on:  *Seiko, Pulsar, Swatch, Fossil* and *Casio* all produced watches with some digital capabilities. We are talking about a wristwatch with a screen and the ability to do much more than tell time; it's like having a Smartphone on your wrist. Smartwatches run apps, play back digital media (audio tracks or radio streamed to Bluetooth headphones), make and receive phone calls, have touchscreens which allow you access to functions like a calculator, thermometer, compass, message notifications, GPS navigation, calendar synchronization, health monitors, fitness tracking and more.

Some of the current iterations of Smartwatches are not wholly standalone devices because they lack an Internet connection - many of the watches are designed to link directly with other devices that do have Internet connectivity like your Smartphone. Furthermore, some Smartwatches are aimed directly at athletic enthusiasts, i.e. running, sailing, cross-training.  They are gaining popularity in spite of their technological hurdles: they must be extremely compact to fit the human wrist,  the display screen must interface well to accommodate software developers' needs, long battery life is a must, and it must

be attractively fashionable.  So far, no Smartwatch has managed all these elements to perfection regardless of the price point but progress continues and it is expected that 373 million will be sold by 2020.

Right now the top 10 contenders in this field are:

1. *Apple Watch 2* – most features, more durable and water resistant
2. *Sony Smartwatch 3 SWR50* – most advanced
3. *Samsung Gear S3* – closest to iWatch
4. *LG Watch Style* – thinnest Android Wear Smartwatch
5. *LG Watch Sport* – Google's wearable Android phone
6. *ASUS ZenWatch 3* – great display, good battery life
7. *Huawei Watch 2* – best for 2017, values function over form
8. *Moto 360 – 2$^{nd}$ Gen.* – great design, improved performance
9. *Apple Watch* – most stylish, 1-day battery, clever interface
10. *Huawei Watch* – nice presentation, poor battery life

So if you are thinking about purchasing one, best to wait a bit as improvements are coming fast and furiously.  It all depends on what you want the Smartwatch to do for you…replace your Smartphone?  Be a fitness tracker?  Be up on the newest trends?  Whatever your motive, make sure your purchase warrants the cost…unless money is no object and this is just a fleeting fashion accessory.