

## Tech[nology]News:

# Ocean depths explored in record plunge by Hollywood director

By Mike Purdy  
OPINION EDITOR

In his latest endeavor, filmmaker James Cameron plunged to the ocean floor of the Mariana Trench's Challenger Deep, setting a record for the world's deepest solo voyage at the world's deepest point. Cameron exuberantly emerged from his vessel, the "Deepsea Challenger", last Monday after his successful seven-mile journey to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean marked a victory for both man and science in a time when adventure and exploration are more important than ever.

The monumental mission was funded by Cameron, along with the National Geographic Society and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, and illuminated mankind's efforts to explore the far reaches of planet Earth in an impressive display of technology and human enterprise. The 57-year old Cameron, who is most well-known for directing such films as *Titanic* and *Avatar*, is a marine enthusiast at heart and has completed 72 deep-sea dives in his prolific career. Many of those dives were focused in and around the wreckage of the *Titanic*, where Cameron quickly gained a passion for the mysteries of the ocean depths.

During his submersible voyage, Cameron's "vertical torpedo" submarine used its eight-foot tower of LEDs to cast an expanse of light onto the ocean floor while 3-D cameras captured beautiful footage of a seemingly alien landscape. The vessel also collected living samples and oceanographic data to be analyzed by the expedition's science team.

The Mariana Trench, located roughly 200 miles southwest of the island nation of Guam, is about a mile deeper than Mount Everest is tall and nearly 120 times larger than the Grand Canyon. Cameron is not the first to have experienced the wonders of Earth's deepest point, however; in 1960, Navy Captain Don Walsh and late Swiss engineer Jacques Piccard descended to the bottom of Challenger Deep



Photo courtesy of futuredude.com

but were unable to get a proper view because their submarine kicked up too much sediment from the murky ocean floor. 52 years later, Walsh came back to aid Cameron's mission and witness him "join the club" in this historic dive.

Don't expect the Deepsea Challenger mission to be a one-time occurrence; Cameron is already planning for many future descents of the Trench. A full length article of Cameron's expedition will be published in a coming edition of National Geographic magazine, and the team is already working on a feature documentary in efforts to share

this amazing achievement with the scientific community and general public alike.

Billionaire tycoon Richard Branson is also in the process of developing his own deep-sea adventure; one that will likely see him at the bottom of the Atlantic's Puerto Rico Trench in roughly four months' time. A friendly competition seems to exist between Cameron and Branson, helping to bring much attention to the arena of privatized exploration.

Explorations such as Cameron's journey to the Marianas depths do more than just advance the reaches of humanity; they

effectively inspire and motivate new generations of energetic scientific pioneers and explorers determined to bring Earth's enduring mysteries to light. At a time when funding for such endeavors is decreasing, privatized, collaborative exploration is more important now than ever. Many areas of the Earth remain unexplored, each presenting its own unique piece to the puzzle of this dynamic blue sphere we call home. My hat goes off to Mr. Cameron and his undying curiosity for the life which lies beneath. If only all famous billionaires used their time and money as wisely.

## Tech[nology]News:

# Pantech Burst phone review

By Ryan Kamphius  
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In the smartphone world, little attention seems to be paid to budget devices. Every year the hot new devices are the top-of-the-line smartphones that cost more and more with every year. The public is captivated by the new iPhone, which costs \$200 with a two-year contract. Android fanatics are flocking to the new Samsung Galaxy Nexus, which costs \$300 with a two-year contract. With the brand new Burst on AT&T, Pantech is looking to end the dominance of the smartphone market by high-end, multi-hundred dollar devices. Costing just \$50 with a two-year contract, the Pantech Burst is attractively priced so that it can be afforded by all.

Trying out the device for the first time makes it clear that this is a budget device. The Burst is not nearly as thin as its higher-end competitors, nor is it as beautifully designed as the iPhone. But, this is not necessarily a problem. While not as thin or sleek as the competition, the Burst still feels excellent in the hand and has a very good weight to it.

The device feels rugged, and looks cool. The device has a 4 inch Super AMOLED display that is clear and vibrant. The device also has a 5MP camera with an LED flash that is good in a pinch, but won't be replacing your camera anytime soon. Overall, I really enjoyed the Burst's hardware. It felt well-made and solid, and despite the price of the phone, didn't feel cheap.

Powering up the phone for the first time revealed that it ran Android 2.3 Gingerbread with a Pantech-created custom skin. Android 2.3 is a solid build, and allows access to all of the hot new applications available on the Google Play Store. Pantech's custom skin

left something to be desired, however. The skin didn't seem to add many features to the device, but merely made it more cluttered.

I didn't like it all and thought it took away from the Android 2.3 Gingerbread experience a lot. I respect that Pantech is attempting to make an intuitive, feature-adding custom skin like Samsung's, but I think Pantech's skin on the Burst needs a little more time in the oven. The one feature that Pantech's custom skin brings that is a game changer is the lock screen, which allows you to launch into specific applications depending on which lock icon you drag into the middle of the screen.

Despite the lackluster custom skin, the Burst's performance is phenomenal. Using the device, applications, and all the features of the phone was a breeze. I never experienced any lag while switching applications and applications never crashed. I was extremely impressed that the Burst was able to perform at such a high level. It was performing just as well, if not better, than many of its \$200 and \$300 Android smartphone brethren.

Finally, the Pantech Burst is a 4G LTE device, able to use AT&T's brand new LTE network. I have found that many budget 4G devices drain through their batteries quite quickly. I was delighted to see that the Burst did not, and stayed powered on all day even through heavy usage.

At the end of the day, when you consider the price, the Pantech Burst is a great device. It may not have a slick custom skin like the expensive Samsung Galaxy S II or a fancy camera like the iPhone 4, but the Pantech Burst delivers in performance and utility. The Burst is an excellent smartphone for just \$50, and anyone willing to compromise on fancy features will find themselves with a powerful device that is able to keep up with the high-end devices



Photo courtesy of theverge.com