

Close-up of Microsoft's canceled Andromeda operating system running on Lumia 950

Andromeda was a hybrid project between the Andromeda operating system and a dual-screen device, but in the end, Microsoft switched to Android for the Surface Duo.

Launched in 2010 with Windows Phone 7 and gradually gaining more attention in 2012 and 2014 with Windows Phone 8 and 8.1, Microsoft once entered the mobile operating system race with Android and iOS. Windows Phone became Windows 10 Mobile in 2016, and that's when the operating system died down. The last feature update for Windows 10 Mobile was in 2017.

However, that is not the end of Microsoft's own operating system on smartphones. Microsoft once had a plan called Andromeda, which was a combination of Andromeda operating system software, and dual-screen hardware. Microsoft later used this hardware idea to create the Surface Duo running Android, but what about Andromeda OS?



Windows Central reporter Zac Bowden got his hands on Andromeda OS, but is running on a Microsoft Lumia 950, a single-screen device. The reason was because the Andromeda OS developers didn't have a dual screen device at the time, so they worked on the Lumia 950.

Andromeda OS was not scheduled for release on the Lumia 950 or any other Windows phone on the market at the time. Microsoft only used the Lumia 950 in the internal development of the Andromeda operating system.

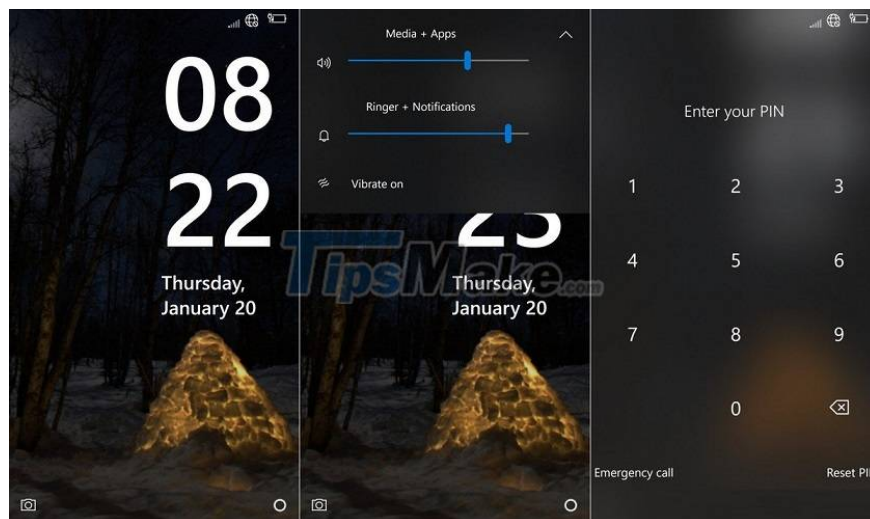
Andromeda OS is a canceled project. Work on the project was postponed in 2018 and never resumed.

Bowden stressed that this is not something Microsoft is currently working on for a future Surface Duo, these images and videos are just the Andromeda OS of the past. Android will continue to be the operating system for

any future Surface Duo devices.

And since it was cancelled, all the features and interfaces are in an unofficial state, but enough to show us the idea that Microsoft used to have with Andromeda OS.

Close-up of Andromeda OS



Microsoft decided to do something quite unique with Andromeda OS, which is to build an operating system around the experience of taking notes, writing, and drawing. On the lock screen, users can start taking notes directly by placing the pen on the screen. You don't need to initiate a special mode or launch apps, just grab the Surface Pen and start writing, if you don't delete or save them, they'll stay on the lock screen forever.

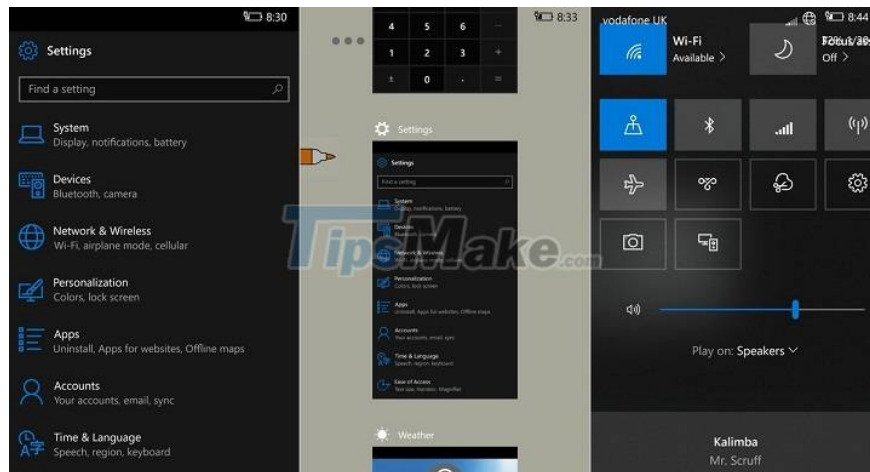
It removes any barrier between the user and the ability to take notes, so you don't have to bother with unlocking your phone and finding the app or mode you need to let you take notes. Just start writing on the lock screen, and you're good to go.

Unlocking the device takes you to the home screen, which on Andromeda OS is another canvas. The framework was called Journal (which later became the Microsoft Whiteboard app), which acts as a digital notebook with the ability to take notes with a pen, insert images and 3D objects, etc. Journal will always run in the background, with other apps on top.



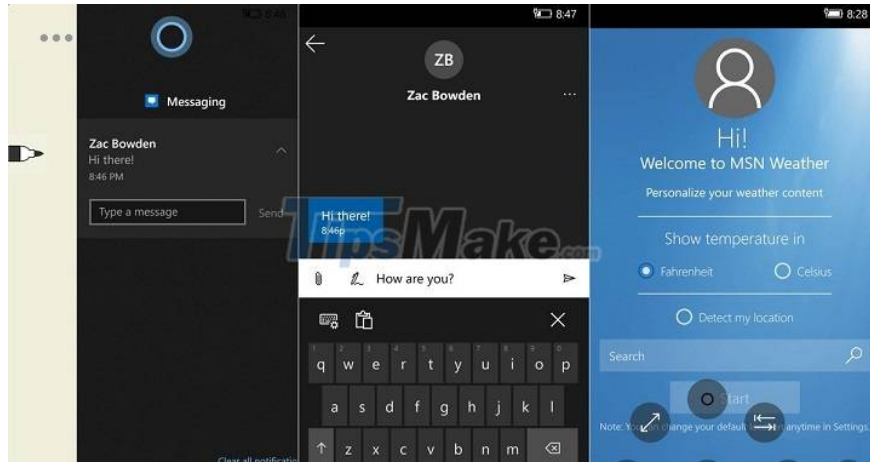
Andromeda OS also works based on gestures. The on-screen Start and Cortana buttons will disappear when opening the app to provide a full-screen experience, to access them you'll swipe in from the left to access Start and from the right for Cortana, which is also where Your message has been archived. On Andromeda OS, Cortana helps manage missed or saved notifications for later processing.

Swiping down from the top edge opens the Control Center, something that was on Windows 11 but has been in development since Andromeda OS. In terms of features, it's completely familiar, with the ability to control things like Wi-Fi, brightness, volume, and music playback. It also features Fluent Design's acrylic blur effects.



In fact, even with the unfinished software, it's pretty clear that Microsoft will capitalize on the beauty of Fluent Design on top of the Andromeda operating system.

There's also an experimental "Radial UX Menu" mode, where instead of swiping to access Start and Cortana, a swipe of the Radial UX Menu gives you an interface full of buttons for things like Start Menu, switching apps, etc. This could be an alternative to on-screen navigation, as not everyone was used to full gesture navigation at the time. Or, it can be an alternative method of navigation when you use the pen.



Microsoft also included Continuum mode in Andromeda OS, but unfortunately it is not available on this build.

There are a few points about the interface on Andromeda OS that have been brought to Android by Microsoft, including the date and time layout on the lock screen, the multitasking interface, controlling parallel running applications in split screen mode, ...

Once again, the Andromeda OS project has been abandoned. It is not in development and will never be released. Surface Duo is currently an Android device, and Microsoft plans to continue using Android in the future.

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