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# Gigabyte GSmart Roma R2 Review

Posted: 27 Nov 2013, 03:35, by Victor H.

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## Introduction

The [Gigabyte GSmart Roma R2](#) is an affordable Android smartphone and that puts it in the same category with a myriad of devices. Can it manage to hold its own and stand out? Packing a 4-inch display, dual-core processor and a 5-megapixel camera in a compact well looking body, this \$150ff-contract price, by the way) device comes with the promise of value for the money that not every device has and that alone is captivating.

The GSmart Roma R2 is also not a device for every market. It aims squarely at developing countries where people often have two SIM cards from different carriers to save on their bills. The Roma R2 does come with this dual SIM connectivity, which is a plus.

However, as any affordable device it does come with some compromises. Are those reasonable, though? We'll be looking for a balance of a decent screen, good enough camera, mostly smooth performance and pleasing design. Let's see if we can find them in the Roma R2.

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


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**GIGABYTE GSMART ROMA R2**


OS: Android 4.2

VIEW FULL


Display		4.0 inches, 480 x 800 pixels (233 ppi) IPS LCD
Camera		5 megapixels
Hardware		MediaTek MT6572, Dual core, 1300 MHz, ARM Cortex-A7 processor, 1024 MB RAM
Size		4.92 x 2.49 x 0.37 inches (125 x 63.2 x 9.3 mm) 4.41 oz (125 g)
Battery		1400 mAh, 3.5 hours talk time

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## Design

The GSmart Roma R2 is a small and compact device with a nice soft touch matte plastic finish on its back. It comfortably fits in even smaller hands and is a joy to use single-handedly.

It's a device put solidly together and its matte plastic cover does not squeak when you hold it tighter. Actually, the matte front and back give the impression of a very tough device, almost as if it was a rugged phone (it is not).

The handset comes with three capacitive Android navigation buttons below the screen and with large and very clicky, easy to press physical keys on the side. The lock key is on the right and is larger than any other lock button we've seen, while the volume rocker is on the left. On the back, there's a 5-megapixel camera with a single-LED flash, all placed on a small glossy strip of plastic, contrasting with the otherwise matte look of the device. A microUSB port and a headphone jack are located on top.



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[Front view](#) | [Side view](#)



4.92 x 2.49 x 0.37 inches  
125 x 63.2 x 9.3 mm  
4.41 oz (125 g)

GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2



4.46 x 2.43 x 0.46 inches  
113.2 x 61.6 x 11.6 mm  
4.25 oz (121 g)

Samsung Galaxy Fame



4.88 x 2.44 x 0.37 inches  
124 x 62 x 9.3 mm  
4.06 oz (115 g)

Sony Xperia M




5.11 x 2.59 x 0.46 inches  
129.9 x 65.9 x 11.6 mm  
5.04 oz (143 g)

Motorola Moto G

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Apple iPhone 5s vs Samsung Galaxy S4

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## Display

The GSmart Roma R2 ships with a 4-inch IPS LCD display with a resolution of 480 x 800 pixels. With a pixel density of 233ppi this is not the sharpest screen out there, but it is at or even above the average for its class and the display is still legible for all but tiny text. There's none of the issues of similarly priced devices where jagged text makes reading very hard unless you zoom in very closely.

We cannot expect a high-class screen on such an affordable device, so we set our expectations low, but the Roma R2 exceeded them as the screen actually has comparatively rich and vibrant color. There is however a slight but noticeable bluish tint and images tend to look colder than we like in a perfect-case scenario.

For outdoor use, the screen gets fairly bright and that's a plus, but it is also very reflective, so overall you can see what's on it, but it's not as legible as we'd like. Viewing angles were once again good for its class as we're dealing with an IPS panel here. If we had to nitpick, we'd say you can see colors wash out slightly when you tilt the display, though.

## Display measurements and quality


	Screen measurements	Viewing angles	Color charts				
	MAXIMUM BRIGHTNESS (nits) HIGHER IS BETTER	MINIMUM BRIGHTNESS (nits) LOWER IS BETTER	CONTRAST HIGHER IS BETTER	COLOR TEMPERATURE (Kelvins)	GAMMA	DELTA E RGBCMY LOWER IS BETTER	DELTA E GRAYSCALE LOWER IS BETTER
SONY XPERIA M	438 (Good)	48 (Poor)	1:693 (Poor)	14328 (Poor)	2.74	9.17 (Poor)	12.75 (Poor)
GIGABYTE GSMART ROMA R2	425 (Good)	60 (Poor)	1:444 (Poor)	10195 (Poor)	2.49	8.3 (Poor)	8.41 (Poor)

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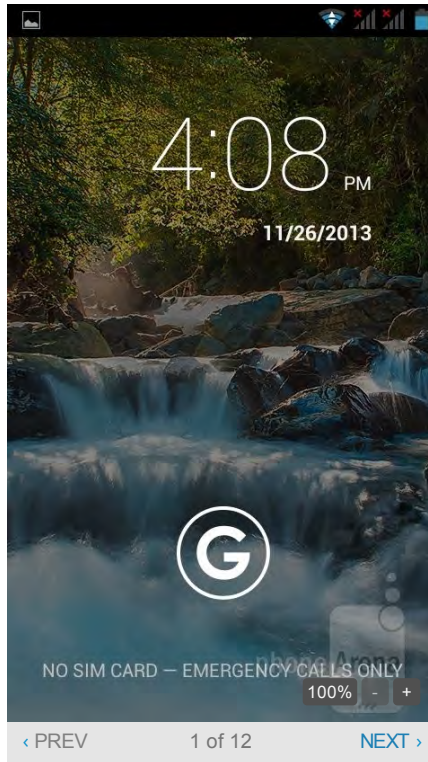
## Interface and Functionality

The GSmart Roma R2 runs on a very slightly modified version of Android 4.2.2 Jelly Bean. Gigabyte has tweaked the experience to add its G-sign logo on the lock screen, and there are some custom Gigabyte widgets that you can add, but apart from these small differences we're basically looking at nearly stock Android.

Having mostly pure Android is a good thing for the most part. Without the heft of heavier skins, the platform is better optimized to run on devices lacking great silicon, like the Roma R2.

Basic functionality is well covered with the dialer, messaging and Hangouts applications. We like how quickly the dialer opens and it does features a neat swipe-enabled interface that is convenient to use. The messaging app is the standard Android affair with smiles and group texting support.

Despite its comparatively small screen size, the 4-inch Roma R2 does not feel cramped when you text. It comes with a custom "TouchPal" keyboard with gesture-typing support and it's comfortable for texting, even more so - it's also usable single-handedly when you're on the run.



## Dual SIM functionality

The Roma R2 ships with support for two regular sized SIM cards that work in dual SIM dual standby regime. What this means is that while you're on a call, the other card would show as if it was out of coverage - you cannot have both active at the same time. Dual SIM functionality is embedded in the platform in the dialer and messaging apps with different colors showing which card has received or sent calls or messages. You can also select which SIM card to use for your data connection.



## Processor and Memory

The GSmart Roma R2 runs on the dual-core MT6572 MediaTek chip. That's the new Cortex A7-based chip by Chinese chip maker MediaTek that has grown hugely in popularity, but despite being a dual-core device, the Roma R2 runs slower than we'd like with noticeable lag and slowdown when you scroll around. It's clearly not a smooth experience.

On paper, the device looks better than you would tell from the stuttery interface. The MT6572 chip hums along with 1GB of RAM (more than the average for the class 512MB RAM) and the phone features the Mali 400 graphics chip.

We don't know whether the slowdown in interface is because of lack of software optimization or whether it's

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**GIGABYTE GSMART ROMA R2**  
 OS: Android 4.2  
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Display	4.0 inches, 480 x 800 pixels (233 ppi) IPS LCD
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that the chip can't handle the load of Android 4.2, but we did notice that the very same Roma R2 was actually able to play a lot of our favorite Google Play games like Temple Run 2 and Punch Quest fairly well. Here's how it fared on our benchmark testing suite.

## PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

QUADRANT HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	4254
	<b>GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2</b>	<b>2926</b>
	Samsung Galaxy Fame	2045
ANTUTU HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	11629
	<b>GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2</b>	<b>10702</b>
	Samsung Galaxy Fame	4810
GFXBENCH EGYPT HD 2.5 ONSCREEN (FPS) HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	26
	<b>GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2</b>	<b>14</b>
VELLAMO METAL HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	427
	<b>GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2</b>	<b>494</b>
	Samsung Galaxy Fame	319
VELLAMO HTML 5 HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	1772
	<b>GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2</b>	<b>1660</b>
	Samsung Galaxy Fame	1160

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Just as a lot of other affordable Android devices, the Roma R2 has the disadvantage of low internal storage allowance. The on board memory stands at merely 4GB and just around 2 gigs of those are actually available to the end user. Luckily, you can expand storage via microSD cards of up to 32GB.

## Internet and Connectivity

To access the web, the Roma R2 ships with the stock Android browser and mobile Chrome. We like Chrome much better for its better optimized for touch interface and cross-syncing capabilities. The browser loads and renders web pages reasonably fast and while there is a bit of a stutter with heavier addresses, especially when you have to scroll around, but lighter browsing is generally not a problem.

The handset supports 4G HSPA connectivity, but no LTE. That's hardly a surprise for such an affordable phone, though, and it's still plenty fast with downlink speeds reasonably fast at up to 21.1Mbps.

Other connectivity includes a GPS, Wi-Fi b/g/n and Bluetooth 3.0. There's no NFC in this handset nor does it support MHL.



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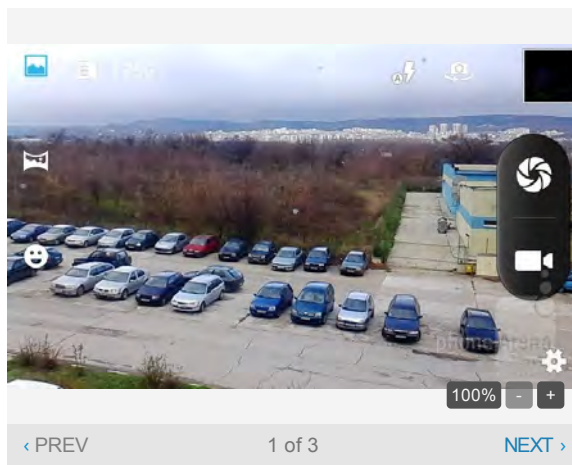
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## Camera

The Roma R2 comes with a 5-megapixel fixed-focus main camera and a basic VGA front-facing shooter.

Opening the camera app is fairly quick and since you have a fixed-focus shooter, you don't have to wait for the camera to lock focus and capturing an image is a very fast process. Shot to shot time is a bit slower than we'd like, but there is a burst shot mode that you can select and it fires a very rapid sequence. The camera interface features a dedicated video and image still capture buttons, and that's something we appreciate as a time saver. It's also tightly packed with manually adjustable settings like ISO, white balance, exposure controls, and so on - great for more experienced camera folks. We do wish however that all those settings were easier to reach as right now they are hidden in menus and submenus.



The actual images however do not impress in any way. They are not terrible either, but we've seen similarly cheap devices capture better shots. The still image quality suffers from a sore lack of detail as daylight images turn out noticeably smudgy with a lot of noise even in broad daylight, plus pictures are a bit underexposed. Truth is the Roma R2 is an affordable device, and that forgives some of its camera flaws, but we've seen other similarly affordable devices raise the bar and offer picture quality that this handset simply does not match. Since this is a fixed-focus camera it does come with some limitations so for instance you cannot shoot macro - anything that's up to around half a foot and closer will appear out of focus.

Now, indoors we like the performance of the camera better. Noise is still here, but it looks - for a lack of a better word - more natural, and we're content with the colors and general look of the indoor shots. In a dark room, though, the camera on this phone becomes pretty much useless as it just can't capture enough light. The built-in flash seems also worthless as the light it flashes is too weak, useless.

### Sample Images

Fullscreen

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OS: Android 4.2

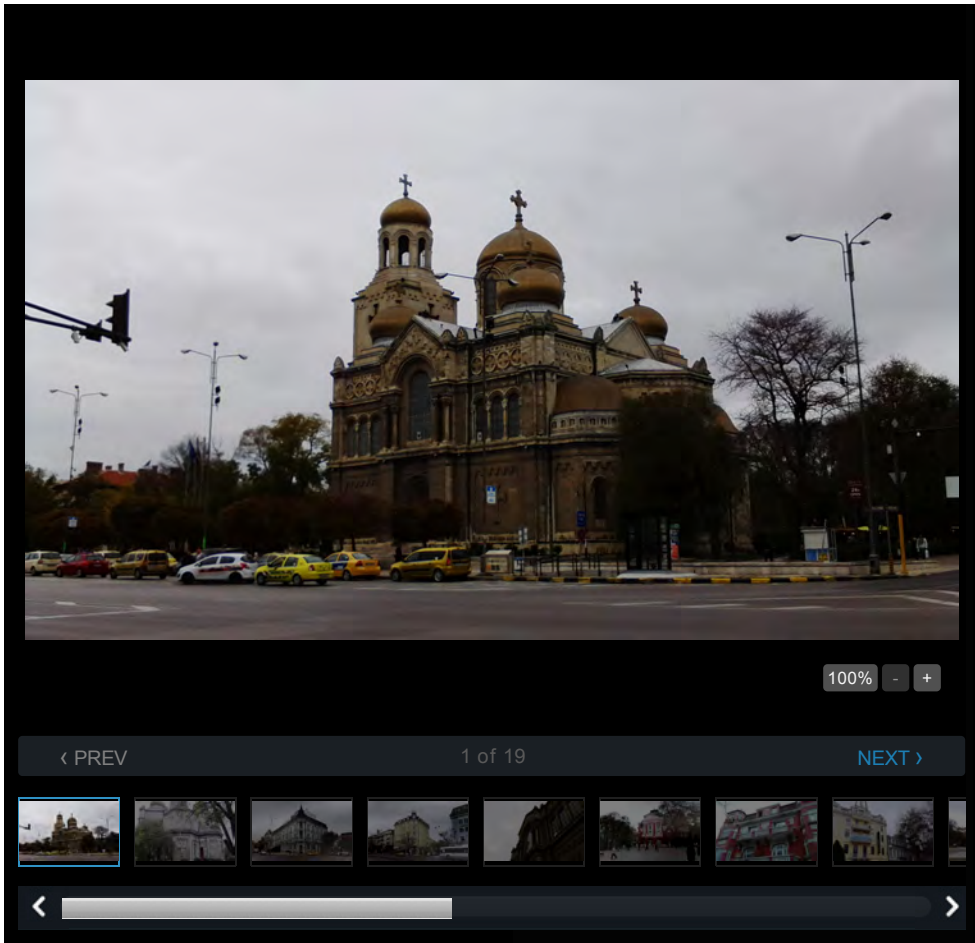
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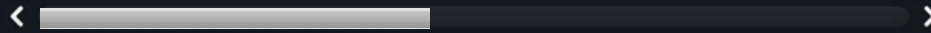


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Color poster ISO Chart



Image size: Original



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	TAKING A PIC (sec) LOWER IS BETTER	TAKING AN HDR PIC (sec) LOWER IS BETTER	CAMSPEED SCORE HIGHER IS BETTER	CAMSPEED SCORE WITH FLASH HIGHER IS BETTER
GIGABYTE GSMART ROMA R2	3	No data	532	No data
SONY XPERIA M	3.3	4.7	663	643

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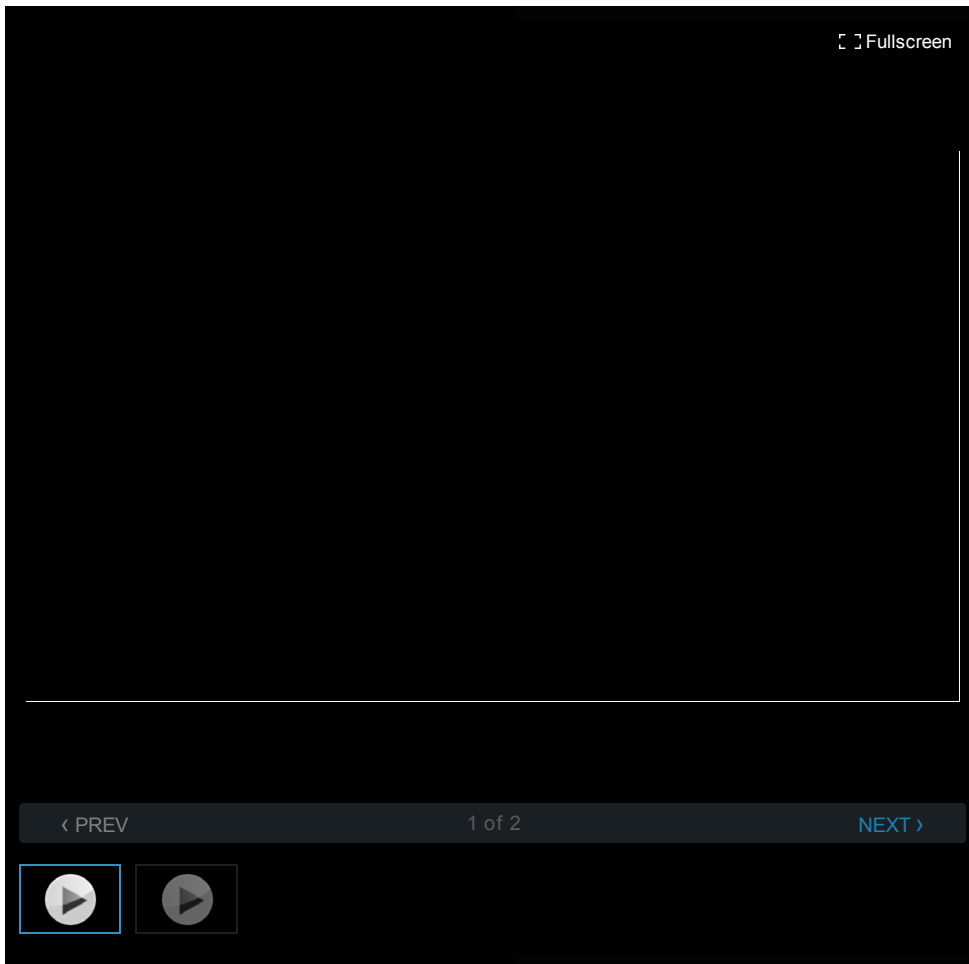


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Video recording maxes out at 1280 x 720 pixels and 30 frames per second. Video recordings actually look pleasingly smooth with quick and accurate exposure compensation, and we like the footage much better.



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The front camera is very basic and cannot capture much detail, but at this price we appreciate having it there for video conferencing and the occasional selfie.

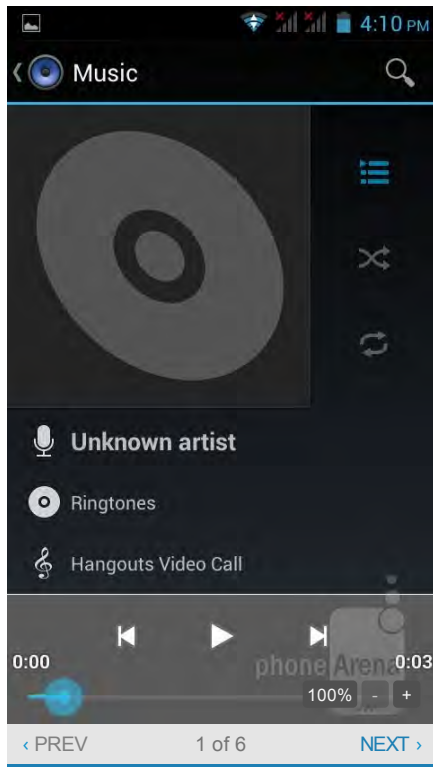


# Multimedia

This little smartphone stands out among the rest in its class with a relatively big 4-inch display (this might sound a bit surprising, but cheap Android devices like this one often come with even smaller screens), but it's not only big it's also a display with vibrant colors making the Roma R2 a great companion on the road as you can watch movies or short clips on it easily. Actually, the device chewed through all video codecs and formats we threw at it with ease and despite its 480 x 800 pixel screen resolution, it even played back 720p files without a stutter.

For music, the device comes with a dedicated Music application that breaks down your collection by artists, songs and albums, and allows building playlists on the go. We also appreciate the built-in equalizer so you can adjust your tunes' sound.

The large loudspeaker on the back of the device is sufficiently loud, but it lacks any depth, sounding rather flat and tinny. This however is more of a critique to the smartphone landscape in general (where we have only a few exceptions with truly good sound output) rather than just to the Roma R2.



## AUDIO OUTPUT

HEADPHONES OUTPUT	GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2	0.36
POWER (VOLTS) HIGHER IS BETTER	Sony Xperia M	0.15
LOUDSPEAKER LOUDNESS (DB) HIGHER IS BETTER	GIGABYTE GSmart Roma R2	77
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## Call Quality

With dual SIM card support, the GSmart Roma R2 is expected to make and receive a lot of calls, and luckily it performs very decently. On our end of the line, voices were easily recognizable, sufficiently clear and loud enough. Our callers reported almost the same on the other end of the line with the slight niggle of a bit muffled sound, but still perfectly audible.



## Battery life

The 4-inch Roma R2 ships with a 1400mAh battery with a quoted talk time of the very low 3.5 hours and standby of the below average 9.2 days. In our few days with the device, we noticed that almost always it did last through the day, but not more and we had to plug it in the evening. The battery is user replaceable.

## BATTERY LIFE

We measure battery life by running a custom script, replicating the power consumption of typical real-life usage.

NAME	TIME	HIGHER IS BETTER
SONY XPERIA M	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>	5h 53 min
GIGABYTE GSMART ROMA R2	<div style="width: 85%;"></div>	5h 48 min
<input type="text" value="Add phone"/>	<input type="button" value="v"/>	

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## Conclusion

The Gigabyte GSmart Roma R2 is a likeable little smartphone. First and foremost, it's a phone for those on budget as its price gravitates around the extremely affordable \$150 off contract. That money buys you a well built and good looking handset that comes with a fine display and dual-SIM connectivity. It's not a perfect device by any means, though, and you'd have to compromise on speed as it stutters way too often even just navigating around the menus, and the camera could have been better.

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The low-end Android space is simply packed with devices from both known manufacturers and white box makers from China, and there are some alternatives that offer the Roma R2 heated competition. We like the equally priced but smaller 3.5" Samsung Galaxy Fame for its great camera, if that's a top priority. If you're willing to jump a little higher in price, we'd also recommend the just launched Motorola Moto G, which is a huge step up in all aspects - screen size, camera and performance. These two however do not support dual SIM connectivity and to get that and a larger screen at a similar price we'd turn to the Huawei Ascend Y511. Looking over to Windows

Phone, the Lumia 520 (a single SIM device) continues to be an excellent value for the money and offers a similarly sized 4-inch screen and a great camera in a colorful fun body.

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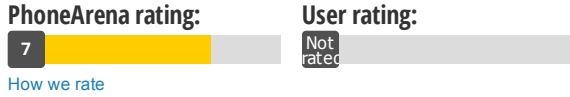
With all its shortcomings, though, the GSmart Roma R2 is not bad value for the money, just make sure to understand all its strengths and weaknesses well before buying.

PROS

- + Vibrant 4-inch display
- + Likeable design, compact size
- + Dual SIM functionality

CONS

- Stuttery performance
- Image quality does not impress
- Below-average battery life



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