# OpenAI and Jony Ive join forces to pioneer AI device beyond smartphones



OpenAI's recent venture into the hardware space, marked by its collaboration with renowned Apple design luminary Jony Ive, has sparked considerable intrigue in the tech community. This strategic partnership, which involves the acquisition of Ive's startup, is seen as a bold attempt to redefine personal technology beyond traditional devices. Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, and Ive are taking substantial steps towards creating an innovative AI-centric device that may one day replace or significantly diminish the need for smartphones.

Driven by the belief that conventional devices are unsuited for the seamless integration of AI into users' lives, Altman and Ive are envisioning hardware that acts as an unobtrusive companion, aware of its environment and capable of enhancing daily interactions without the constant need for screens. In interviews, they have hinted at a vision of "ambient computing" that could reframe how users interact with technology. This approach aims to alleviate the friction associated with current digital tools, an ambition underscored by Altman's acknowledgment of past pitfalls in hardware development, referencing the less than successful Humane AI Pin initiative.

Ive brings a wealth of design expertise to the project, having played a pivotal role in crafting some of Apple’s most iconic products. His reputation for innovative thinking, alongside Altman’s leadership in generative AI, suggests a formidable alliance. According to industry analysts, this project stands out as one of OpenAI's most significant acquisitions, potentially worth around $6.5 billion. This figure includes a substantial equity investment, bolstering the resources available for the design and development team, which comprises around 55 engineers and researchers from Ive’s studio, LoveFrom.

The future device, while still shrouded in mystery, is speculated to blend AI capabilities with a new form factor, potentially eschewing wearable technologies that some analysts like Ming-Chi Kuo have suggested. The goal appears to be the creation of an experience that seamlessly integrates AI into daily life, allowing for a deeper connection between the technology and its user. The lack of clarity surrounding the product's final design may reflect a cautious approach, echoing the lengthy development timelines seen in successful consumer tech launches like Apple’s Vision Pro, which took seventeen years to come to fruition.

However, the ambition of creating a product that could rival the smartphone's dominance comes with significant challenges. Critics highlight the entrenched nature of smartphones in contemporary society and express scepticism regarding whether even the combined talents of Ive and Altman can result in a breakthrough compelling enough to foster a widespread shift in user behaviour. The project's success will heavily depend on demonstrating a leap in functionality that convinces consumers to adopt an entirely new gadget.

Moreover, as the tech landscape evolves, other companies are simultaneously advancing their own AI technologies. For example, Google is introducing an "AI Mode" in its chatbot offerings, while Apple is reportedly preparing to release AI-enabled smart glasses by 2026. This intensifying competition in the arena of integrated AI solutions further complicates OpenAI's path.

Ultimately, the collaboration between Sam Altman and Jony Ive could herald a new chapter in the evolution of personal technology, provided they can navigate the challenges inherent in redefining user experience. Both experts understand that any successful product must resonate with consumers’ needs and habits, turning aspirational concepts into tangible realities.

As anticipation builds, stakes are high for OpenAI's foray into hardware. While the potential is palpable, the outcome of this venture remains to be seen; the tech world will be watching closely to see if Altman and Ive can indeed conjure a device that transcends the limitations of current offerings and firmly establishes a new paradigm in personal computing.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://thegadgetflow.com/blog/openai-device/), [[2]](https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-f176f140-3818-11f0-a874-ff3230720582)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://thegadgetflow.com/blog/openai-device/), [[3]](https://www.axios.com/2025/05/24/sam-altman-ai-steve-jobs-apple), [[4]](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/05/openai-io-jony-ive/682884/?utm_source=apple_news)
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* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/05/openai-io-jony-ive/682884/?utm_source=apple_news), [[6]](https://theweek.com/culture-life/personal-technology/jony-ive-joins-openai-sam-altman)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://thegadgetflow.com/blog/openai-device/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-f176f140-3818-11f0-a874-ff3230720582> - This article discusses OpenAI's recent partnership with Apple design legend Jony Ive, highlighting the acquisition of his startup io for $6.5 billion. The collaboration aims to develop AI 'companions' and establish a massive data center in Abu Dhabi. Additionally, it covers Google's introduction of an 'AI Mode' chatbot and the unveiling of Veo 3, a powerful video model, as well as Anthropic's new Claude 4 series, including the Opus 4 model. The piece also touches on Apple's plans to launch AI-enabled smart glasses by 2026, signaling a rapid transformation in AI integration into daily life.
3. <https://www.axios.com/2025/05/24/sam-altman-ai-steve-jobs-apple> - OpenAI is positioning its CEO, Sam Altman, as the modern-day equivalent of Steve Jobs, aiming to associate him with revolutionary innovation in AI similar to Jobs’ legendary status in tech. This comparison comes amid the company's recent move to bring on board Jony Ive, a former Apple designer instrumental in creating iconic products like the iPhone and iPod, to lead a new venture into AI hardware. Altman’s leadership in steering OpenAI through the emergence of ChatGPT and its role in igniting the generative-AI trend is seen by some as echoing Jobs’ groundbreaking influence on consumer technology. Moreover, both Altman and Jobs experienced being ousted from the companies they founded, albeit under different circumstances. However, critics argue that equating Altman with Jobs may be premature or misguided, as Jobs’ unique blend of product vision, strategy, and marketing remains unmatched. The article suggests that while industry leaders often idolize figures like Jobs, truly replacing such iconic legacies is extraordinarily rare.
4. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/05/openai-io-jony-ive/682884/?utm_source=apple_news> - OpenAI has announced a major strategic shift by partnering with Jony Ive, former Apple design chief, to develop AI-specific hardware that could potentially replace current smartphones and computers. This move, backed by a $5 billion acquisition of Ive’s startup Io, signifies OpenAI CEO Sam Altman’s ambition to remove the friction of using AI tools through conventional devices like laptops and phones. Although details remain vague, the envisioned hardware could encompass wearable AI devices or an 'external brain' offering constant ChatGPT-style assistance. Altman and Ive argue that legacy devices inadequately support the evolving use of AI, advocating for a new generation of purpose-built technology. While prior AI devices like Humane’s AI pin have failed, the partnership between Altman and Ive—responsible for industry-shaping products like the iPhone—holds promise. The initiative also seeks to enhance OpenAI's market presence and reduce its reliance on competitors' platforms, potentially capturing users' digital lives into a cohesive ecosystem. This effort reflects a broader trend among tech giants to retrofit AI into existing platforms, often with mixed results. For now, OpenAI is selling its vision with no concrete product revealed, echoing ambitious beginnings reminiscent of Apple's revolutionary iPhone launch.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/52c72786e54f0ead8b04d037c30d6754> - OpenAI has enlisted legendary iPhone designer Jony Ive to spearhead a new AI hardware initiative, acquiring his company io Products in a deal valued at nearly $6.5 billion. The acquisition includes $5 billion in equity, and OpenAI already held a 23% stake in io from a previous partnership. Ive, known for his iconic design work at Apple alongside Steve Jobs, co-founded io in 2023 after beginning a quiet collaboration with OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. Although Ive won’t become an OpenAI employee, his design firm LoveFrom will maintain independence while leading design efforts across OpenAI and io. The companies aim to develop 'physical AI embodiments'—devices that bring generative AI into the physical world, potentially through cars, robots, or AI-powered wearables similar to those by Google and Meta. The io division will be led by OpenAI executive Peter Welinder, who has experience in early-stage hardware and robotics research. OpenAI remains under nonprofit governance but is exploring structural changes to grow commercially. Both LoveFrom and OpenAI are based in San Francisco, close to the city’s historic creative neighborhoods.
6. <https://theweek.com/culture-life/personal-technology/jony-ive-joins-openai-sam-altman> - Jony Ive, the acclaimed designer behind the iconic iPhone, is teaming up with OpenAI CEO Sam Altman to develop a new piece of personal technology centered around artificial intelligence. Despite ChatGPT's success, OpenAI has struggled with developing compelling hardware to match—efforts such as the AI Pin have failed to gain traction. This new collaboration aims to fundamentally reimagine personal computing, moving beyond traditional smartphones and computers. Altman envisions a device that integrates seamlessly into users' lives, is aware of its surroundings, and operates unobtrusively—potentially reducing screen dependence. The partnership signals OpenAI's ambitious goal of rivaling, or even surpassing, the iPhone's impact. However, critics note that replacing smartphones poses a steep challenge, requiring a major leap in functionality to convince users. While Ive's involvement lends credibility and excitement, some express skepticism that even his design prowess can overcome the complexities of AI-related issues and the deeply ingrained role of smartphones in daily life.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/d31a0fdd-072a-4e64-b03f-ae5d90cfc77d> - OpenAI's recent move into consumer hardware, marked by its $6.5 billion acquisition of io, a startup co-founded by former Apple design chief Jony Ive, has stirred speculation about a potential challenge to Apple's dominance. CEO Sam Altman has heralded the end of the smartphone era, envisioning AI-driven devices better aligned with future technological needs. Apple's own AI shortcomings further fuel this narrative, particularly its failure to deliver promised AI enhancements for the iPhone. However, skepticism remains about whether this marks a real turning point. Notably, Ive will only serve as a consultant, leaving doubts about the project's innovation potential. Io's small team, though costly, may struggle to rival Apple’s decades-deep hardware and manufacturing prowess. Moreover, AI’s diffuse nature—requiring integration across various devices rather than a singular 'iPhone moment' breakthrough—suggests the era of monumental hardware launches may be over. Instead, AI is likely to enhance a diverse array of products, from wearables to smart glasses. While OpenAI’s venture holds promise, it may complement rather than disrupt existing consumer tech giants like Apple.