

Technology

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BenQ's camera is tiny, but packs photo punch

WHEN it comes to the old saying, "good things come in small packages," most people (including me) don't figure that digital cameras are included.

But, think again. There's a cadre of new cameras hitting the market that forces me to rethink the rules.

For example, there's a new \$99 camera called BenQ DC1300 that weighs only 2.2 ounces, is smaller than most cell phones, takes great snapshots, serves as a Webcam and lets you record 90 seconds of video with sound. Better yet, it comes with a strap so you can wear it if you want. It also comes with a USB cable so you can easily upload pictures into your computer.

If that's not a good enough value, the package also comes with three commercial software packages from ArcSoft and Ulead that let you edit your video clips, manage your photos and make them into a DVD slide show.

Given the low price, I really didn't expect the camera to have sophisticated features.

Wrong again.

It has a built-in flash, modes from macro to infinity, a timer and the ability to work from a tripod. It also has several professional-level capabilities and photographic modes to ensure that, regardless of lighting conditions, users get high-quality photographic images without color distortions. This model provides both automatic and manual white balancing, with settings that include auto, daylight, cloudy, tungsten light and fluorescent. Furthermore, a mode for close-ups and a burst mode allow users to take up to three photos in rapid succession.

After testing the camera, I was pleased with the clarity of the pictures. And uploading your shots to a PC or laptop is very easy.

Technically, BenQ raises the bar for cameras that use CMOS technology. Its pictures can be up to 1.3 megapixels, and to improve clarity it uses BenQ's unique Histogram and Image Transformation technology to further enhance color reproduction. With HIT, the BenQ Digital Camera 1300 is able to capture every color level in photographs for shots with crisp detail and true-to-life colors. To read more about CMOS technology, see the discussion at www.howstuffworks.com/question362.htm.

The camera is also a power miser. It runs on two AAA batteries and can shoot over 1,500 pictures on a single set of batteries if you don't use



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its flash, or 200 if you do.

The BenQ DC1300 is a little different from many of the cameras that I review. It doesn't have an LCD screen, so you cannot review your pictures until you upload them to your PC. It uses its own built-in memory to store pictures, instead of removable digital film media. It has a



For \$99, the diminutive BenQ DC1300 serves as a Webcam, records video with sound and comes with a strap and a USB cable.

fixed focus lens, but if you want a close-up, you can crop a photo with the software on the PC. Experienced digital camera owners might scoff at these "limitations," but I assure you that beginners will love the simplicity and the price.

For more information, check out the BenQ Web site at www.benq.com. You can buy the camera directly from BenQ at www.benqshopper.com or look for it at local retailers.

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