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Sony Ericsson Z610 mobile phone - FIRST LOOK

Can Sony Ericsson do fashion? We take a look at the company's new Z610

by Stuart Miles published on 31 August 2006

Sony Ericsson hasn't really done fashion up till now preferring to concentrate on communication, music and photography as its key strengths. But perhaps bowing to public pressure with the success of phones like the RAZR from Motorola and the more recent Chocolate phone from LG, the company has decided to dip its toe in the market with its latest handset, the Z610. But can Sony-Ericsson do style? Pocket-lint was the only UK website invited to Sony Ericsson's headquarters in Malmo, Sweden, to take a look ahead of its release towards the end of the year. "It is so pretty it's a shame to use it", boasted Sony Ericsson's VP Creative Design Centre, Michelle Saboune. And on the surface pretty is it. If we were to describe the company's new fashion phone, the Z610's outer body it would be "shiny". Using the same material and technique as Sony's flash-based Network Walkman range launched last year, the rather bulky (yes it is 3G) mobile phone comes with a highly reflective shiny outer body. Available in black, blue and of course the "colour de jour" pink, the mobile phone sports an OLED display underneath its polished exterior. Appearing out of nowhere when opened, the display is used to convey key information such as time, signal and battery life. The end result is like the NW-A1000 very glossy, very stunning, but very smudgeable. The colours, especially the pink, are very bright and it certainly packs a wow factor that we haven't seen since, well the last shiny glossy thing we've seen. It is at this point that you are no doubt expecting us to wax lyrical about the Z610 with lots more reference to shiny, sparkly, shimmering, glossy, polished and any other word we can think of to suggest its sleek design. Wrong. Why? Because while the promo pictures tell one story, the Z610 in the flesh comes across, as only half finished. Turn it over and the back looks like it comes from another



...cont.

phone - no shine, no gloss, nothing. Okay perhaps this can be forgiven, after all, how often do you look at the rear of a phone. But it's not just the Z610's backside that suffers from this affliction. Inside the phone offers none of the style found on the outside, as if it is a different phone altogether. The pink variant, for example, reverts to a silvery fa ade, which looks very cheap and tacky and reminiscent of the Z600 model launched in 2003. The black and blue variants are slightly better looking choosing safe gun-metal and even safer white inners respectively but the design still lacks any imagination. The flat overly spaced keypad has as much personality as a database professor looking at reorganising his cutlery drawer. Design aside, the interface, which has yet to be fully finalised (going gold in the next couple of weeks) looks promising, offering an easy to use menu system as found on models already on the market. But surprisingly lacking some of the nicer features like TrackID found on the W850 and the Blogging tool found on the K800 although it did look to feature RSS and push email support along with a built-in browser so you can take advantage of the 3G connectivity. Tech specs and the phone sports 3G connectivity, two cameras including one which is 2 megapixels, and Bluetooth.

VERDICT

First impressions from the images and details announced at the end of August suggested that Sony Ericsson's attempt at a fashion phone to match LG's Chocolate or Motorola's RAZR was a good one. In the flesh though and it's seems to have been a disappointment all round. Sony Ericsson should be applauded for not skimping on features just because they have made a phone that looks good, and for this the Z610 clearly out-performs any competition in the fashion genre, but as a fashion phone it is as shallow as a catwalk model. When it comes to design, beauty, when referring to the Z610, really is only skin deep.

At a glance

What is it?

Fashion conscious style mobile phone

Good

Shiny top surface, OLED display, 3G, Bluetooth, 2 megapixel camera

Bad

Phone looks only half finished, outside and inside look like they have come from a very different handset, bulky

Verdict

When it comes to design, beauty, when referring to the Z610, it seems is only skin deep

Price Price dependent on contract

Your score

??/10