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## Casio Exilim Card EX-S770 digital camera

Can the Casio's latest thin offering perform?

by Doug Harman published on 25 September 2006

The S770 is the camera equivalent of a catwalk model, thinner than perhaps you might think normal, but stunning looking nevertheless particularly in the right outfit. And the S770 comes with three liveries: red, silver (tested here) and blue, so you've got a choice of looks to match your mood or even your outfit. The S770 is also unique in the Casio line up as it provides true widescreen support for both stills and movies (high quality MPEG4 at up to 704 x 384-pixels and 30fps to the limit of the storage) and it's the company's slimmest model to boot, being just 13.7mm thin at the narrowest point. An F2.7, 3x zoom lens provides 38-114mm focal range offering a pretty standard range at this level. My one worry is for the lens performance, which is marred by barrel distortion at the wide end. The camera, like the wobble free catwalk models it emulates, is equipped with an anti-shake DSP set up, a software processing system that helps to reduce the effects of camera shake. The 1/2.5-inch sensor housed behind the lens is pretty small and packs 7.2-megapixel effective resolution. So, the chip's jam packed with pixels and this can often have a detrimental effect on image quality due to excessive noise, we'll see how the camera fares in a minute. In the meantime it's worth pointing out the camera is actually nice to use. Those with bigger hands (like me) might like a camera with more meat on it, but even with my fairly stubby fingers, I found the S770's handling to be good despite its waif-like dimensions. In fact, the only quibble here is the vertical zoom control, which is a tad fiddly. Unlike a stick thin model on the catwalk, the S770n has a nice curvy-yet-sloped top plate with a recessed on/off button, sliver-like shutter release and playback and capture buttons. Additionally, here you'll find the display toggle to activate the composition grid lines, live RGB histogram, dynamic brightness



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settings, information display type and the very nice "panel" display mode. The latter provides a vertical strip of fast access control options down the right side of the screen so you don't have to constantly dip into menus to change settings such as resolution, flash, focus mode, sensitivity (ISO) and the white balance settings among others. On the back plate is the large and excellent-to-use widescreen display, I found it both sharp and easy to use even in bright and direct sunlight, making it one of the best such displays I've ever used. This is particularly important when a camera lacks an optical viewfinder to fall back on, as is the case here. On the right side of the display are the vertical zoom buttons, a menu control, a ring-style four-way jog button (for scrolling and moving through images, also used for manual focus) a central joy-stick for "okaying" options and a "BS" or Best Shot button. The latter accesses the 32 scene modes, offering everything from (a disappointing) 15cm close focus so called "Macro" mode, to text document capture, firework snapping, food and a scenery setting. The camera comes with a neat cradle in which it sits to connect to PC and charge, a full charge provides enough power for around 200 -shots; that bright screen seems to suck the life from the battery very quickly. Other neat features include the active histogram display with luminance and RGB indication, exposure compensation to +/-2EV and the nine point AF, which works well and is backed up by a manual focus control that is actually nice to use. The screen magnifies the central area being focus upon so you can get good critical assessment of the focus as you go. Image quality is, overall, very good. The colour capture is great; a fast white balance (WB) set up lets you quickly manually select the WB, while the auto presets help out. Full auto WB control worked well in all but fluorescent lighting where it seemed to struggle. Metering and exposures are good, the addition of that exposure compensation helps out in difficult situations but I found even shooting into the sun where I pushed the metering to the limit, it still made a good fist of the shots. Noise issues are

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## At a glance

### What is it?

7.2-megapixel compact digital camera

### Good

Slim design and build, ultra-compact, anti-shake mode with high sensitivity setting, 32 automated snapping modes

### Bad

Close focus distance, barrel distortion at wide -angle end of lens, intrusive noise at ISO 200 and above

### Verdict

Casio's EX S770 slots into the Exilim Card range at the top, ousting the S600 and providing pretty much the slimmest camera experience you're likely to meet

**Price** £279.99

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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common with small chipped cameras with high resolution and the S770, unfortunately, suffers in that respect as well. From ISO 50, ISO 100 and up to a sensitivity of ISO 200, things are not too bad. But the top setting of ISO 400 is replete with noise including chroma noise. Detail capture also lacks a bit of finesse, noise reduction processing smoothing away some detail while the lens also seems to struggle with barrel distortion very evident as well. Overall though, if you're not printing bigger than, say, 10x8-inches, you'll be happy but the A3+ sized prints this could print are a challenge without extra processing on PC to remove noise and if you can live with the lack of detail.

## **VERDICT**

Stylish, very very compact, well built and packed with great features, the lack of more manual control might make some look elsewhere and the problems with noise and detail have dropped it a couple of points. But, if you're not going to make bigger prints, it has to be said that at the £279 price (it'll be cheaper online, so shop around) if you want a pocketable, smart and snappy-looking snapper, then the Casio Exilim Card EX-S770 might well be worth a gander.