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Sony Ericsson K850 mobile phone

Will this replace your digital camera?

by Stuart Miles published on 30 August 2007

Continuing its focus on creating the ultimate camera phone, Sony Ericsson's latest effort is the HSDPA ready K850, but has the company lost focus, or is this the best model yet? We get snapping to find out.

The 5 megapixel digital camera on the rear of the model means that the K850 is up against Nokia's N95 and Samsung's G600.

The design, as with other Cyber-shot models, is clearly focused at making consumers believe that they have a digital camera in their hands rather than a mobile phone.

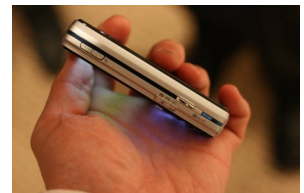
The phone features a dedicated on/off button for the camera for example as well as a shutter and zoom buttons.

There is even a slider switch that allows you to switch between still, movie and playback modes as you would normally find on any regular digital camera and completing the digi-cam appeal the memory card slots and battery is now accessed by a side door rather than having to take apart the phone as with previous Sony Ericsson models.

Memory is expandable via Sony's own Memory Stick and more controversially a microSD slot as well.

The candybar design is around the same size and thickness of the company's popular W810 Walkman model and thankfully over the previous K810 the bulbous back has been lost for a smooth glossy finish.

On the front and the keypad jostles for space against the camera functions and similar to the K810, the regular phone keyboard also has a dual purpose; switch to camera mode and illuminated icons indicate which keys act as shortcuts for the digital zoom and other functions.



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In an attempt to maximise the screen to the fullest (it's still only 2.2-inches however), keys have been lost and there is an awkward configuration at the top.

Having tried to educate Sony Ericsson users over the last couple of years to the benefits of a dedicated back button instead of following Nokia et al by doubling up the function on the "C" button, Sony Ericsson has made the bold omission that nobody gets the "back" button and so it has been ditched.

Not universal across its range of new handsets, the move will probably confuse previous Sony Ericsson users, but be a welcomed move by newcomers from Nokia, Samsung and other brands.

Also confusing is the positioning of the d-pad on the main keypad. Instead of an OK button in the centre, which is pretty much the defacto for mobile phones these days, Sony Ericsson has placed the 2 and the 5 key in there instead.

In our play with the handset, let's just say we got very frustrated.

That central button key has been moved up to three touch buttons directly underneath the screen and it will take some re-learning if you are a current Sony Ericsson user.

Inside and the software is also focused towards the camera features. First off, there is a new media browser allowing you to view photos, video, music or podcasts in one place as well as allowing you to carry out an intelligent search to see photos by the month they were taken, view thumbnail images or scroll through in full-picture mode.

The K850 will also feature BestPic, Sony Ericsson's image technology that takes nine pictures in one burst so you can choose the best one.

At a glance

What is it?

5 megapixel camera phone

Good

5 megapixel camera, HSDPA, dedicated camera controls, software, Best shot mode

Bad

Keypad confusing to use, no back button, chunky

Verdict

With 5 megapixels on board and a stack of camera features, the K850 follows Sony Ericsson's march on bring the gap between mobile phones and digital cameras ever closer

Price price dependent on contract

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

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Other features include the company's range of software tools like the Blogger photo tool that allows you to publish images straight from the phone to your blog without the need for a computer.

VERDICT

With 5 megapixels on board and a stack of camera features, the K850 follows Sony Ericsson's march on bring the gap between mobile phones and digital cameras ever closer.

While all the camera features are brilliant, for us the mobile phone element has sacrificed useability. The keys are fiddly to use and the new layout confusing. Furthermore we found the on/off button for the digital camera awkward as well.

This is a massive leap on from the K810, however with an awkward keypad layout it will end up frustrating most people.