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## Fuji FinePix Z100fd digital camera

Does thin mean good with Fuji's latest model?

by Doug Harman published on 7 November 2007

The Fuji FinePix Z100fd offers a slim line camera package that comes in a selection of four colours: Shell Pink, Satin Silver and Cappuccino Brown, Tuxedo Black and a black special edition with a contrasting white sliding cover panel.

Add to this stylish, all-metal camera a superb (internal) 5x optical zoom lens and Fuji's latest set of advanced auto-snapping technologies, including an 8-megapixel SuperCCD sensor and you have a very tempting treat indeed.

First and probably most useful of Fuji's latest gizmos is the dual image stabilisation system that incorporates a CCD shift anti shake sensor arrangement that moves to counteract you shakiness combined with a high ISO setting, to help reduce subject blur.

This is a great combo but I found the boosted ISO (sensitivity runs from ISO 64 up to ISO 1600) added loads in extra noise and the CCD shift system does not, in my opinion, shift quite enough.

For instance, I shot some images while at a candle lit party and despite the dual image stabilisation, blur was manifest in most shots - even in shots where on similar specified cameras I've successfully hand held snaps before - and noise was all to apparent, this despite Fuji making much of its noise control technology, that to be fair usually works a treat.

However, the dark surrounds did mean shutter speeds dropped through to the bargain basement; around a quarter of a second and slower, so perhaps I'm being a tad harsh on both counts.

This party setting did highlight the white balance control and performance and although it generally



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got things right in auto, it was not consistent. Setting the camera to its party mode improved things while use of the dedicated incandescent white balance setting (it's in the manual mode along with the usual array of presets such as fluorescent, daylight and shade) really showed what it could do.

Another first for the 100fd is Fuji face detection technology that forms part of Fuji's Real Photo technology that also includes automatic redeye removal. This uses the face detection technology to recognise the eyes in a face and, if there's redeye on show, it will process it away for you prior to saving the image over to either the generous 54MB of internal memory or onto either xD Picture Card or SDHC external storage and all without affecting any other part of a shot. I found the system was very impressive and certainly works a treat.

The camera lacks an optical viewfinder, an increasingly common trait on cameras with larger screens, as is the 2.7-inch colour LCD on the 100fd that has a high, 230K-pixel resolution. Detailed and nice to use I found the screen flared when shooting into bright light and, as is also very common with cameras such as this, the screen became hard to see when shooting in direct sunlight.

In terms of handling the simple control layout includes the face detection AF button alongside the larger shutter release, the natty diagonal sliding lens cover turns the camera on and off while lens zooming chores are dealt with via neat zoom controls on the camera's back.

A rotating jog dial with central menu/OK button provides (funkily animated, but slow) scrolling of images in playback while menus can be spun through using the rotating ability of the "jog" dial. While this speeds menu navigation, it is not as nice to use as the novelty suggests, as it is easy to overshoot the required option with constant toing a frowning necessary if you spin the dial too

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## At a glance

### What is it?

World's thinnest image stabilised 5x optical zoom 8-megapixel digital compact

### Good

Build and design, lightweight, fast operation, good flash exposures, good low ISO image quality, simple to use

### Bad

No optical viewfinder, noisy images over ISO 800, AF performance in low light, AF performance with smaller subjects, screen flare in bright conditions

### Verdict

The Z100fd combines a nice 5x optical zoom lens with a host of clever snapping features plus a stylishly small body

**Price** £199

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**10/10**

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fast.

Performance wise, the camera has a couple of niggles. Start up to first shot time is around a second, and shot to shot (without flash) is good with three shots (the top three or the last three in a sequence are captured) in around 1.5 seconds unless the camera needs to refocus or the flash fires. Flash recharge is around five seconds and disappointingly, the camera locks up as the flash charges, which is a shame.

Focusing becomes an issue in low light too, where the camera will hunt trying to key on the subject or just continually fail to focus. So, beware in low light. There was another focus niggle on smaller subjects in macro mode where the camera would simply refuse to focus on anything in the frame smaller than the central AF area, and no matter what I did.

In terms of image quality, the 100fd performs very well indeed - assuming it has focused! Metering is excellent, colour is rich but not overly so (but of course, you have colour vivid and mono colour modes as well, in menus) while the dynamic range seems to favour highlights over shadows, which look prematurely dense in most of my shadier images. Noise is well controlled up to ISO 800, which is akin to other camera's ISO 400, but at ISO 1600 it is disappointingly obvious.

One of the 100fd's highlights however is the flash exposure performance which was excellent, particularly in the face detect AF mode where the flash rarely if ever bleached out the subject, even when close to the camera and overall made a more confident fist of flash photography all round. It is quite impressive.

But there's one more problem and that is battery life. While I did use flash for a lot of then images taken during the test I got around 150-images (with a certain amount of reviewing as well, of course,) before the battery showed it was on its last legs. About twenty shots later it died, so

slightly underwhelming and certainly not what I'd expected.

## VERDICT

The Fuji FinePix Z100fd provides a host of neat features and a good lens with a very useful 36 -180mm (35mm equiv.) zoom range that helps pack in detail; the only really bothersome elements being those focusing foibles and a tad more noise than I'd expect given Fuji's usually superb performance in this regard.

In short, the Z100fd provides combinations of nice design and build, good image quality and a range of clever and, importantly, truly useful features - that work - plus the great flash performance being a real stand out.

Overall, then, the Z100fd is good rather than great but still certainly worth a closer look particularly if you want a camera with slim and stylish build without the bulk.