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Nikon Coolpix P80 digital camera - First Look

Will this get you in the action?

by Stuart Miles published on 14 April 2008

Nikon's new flagship zoom digital camera offers an 18x optical zoom but will it get you into the action? Pocket-lint was given a pre-production evaluation sample to find out.

Being a zoom-specific camera the design is large and bulky for a compact (110 x 79 x 78mm), but still surprisingly well packed given its range of capabilities.

The optical zoom, as you would expect, dominates the design and it offers a 27-486mm focal range giving you plenty of zoom capabilities. The back meanwhile sports a 2.7-inch screen and an electronic viewfinder both of which are responsive.

The camera's layout is straightforward and easy to master and use. The P80 offers 15 scene modes alongside the usual array of P, M, A and auto settings giving you enough control and automation over your picture options.

Inside and the P80 offers a 10-megapixel sensor, ISO up to 6400 (for image sizes of 3 megapixels or smaller), and the usual array of red-eye fix, AF, and luckily image stabilisation via the camera's sensor shift VR (Vibration Reduction), so at least you can use the zoom without every image being blurry.

Images are saved on an SD card (SDHC is also supported) and the camera also comes with its own internal memory to get you started, although at 50MB, while better than the usual 32MB found with Canon cameras, is still unlikely to get you very far without a card.

For the sports photographer out there, no doubt one of the main buyers of a camera like this, there is a Sport Continuous Mode that allows you



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to shoot up to 30 consecutive pictures at 4, 6 or 13fps; the catch is that image resolution at 13fps is reduced to 3 megapixels rather than the full 10 megapixels displayed on the badge on the side of the camera.

In-test, and even though this was an evaluation sample, the images were good although not perfect. The zoom worked a treat however images showed plenty of noise (remember, this is a First Look pre-production sample and we aren't judging the image quality).

In terms of handling, using the zoom at its maximum settings does require a steady hand, especially if you are going to opt for the digital zoom as well.

Likewise, and again we stress this maybe due the sample we had, images took a tad longer than we would have liked to save before allowing us to take the next picture.

VERDICT

If you are looking for a zoom-centred digital camera in a fairly small package, the Nikon P80 is sure to offer you just that. However, on closer inspection, a lot of the camera's top features outside the zoom lens won't be able to benefit from the 10 megapixel sensor (for example ISO settings and Burst mode).

However concerns about image quality in our pre-production sample means we await a final version before being able to recommend or suggest you steer clear when this camera hits the shops later this month.

At a glance

What is it?

Zoom digital camera

Good

18x optical zoom

Bad

Bulky, some features are only available at 3 megapixels

Verdict

At first glance the P80 looks to be a good snapper, but concerns about image quality in our First Look mean the verdict is still out

Price £299.99

Your score

?/10