

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3469/swann-flashlight-dvr-security-torch>

Swann FlashlightDVR security torch

Stop! Or my Mom will shoot!

by Chris Hall published on 17 September 2008

Swann make a range of security and home monitoring products and the FlashlightDVR is, as the name suggests, a torch with a digital video recorder. Intrigued by the concept, Pocket-lint checked it out.

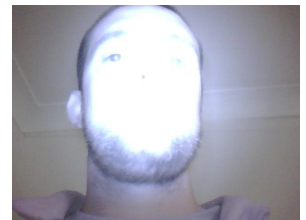
First up the torch is a pretty regular LED torch, formed from aluminium, it feels weighty and up to the job, but perhaps not as sturdy as a classic D-cell Maglite, but shares similar styling along the body. The front houses the LED lamp and the technical components in a bulbous end edged in rubber. The screw cap is also clad in chunky rubber, doubling up as a grip so unscrewing the battery compartment is a breeze.

Normal illumination is provided by the LED lamp which has three brightness settings, which, whilst nice, don't really make much of a useful difference. It does, however, mean that to turn off the torch you have to cycle through all the settings. The buttons are luminous themselves as well, so easy to find in the dark.

Power comes from three C cell batteries. The torch has really been designed to run on rechargables, as we found that the regular alkaline batteries were dead fairly quickly. On the base of the torch you'll find a 12V DC input to support the mains and car power supplies included in the box, which will be popular with roving security guards in cars. This connector lives under a rubber cover alongside the miniSD card slot and the Mini-USB jack.

The Mini-USB (USB 1.1 compliant) is the method for retrieving your files having used the camera, but a word of warning - you can't access the internal memory when the battery is flat. However, even without batteries, you can still run the torch off the mains.

But the real gadgetry comes into play with the on



...cont.

-board colour CMOS camera sensor. The controls allow you to snap video or stills at the press of a button, either onto the 128MB of internal memory (and at about 40KB a JPEG, that's a fair few). An LCD display feeds back basic information, such as battery life and so on. If you need more storage, there is a memory card slot that accepts the slightly obscure miniSD format, up to 2GB (about 3 hours).

All files are saved with file names composed of the date and time, so it is important to ensure that you set this up from the outset. Image files are standard JPEG which come out at 640 x 480. Video capture is VGA at 30fps as MPEG4. Overall the video is fairly good considering this is a touch. You also get sound support so you'll have proof that you issued the correct warning before releasing the dogs, and so on.

Taking photos in the dark leads to some interesting results, namely that you'll have to keep still to avoid blur when using the torch. You'll find that if you are too close to the subject then you'll lose a lot of details - see the face shot - where the illumination of the miscreant has blown-out all the pixels so there is no detail in the shot. Otherwise, it works pretty well, capturing images in daylight as a fixed focus camera would. Colours are always a little washed out, but there is enough detail.

One of the bonus features here is the 17 infrared bulbs on the front of the torch. The IR night vision gives you video recording up to about 4 metres and means that you can snap a shot without turning on the torch. We're guessing that for snapping a burglar in the act or stalking the girl next door, it could be quite useful.

VERDICT

It is a bit of a hefty price when compared to a torch, or even a low spec video camera, but as this is most likely to be a tool for your work, that is perhaps a moot point. Rechargeable batteries are a must and some high capacity ones at that.

At a glance

What is it?

Flashlight with camera

Good

Infrared illuminator actually works, pictures pretty good for a torch, well built, mains and car charger

Bad

Poor battery life, uses miniSD rather than a more common card format, expensive

Verdict

Whilst your average home owner will have no use for such a device, those in a security line of work might welcome the combination of these tools in one

Price £199.99

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3469/swann-flashlight-dvr-security-torch>

...cont.

Overall, the build quality feels pretty good and the rather than being a gimmick, the camera and the video do actually work within their expected limitations. Whilst your average home owner will have no use for such a device, those in a security line of work might welcome the combination of these tools in one.