

Microsoft LifeCam Show webcam

A webcam for your travels?

by Chris Hall published on 29 October 2008

You might question the value of an external webcam as integrated solutions seem to be increasingly common, both on notebooks and now on monitors too. Microsoft has a range of cameras and the LifeCam Show is aimed at those on the move.

The LifeCam Show comes in a rather contemporary colour: brown, or perhaps these days it should be called Espresso, which is perhaps Microsoft's attempt at lifestyling. The camera itself is fairly compact, measuring 33mm wide and 62mm high. These compact dimensions are thanks to any lack of mounting on the camera itself; all you get is a small circular depression on either side containing a magnet.

The magnet allows connection to a couple of box-supplied mounting options. The first is a neat little clip which will happily bite only most notebook screens. You can then mount the camera either in front or behind the screen and facing either way thanks to that magnetic attachment. The circular attachment design also means you can adjust the cam to the exact position you need with little messing around. The second mounting option is a plastic stick with a wide base, allowing the same sort of adjustment, whilst providing an option if you can't clip onto your screen, such as in a desktop set-up.

If those mounting options are not enough, there are also two adhesive-backed discs in the box, meaning you can stick them to practically anything, such as a permanent mounting point on the outside of your notebook lid. You are also provided with a neat protective case for the camera itself, making this a practical device for travel.

The software is a rather heavy and time-consuming install. You get the normal LifeCam software, allowing you to capture stills and video,



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as well as straight up audio capture. In all cases you can, straight from the software, play or email your last capture. You also get Microsoft's Windows Live Call integration, which ties into a shortcut button on the side of the camera. Whilst a nice option, you can't tailor that button to your preferred video messaging service, which is a bit mean.

However the camera will work with a number of different protocols, including Yahoo Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger and Skype, which we tested the webcam with.

The camera itself is a 2-megapixel unit, which will give you video capture at 640 x 480. The result is a good clear picture. We found that the camera also coped well with exposure, giving a nice natural tone to skin colours and quickly adjusting to changing light conditions, so even in lower light it doesn't suffer like some lesser units do. Microsoft boast that the webcam will always be in focus and generally we found this to be the case.

We found that the results were good overall with positive feedback from those we had video calls with. The on-board microphone features noise-cancelling wizardry built-in and callers reported that things sounded nice and clear. Webcam performance is often dictated by your connection as much as anything, so if you have variable signal strength on your Wi-Fi, this is something to bear in mind.

VERDICT

Overall this is a good compact and stylish offering. The inability to change the call button to Skype was an irritation, but it will launch Windows Live for you, so if you are a user then it saves some messing around.

Sound and video performance was also impressive and the size makes this a convenient option for those travelling, but you might not like the price. At £79.95, this is an expensive option, but as a result, there is little to complain about in

At a glance

What is it?

2-megapixel webcam with mic

Good

Good quality video and audio, lots of mounting options

Bad

Expensive, heavy install

Verdict

At £79.95, this is an expensive option, but as a result, there is little to complain about in terms of performance

Price £79.95

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3566/microsoft-lifecam-show-webcam-review>

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terms of performance.