

Toshiba Camileo H20 camcorder

An HD camcorder worthy of your dough?

by Jamie Carter published on 10 June 2009

Costing just £180, could this Full HD shooter from Toshiba prove the perfect bridge between throwaway handhelds that sell on specs (and little else) and professional HD camcorders?

Almost. With so many pocket-sized shooters available that claim to offer HD filming, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the chunky camcorder is dead. Step forward the H20, a camcorder whose size is somewhere between a pocket and a pro model.

For some reason it's still advertised as being in Toshiba's "pocket DV" range, though we can't imagine it fitting in anything but the pockets of an oversize duffel coat. Finished in Midnight Blue (looks black to us), the H20 can record in a number of qualities (VGA, WXGA, up to maximum of 1440 x 1080 pixels - which isn't quite Full HD 1080p, but it's near enough for us. In this mode the H20 films at 30 frames per second.

Its 3-inch LCD screen revolves 360 degrees and hides a USB port (for file transfer), an HDMI output (for hooking-up to a HD Ready TV) and a mini-jack (for connecting to any TV in Composite video quality). The bottom of the cam stages a hole for a tripod and a flap sheltering a SDHC Card slot and the battery. That card slot can take SD or SDHC cards up to a maximum of 32GB in size - that's space for around 8 hours of high-def footage shot in the best quality.

Its lens can take 5-megapixel still pictures, while for video it's 5x optical zoom seems a decent return. When using the cam, the optical zoom does have some problems with focusing. Keep your finger on the top-mounted zoom dial and the 4x digital zoom kicks-in - though it only reaches 2x when shooting in maximum quality.

The software - which works only with a PC, not



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Mac (you're missing a trick there, Toshiba) - includes a direct upload to YouTube as well as basic editing on ArcSoft.

New to this generation is a Night Mode feature and a few novelty modes, including black & white, normal, classic and negative mode. Crazy, eh? These modes are effectively a replacement for full manual control, which the H20 virtually does away with save for some white balance controls.

Though it's bigger than most pocket shooters, the H20's design makes our hands seem too big. Seriously - operating the zoom toggle is uncomfortable while it's all too easy to leave a stray pinky over the microphone.

VERDICT

Film outside and you're treated to bright and breezy pictures that don't suffer from much blur when played back on a HD Ready TV, though the H20 is slow to adapt to changes in light and struggles with darkness even using its night mode. Its biggest problem, however, is focusing; high definition does lose its shine when the object you're pointing the camcorder at isn't in focus.

Although a step up from the brand's tiny S10, which sells for only £30 less, we're not sure the H20's extra bulk pays its way.

At a glance

What is it?

Portable HD camcorder

Good

Detail in motion-free Full HD video, outdoor use, versatile SD options for uploading

Bad

Slow to focus, ergonomics, size/features ratio

Verdict

Although a step up from the tiny S10, which sells for only £30 less, we're not sure the H20's extra bulk pays its way

Price £180

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10