

FANTASTIC FOUR

THESE NEW COMPACTS BOAST INNOVATIONS EVEN A PRO COULD LOVE | BY KATHLEEN DAVIS


NIKON COOLPIX S1000PJ
COOLEST FEATURE: CAMERA TURNS INTO A MINI-PROJECTOR

Bigger LCDs and Wi-Fi have made sharing digital photos easier, but you still have to pass the camera around to give everyone a look. Nikon's new 12.1-megapixel Coolpix solves the problem with first-of-its-kind technology. Turn on its tiny, built-in projector and everyone in the room can view VGA-quality photos or videos (with sound) at sizes up to 40 inches across, on surfaces up to six feet away. The coolest new Coolpix is lots of camera too, with a 5X zoom that starts out at a wide-angle 28mm (35mm equivalent) and vibration reduction bolstered by a motion-detection system that ups ISO and shutter speed automatically. (Sensitivity goes as high as ISO 6400.) Still not sure you'll get it sharp? The Best Shot Selector shoots a burst of up to 10 frames and saves the sharpest one.

BUY IT: \$430; nikonusa.com

SAMSUNG TL225
COOLEST FEATURE: TOUCH-SCREEN IS HIGHEST-RES EVER

This 12.2-megapixel compact takes a cue from Apple's iPhone. Using its 3.5-inch touch-screen, you can scroll through photos with finger swipes, delete photos by drawing an "X" through them or rotate photos by tracing a circle. The LCD itself boasts the highest resolution of any camera, with an impressive 1,152,000 pixels. Aside from the TL225's dazzling, user-friendly interface, its face-recognition capability can memorize up to 20 faces that you identify for it — and when it spots one, it bases focus and exposure on it. The Schneider zoom has a nearly 5X range that starts at a wide-angle 27mm (35mm equivalent). Also way cool: a front-facing screen for self-portraits.

BUY IT: \$350; samsung.com

FUJIFILM FINEPIX F70EXR
COOLEST FEATURE: SIMULATES SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD

It packs a 10X wide-angle zoom into the smallest body in its class, but Fuji's new 10-megapixel model has other unique charms. In Pro Focus mode, it shoots a series of frames in which focus is automatically varied from your actual focused distance and reassembles them to create an out-of-focus — and less-distracting — background and foreground. Ideal for portraits, that effect is impossible to achieve with a small-chip, short-lens camera in a single exposure. Likewise, in Pro Low-Light mode the F70EXR shoots a series of bracketed exposures — then reassembles the frames to produce a much smoother, fuller-toned image with greatly reduced noise.

BUY IT: \$270; fujifilmusa.com

SONY CYBER-SHOT DSC-WX1
COOLEST FEATURE: MAKES PANORAMAS WITHOUT STITCHING

Even automatic panorama stitching programs take work during shooting to get a seamless shot. Sony's 10-megapixel WX1 makes the technique intuitive: Hold down the shutter button in its Sweep Panorama mode and simply pan across the scene, and it fires off 10 frames per second, reassembling them into a sharp, seamless image that measures a considerable 7152x1080 pixels. (Like an old-fashioned swiveling-lens panoramic camera, the WX1 can cover 185 degrees.) Taking it all in is made easier by a crisp Zeiss 4X zoom that starts at a very wide 24mm equivalent.

BUY IT: \$380; sony.com