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The Newest Digital Camera Features Will Surprise You

The digital camera has become ubiquitous. You now find them built into almost everything that is portable and digital. While you can assume that a serious photographer won't be willing to trade his or her photo-centric-featured camera for a tripped out multipurpose digital device, the question becomes: What does a camera manufacturer have to do to keep the general public buying its camera hardware if it is only capable of taking pictures?

Casio has two solutions to staying relevant in today's marketplace. To leapfrog what you can do with a cell phone camera or other manufacturers' digital cameras, Casio has packed its new Exilim EX-S12 (Photo 1) with some amazing new features.

The EX-S12's dynamic "Best Shot" feature lets you easily switch the background behind your subject. In layperson's language, what does this mean? With just three snaps of a photo shutter you can lasso people, pets, or movable objects out of one scene and then insert them into a different photo. (See Photo 2.)

Television studios and professional photographers often use a green screen behind their subjects to perform this digital magician's trick. This camera does it on the fly, without a green screen, whenever you get the urge to amaze your friends with a photo that defies gravity, logic, or even the space-time continuum. The S12 has two digital image processing chips instead of the usual one found in other digital cameras. The first chip processes digital image data into photos. The second chip lets you create special, often magical, ef-

fects without the use of a computer. To see what this camera can do on the fly, watch the video that is linked to this column at www.technologytoday.us/id27.htm.

This feature alone makes the Casio EX-S12 a dream machine for elementary school teachers and parents of young children. I am certain that this feature is the reason that Casio chose the Children's Museum in New York City as the place to introduce this camera to the press.

The two processing chips are integral parts of a new high-speed engine that makes the above feature possible and also allows you to burst shoot up to 10 images per second. After you rapidly shoot this series of pictures, you can look at each and select which ones to keep or keep them all. When this feature is set, the camera lowers your megapixel selection down from its 12 megapixel maximum to 2 megapixels per image.

This new high-speed engine also allows you to shoot great handheld scenic night photos. When set to the "Best Shot" function, a click of the shutter will rapidly take 10 photos in one second without a flash. The EX-S12's onboard computer will then layer the photos together so that all of the underexposed images add up to one fantastic night scene image.

The camera's one- or two-person self-portrait mode lets you turn it around to photograph yourself. In general, when you turn a camera around and hold it at arm's length, you can't tell when you are in the frame. With this camera, when you press the shutter release button, the camera will wait until it sees one or two full faces centered in its frame before it takes the picture.

Among many other features, the EX-S12 has a video-shooting mode that can shoot high-definition or YouTube-quality movies. Before you start shooting your video, you select the video's resolution.

At the beginning of this column, I mentioned that Casio has a two-solution approach to staying ahead of its competition: The company has recently announced that it will soon market a camera-centric cell phone. If Casio's camera cell phone hybrid proves true to its camera roots and also functions equally as well as a cell phone, I will explore its abilities in a future column.



Photo 1—Casio's EX-S12



Photo 2—Example of some of the magic the EX-S12 can do

Recalling the Facts

1. If a cell phone has a built-in camera, do you feel it is necessary to also own a separate digital camera? Why?

2. If you could design your own camera hybrid, what features would you include in your device? ☺

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