

# First look

## Time to trade up to a digital SLR?

The Sony Alpha 230 is an entry-level digital SLR camera, and is the successor to the Best Buy Sony Alpha 200. We haven't fully tested the Alpha 230 yet, but here are our initial impressions based on some hands-on time with the camera.

The Alpha 230 is an interesting camera to consider if you're just getting into digital SLR (DSLR) photography. It's light (just 450g without its batteries) and compact, and the number of buttons on the body has been stripped down to make it less daunting for beginners. Digital SLR novices will also like the on-screen text and diagrams that describe available settings, offering the user a tutorial of sorts.

The diagram showing how to use various exposure settings is particularly good – a stationary figure illustrates that a longer

shutter speed can be used, while a running figure shows that a quicker shutter speed should be used.

The camera offers a resolution of 10.2Mp, and the screen on the back measures 2.7 inches diagonally. Unfortunately, the LCD doesn't offer live view, a feature that's becoming more common on DSLRs, so you'll have less of an idea of what the final picture will look like until it's been taken.

The Alpha 230 has a maximum ISO of 3,200, six scene modes and six white balance presets. The white balance can be manually adjusted to allow for more accurate colour representation in different light. Sony claims that it can snap up to 2.5 pictures every second.



The Alpha 230 is available with an 18-55mm kit lens for £400 at Jessops.

Find out how it compares to other DSLRs we've tested by browsing the reviews at [www.which.co.uk/digitalslrs](http://www.which.co.uk/digitalslrs).

**VERDICT** Light and compact, the Sony Alpha 230 features useful on-screen tips and advice, making it great for novices, but the lack of a live view through its LCD screen could be a problem for those used to using point-and-shoot models.

### Cutting the cords

Messless's charge station is a universal charging device that allows you to charge up to four gadgets at once. We haven't tested this device in our labs, but here are our first impressions.

The Messless station is certainly a more attractive option than having several cables and docks on a table or trailing around your home – it runs off a single power cable that can be hidden out of sight. But, as devices stand upright with no

support except for the charge station

connection, they have the potential to be knocked over and damaged fairly easily.

It's supplied with adapters suitable for Nokia and Sony Ericsson phones, iPods, PSPs and anything that charges via a micro USB connection. You can buy other adaptors from [www.yourmessless.com](http://www.yourmessless.com) for around £15 each.

**VERDICT** The Messless charge station does away with many cables and charges multiple devices, but at around £70 from [www.cutebitz.com](http://www.cutebitz.com), it's an expensive way to keep things tidy, and devices sit on the charger precariously.



### Toshiba's touchscreen

The Toshiba TG01 has a large 4.1-inch touchscreen and boasts the UK's fastest mobile phone processor – a 1GHz 'Snapdragon' chip.

The TG01 is only 9.9mm thick, but is considerably larger than the iPhone 3GS. Its resolution trounces the iPhone, and we found that the screen was one of the outstanding features of this handset.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for its operating system – a customised version of Windows Mobile 6.1 Professional, which is versatile but not very intuitive.

The TG01 has full Flash support, so video on sites such as YouTube plays directly in the web browser.

We're currently putting it through our full lab tests – keep an eye on [www.which.co.uk/mobilephones](http://www.which.co.uk/mobilephones) for the complete test results.

The TG01 is available exclusively on Orange, free on 24-month contracts starting at £39.15 a month.

**VERDICT** Impressively large and clear touchscreen, but the interface isn't intuitive and it's expensive.



## DYSON'S LATEST HANDHELD VAC

**D**yson's first handheld vac – the DC16 – proved popular, but its short battery life was disappointing. Dyson's DC31 boasts a new motor and two suction strength settings. We've given it a quick trial to give you our first impressions.

It has a robust feel about it, but most of the weight is in the motor above the handle, so it's more comfortable to use if you angle it downwards. You have to keep your finger on the trigger to keep the vac going. See it in action at [www.which.co.uk/dysondc31](http://www.which.co.uk/dysondc31).

Using the higher setting on the DC31 gives the same amount of running time – around six minutes – as the DC16, but much better suction. The suction on the DC31's lower

setting is similar to the DC16's, but the charge lasts much longer, – around 10 minutes.

Unlike most handheld vacs, which run out of juice slowly, the DC31 cuts out before the suction drops, so you use it only while it's still sucking at your chosen level.

The DC31 costs £130, and the DC31 Animal is £150 from [www.dyson.co.uk](http://www.dyson.co.uk).

**VERDICT** They're handy vacs with good suction, but may be too bulky for vacuuming twisty tight spaces.



## Fit more in your oven

**T**he result of a competition among Lakeland customers to dream up the next kitchen 'must have', Lakeland's Oven Add-a-Shelf (£19.99) makes use of the empty space at the bottom of your oven.

The free-standing, stainless steel rack slides in beneath the lowest oven shelf, giving an extra cooking level – handy if you're cooking a big dinner.

Baking a tray of cookies, oven chips or a pizza on the extra shelf could help you use the spare space and let you cook more dishes at once. But if you end up moving existing shelves around to fit large dishes on the Add-a-Shelf, it could prove to be a false economy.

**VERDICT** A thoughtful solution to the age-old problem of how to cook everything you need at the same time, but it won't turn your oven into a Tardis.



## JUST OUT

A peek at what's new on the shelves

### LG GWL227HSYA

£1,100

Available from Comet and Currys



LG claims this American-style side-by-side fridge-freezer, is the first ever non-plumbed-in model to have a water and ice dispenser. As the GWL227HSYA has a reservoir filled from the

tap, it doesn't need to be placed near a water outlet. It is A-rated for energy efficiency but, because it's so big, it will use more energy than a conventional fridge-freezer. We'll be testing it soon; see [www.which.co.uk/fridgefreezers](http://www.which.co.uk/fridgefreezers) for the results.

### Hoover Dynamic 10+

£699

Available from Comet

The DYN10146P Dynamic 10+ is about the size of a standard washing machine, but its drum has enough space to wash up to 10kg of cottons in one go. This should be big enough for a duvet, which might save you the bother of going to the laundrette. We haven't tested it yet – full results will be available at [www.which.co.uk/washingmachines](http://www.which.co.uk/washingmachines)

in November – though it's worth noting that Hoover washers get low reliability scores in our annual survey.



### Wii Sports Resort

£40

Widely available

Nintendo has released a follow-up to its popular Wii Sports title on the Nintendo Wii games console. Wii Sports Resort adds more exotic



sports including fencing, frisbee, cycling and table tennis to the original's roster of bowling and golf. A new controller that offers greater accuracy is included, though some will find sports such as canoeing less appealing than the original.

### Magic Blackout Blinds £35

Available from Ryman

The company which appeared on *Dragons' Den* with its Magic Whiteboard sheets has also produced 'magic' blackout blinds for those whose curtains don't cut out enough light. The blackout blinds come in a roll of 10 perforated sheets which stick to a window with static. You can tear off a sheet or cut several to size, and the company says the blinds are also useful for boat windows and for caravans. We're giving them a full review – you can read our findings at [www.which.co.uk/blackoutblinds](http://www.which.co.uk/blackoutblinds).

