

Olympus 4040 Zoom

- 4.1 megapixel camera
- 35-105mm f/1.8-2.6 zoom lens
- 7.7 megapixel SHQ mode
- £800



The rear-mounted rocker switch makes menu navigation easy



The fast f/1.8-2.6 zoom lens makes low light work a real possibility.

WHEN IT COMES to producing great digital cameras, Olympus appear to have it sorted. It seems only yesterday the C3040 was being hailed as the benchmark of the 3.3 megapixel brigade, but before you know it, they're back on the scene with yet more pixels. With a similar layout and construction to the C3040, the 4.1 megapixel C4040 has an updated on-screen menu with big, easy to read graphics and an intuitive system that's simple to use. The level at which you can fine-tune and tweak this camera is outstanding, and everything you could want is available for you to set. A very useful feature is a quick custom function which lets you assign any setting to three on-screen menu buttons or one physical button on the back of the camera. After switching on and snapping your first pic, you realise how fast this camera is – there's not much hanging around while it boots itself up.

Menu changes are quick too, and this rapid access to the camera's settings makes shooting a very painless experience. While nowhere near the speed of a film SLR, autofocus is relatively brisk and the shutter lag is much shorter than you'd expect in this class of camera. Picture quality is very high, with accurate exposures and consistently sharp images. Colour is natural but vibrant, and in difficult conditions with mixed light sources, there's a handy manual white balance. On the down-side, there's still no metal



tripod mount and the lens still makes the camera emit a painful noise if you power it up with the lens cap on. In common with many digital cameras, the optical viewfinder is poor and can't be used for accurate framing. Better to rely on the LCD monitor and live with the accompanying battery drain. The fast f/1.8-2.6 lens means that low light situations are captured better and when combined with the noise reduction mode, night time shots with long exposures (up to 16sec in manual mode) are a real possibility.

The 3200x2400 mode works well, and interpolates the in-camera resolution to 7.7 megapixels. This is saved as a JPEG, keeping the write-to-card time down to around 6 secs. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

OLYMPUS C4040 ZOOM 4.1 megapixel digital camera

LENS 35-105mm f/1.8-2.6mm lens

TYPE Digital, non-interchangeable lens

FOCUSING TTL contrast type, AF, manual, spot AF

RESOLUTION IN PIXELS 4.1 megapixel CCD gives 2272x1704pixels. In-camera interpolation to 3200 x 2400 in SHQ/HQ mode (7.7 megapixel mode)

MONITOR 1.8in TFT (114K pixels)

SHOOTING MODES Auto, aperture priority, shutter priority, black & white, sepia, white board, black board

METERING Digital ESP and spot

PICTURE RECORDING MODES TIFF, SHQ (two levels), HQ (two levels), SQ1 (two levels), SQ2 (two levels)

WHITE BALANCE Automatic, preset and custom

SUPPLIED MEMORY CARD 16Mb

STORAGE MEDIA SmartMedia

SHUTTER RANGE 1/6sec to 1/800sec

SENSITIVITY auto, 100-400 ISO

FLASH Automatic, red-eye reduction, forced flash, flash off, leading or trailing slow synchro and 5-pin external socket for flashgun

WEIGHT 320g (no batteries)

DIMENSIONS 109.5x76.5x69.6mm

BATTERY 4 x AA, 2 x CR-V3 lithium

SUPPLIED WITH 16Mb SmartMedia card, USB cable, AV cable, strap, lens cap, lens cap string, 2 x lithium battery pack, Infrared remote control and Olympus software for Mac & PC



The Digital ESP metering does a great job in less than perfect conditions and the standard image size of 2272x1704 pixels produces good-sized pics. Check it on the CD.

PRINT QUALITY AT A4 SIZE



PRINT QUALITY AT A3 SIZE



WIDE ANGLE



ZOOM



The zoom lens offers a useful range, equivalent to 35-105mm in 35mm.

DIGITAL PHOTO TEST RATING **91%**

This camera sits neatly between the C3040 and the E10, but with images this good it's nearer to the E10 for a lot less cash. Simple enough for beginners, yet advanced enough for semi-pro use. Very responsive, with good handling and great pictures, it's a camera from the top drawer. Just sort out the lens cap and the plastic mount! RAY ALLEN

CONTACT OLYMPUS 0207 253 2772 WEBSITE <WWW.OLYMPUS.CO.UK>

Epson PhotoPC 3100z

- 3.3 megapixel camera
- 34-102mm f/7-21mm digital lens
- Auto or manual (spot or matrix) metering
- £649



The main mode dial gives straightforward access to settings.



The buttons around the screen make menu selections easy.

SPECIFICATIONS

EPSON PHOTOPC 3100Z 3.3 megapixel digital

LENS 34-102mm f/7-21mm

TYPE Digital, non-interchangeable lens

FOCUSING TTL contrast type, AF, manual.

RESOLUTION IN PIXELS 3.3 megapixel CCD Gives 2048x1536. With hardware interpolation 2544x1904 (4.8 megapixel HyPict mode)

MONITOR 1.8" TFT (110K pixels)

SHOOTING MODES Auto, aperture priority, shutter priority, Monochrome, Program modes sport, portrait and landscape.

METERING Auto and manual (spot or matrix)

PICTURE RECORDING MODES TIFF, HyPict, HyPict TIFF, Super Fine, Fine and Standard.

WHITE BALANCE Automatic and custom

SUPPLIED MEMORY CARD 16Mb

STORAGE MEDIA CompactFlash

SHUTTER RANGE 8 sec to 1/1000 sec

SENSITIVITY auto, 100-400 ISO

FLASH Automatic, red-eye reduction, forced flash, flash off, leading or trailing slow synchro and hotshoe for external flash gun.

WEIGHT 358g (no batteries)

DIMENSIONS 108x89x65mm

BATTERY 4 x AA cells

SUPPLIED WITH 16Mb CF card, lens adapter, USB cable, AV cable, strap, lens cap string, soft case, 4 x AA Alkaline batteries and Epson software for Mac & PC

NOT WELL KNOWN for digital cameras, Epson are more associated with printers. They have worked hard to try to change this with their latest camera, the 3100Z. Updated from the 3000Z, the most important new feature is PIM – Print Image Matching – a new standard that records special information about the picture. This can then be used by a printing device that can understand the PIM standard, enabling the printer to be calibrated to produce enhanced prints. Epson also happen to make printers that can understand the PIM data and they also make one with a built-in memory card reader that can use the data without a computer in sight.

The camera is compact and attractive, and has a nice balance and weighty feel. Setting up is easy with a clear and intuitive on-screen menu navigated by buttons surrounding the edge of the 1.8in LCD screen. The features list is not great but does have all the basics for the beginner with an uncluttered layout, making it an ideal point-and-shoot. Lacking the more sophisticated features that the enthusiast may require does put it some distance behind the market leaders, but features such as video clip, sound clip, monochrome mode, time lapse and panorama stitching help give this Epson a wider audience.

WIDE ANGLE



ZOOM



The zoom lens offers a useful range, equivalent to 34-102mm in 35mm.



Other nice touches include a hot-shoe for additional flash power and HyPict mode which will interpolate the 3.3 megapixel images up to 4.8. The only penalty for this is time – up to 14 seconds for each picture.

Picture numbering is reset when the card is formatted and you have no control over this – something Epson should fix on their next model. In terms of how quickly the camera functions, it's a bit short off the mark with slow start-up and shutdown times. Shutter lag is about average, but playback speed and saving to the card is slow. Battery life is good with about 90 minutes of continuous use before new cells are required, but no battery indicator is shown until the cells are low and by this time it's too late.

The metering is above average with accurate exposures under nearly all conditions with only demanding subjects giving slight under-exposure.

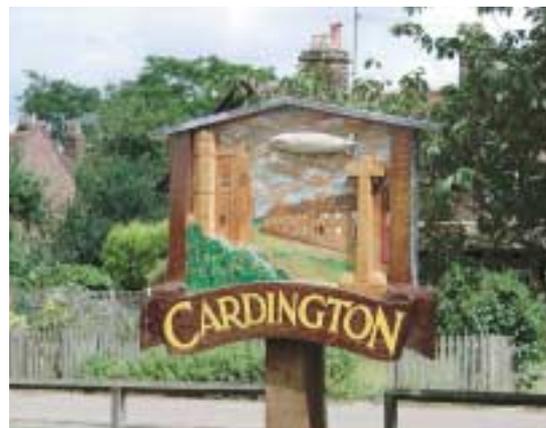
White balance and colour are both very accurate but the AF, though responsive, can sometimes hunt and waste time before it locks on. Images are slightly soft compared to the competition, which is a shame as Epson have missed the chance to make an average camera a serious threat to established market leaders. ■

DIGITAL PHOTO
TEST RATING 72%

Solid, good all-rounder ideal for the beginner with its easy menus and uncluttered layout. More advanced users will demand better image quality than Epson can deliver. Epson owners have no need to upgrade unless they want to use PIM.

RAY ALLEN

CONTACT EPSON 01442 261 144
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PRINT QUALITY AT A4 SIZE



PRINT QUALITY AT A3 SIZE



Great colour accuracy and exposure are the norm for the 3100Z and you can check the quality for yourself on the CD.