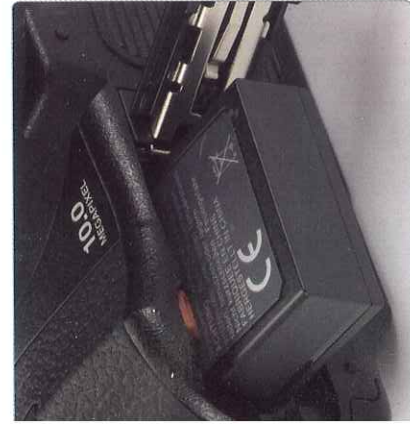


Olympus E-410

549 | £599
ELECT TO PAY SFP

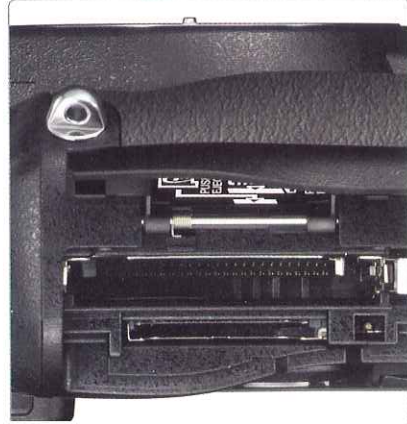
OLYMPUS HAS TINKERED WITH THE E-400... BUT IS IT ENOUGH?

10
MEGAPIXELS



BATTERIES

The 1150mAh battery provides around 450 shots before requiring a recharge, but if you use Live View or extensive image replay, then this will vary



MEMORY CARD

Olympus has kindly supplied slots for both CompactFlash and xD cards. This is very useful and rare on a camera at this price

Olympus is the poor relation in the DSLR market. It's common knowledge that it lacks behind everyone else in innovation, resolution and performance – right? Well, actually, the truth is somewhat very different.

Olympus was the pioneer of a dust-reduction device that was featured on the first Four Thirds camera, the E-1, back in 2003. Then along came the E-300 (the first 8MP camera), the E-330 (a 7.5MP DSLR with a unique Live View facility), followed by the world's smallest DSLR in the form of the E-400.

One odd aspect of the E-400 launch was that Olympus didn't release it in North America. However, six months on we know why, as the E-410 has landed on our laps, replacing the hardly aged E-400. So has Olympus finally managed to squeeze the best from its unique camera system that promised so much?

First off, it really is tiny and so light. Putting the E-410 next to a Canon EOS 5D with 24-105mm lens and battery grip, is like parking your Smart car next to a Hummer H2. The kit lenses are interesting, too. The 14-42mm and the 40-150mm are smaller and lighter than any other Olympus Zuiko digital lenses and feature near-telecentric construction.

One of the main changes from the E-400 is the inclusion of a Live View facility. This has resulted in a switch of sensor brand from Kodak to Panasonic. Another benefit of the switch, according to Olympus, is that the new sensor displays less noise at higher ISO settings. It's fair to say that Olympus has never been regarded as the class leader in signal-to-noise ratios and we'll return to this issue later on.

Having a 10MP sensor puts it in the class currently dominated by the Nikon D40X and Canon EOS 400D. If the image quality can compete, then it may well be onto something. The launch price is also tempting: a body-only purchase is just £499. The build quality is as good as the current class leader, the Nikon D40X, and it feels better made than the Canon rival. The plastics



▲ TEST SHOT

All test shots were taken using the Auto WB control, which was excellent - outdoor images required no fine-tuning

are of a good quality, nicely put together and it fits nicely in your hand, with a rubberised grip to improve comfort. Existing E-series owners will immediately be at home with the handling. Most functions are easily accessible through the menu system and there are one-touch buttons for Timer/Shooting mode, exposure compensation and the Depth-of-field preview button.

The main camera functions – ISO, metering, image quality, etc – are controlled by a user interface that's one of the most intuitive we've seen. There's a plethora of metering options, from spot to matrix, and also the ability to protect highlight or shadow detail. From our testing, the metering system was as accurate as anything in this price range.

One minus for the E-410 is that there are only three selectable focus points, less than some of its rivals. Our gripe is that, when mounted on a tripod, we sometimes want to select the appropriate focus point to maximise the depth of field. (Normally, this may well be low down in the frame.) With the E-410,

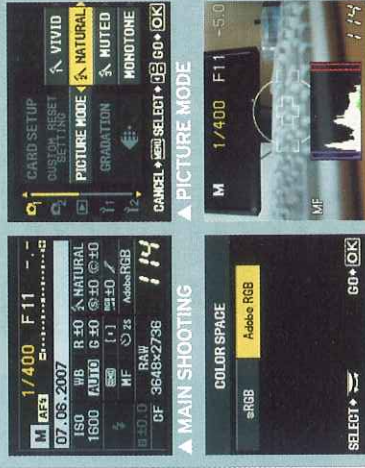


LIVE VIEW
BUTTON

D-PAD

INFO
BUTTON

MENU SCREENS



▲ COLOUR OPTIONS

▲ LIVE VIEW

▲ NAVIGATING YOUR ON-SCREEN OPTIONS

The interface on the E-410 is highly intuitive and very impressive. In the main shooting menu, press the OK button then use the d-pad to navigate. Live View makes the transition from point-and-shoot easy.

DIGITAL CAMERA BUYER'S AWARDS

EDITOR'S CHOICE



▲ BUILD DESIGN

For a DSLR, it really is very tiny and lightweight. But this doesn't mean it's flimsy. The plastics are good quality and the rubberised grip feels comfortable and secure



▲ CONNECTIONS

The E-410 provides the usual high-speed USB 2.0 connection, housed behind a secure panel on the rear of the camera. The USB cable is supplied, along with an AV lead



▲ LENS

The 14-42mm kit lens is an absolute peach for the money. The sharpness across the frame is impressive and outperforms lenses costing twice the price



▲ D-PAD CONTROL

Pressing the OK button when you're in Shooting mode gives instant access to all the main shooting functions, allowing you to navigate easily using the d-pad

we were unable to do this and we had to resort to Manual focus (in Live View) in order to achieve this. Olympus claims that by only having three focus points, focusing is faster and more accurate, which was indeed the case.

The E-410 does give the opposition a swift backhander, though, by providing the rather excellent Live View function. Currently the only production DSLR at this price point to offer this extremely useful facility. We feel that those making the move from a point-and-shoot will feel very at home with this.

One essential feature on DSLR cameras is the ability to have a histogram review available post-shot to tell us what we have captured and then adjust the exposure if required. The E-410 offers an excellent histogram and also an equally essential highlight warning indicator. We cannot over-stress the importance of these features and Olympus obviously understands the needs of the serious photographer.

IN THE BOX

- Olympus E-410
- Olympus Master 2.0 software
- Battery charger
- Shoulder strap
- USB, video cables
- Basic and Advanced manuals
- 14-42mm kit lens

Size does have its penalties, though, as the viewfinder on the E-410 is a little on the small side. However, it's actually very bright and easy to compose images with. Flash performance was adequate for an on-camera flash.

Take any of the full-res files produced by this camera and print them off on a decent printer and you should be impressed.

Logically, with 12-bit sensors being able to capture four thousand colours or so, it's not surprising. However, there's just a special something about the Olympus prints that can rival the best output from some manufacturers' pro-spec offerings – all in a camera costing less than £600 with kit lens.

Throughout our testing we really got to like this little gem. It's well proportioned, svelte and curvy. If you have a budget that allows you to consider the E-410, then we would say unless you already have an investment in lenses from another brand, buy one. You'll be taking home the new class leader.

Camera specs

Olympus E-410

10 Megapixels | Expect to pay: £549

MAX RESOLUTION 3,648 x 2,736

LENS DATA By lens

ZOOM By lens

FOCUS/MACRO By lens

SHUTTER SPEEDS 60-1/4,000 sec, bulb

ISO SENSITIVITY A, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600

EXPOSURE MODES P, S, A, M, 20 scene modes

METERING OPTIONS ESP, CW, S, Highlight, Shadow

FLASH MODES A, RE, M, SS, Fon, Foff

CONNECTIVITY AV, USB

WEIGHT 375g (body only)

DIMENSIONS 129 x 91 x 53mm

BATTERIES Lithium-ion

STORAGE CF, xD

LCD 2.5"



What we like

- ▲ Highly intuitive handling and control
- ▲ Live View MOS sensor
- ▲ Outstanding, clean image quality
- ▲ Excellent Auto WB feature

What we don't like

- ▼ There are only three selectable focus points
- ▼ It struggles a bit under tungsten lighting

Verdict

FEATURES ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★
QUALITY OF RESULTS ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

Olympus has really pulled the rabbit from the hat with the E-410... so look out Canon and Nikon!

Overall score

★★★★★