

Live and clicking



Offering live preview via a large, bright LCD screen, the Olympus E-330 is the perfect option for photographers looking to upgrade their compact cameras, while retaining the same versatility, as Sue Bishop explains

I have to admit that there have been times when, weighed down by my SLR, lenses, tripod etc, evaluating a scene in front of me and wondering whether to start unpacking and setting up all the kit, I have experienced a certain amount of envy as a digital compact user saunters up next to me, holds

his camera at arm's length in one hand, looks at the brilliantly bright and sharp image in his LCD, takes the picture without even removing his other hand from his pocket, and saunters off again. At times like these I have to remind myself that the final image quality will make it worthwhile



doing what I do, plus there is no need for me to shell out money on gym membership when I get all the exercise I need carrying my photo gear around!

However, now one of those compact camera advantages is available to digital SLR users. Olympus has brought out the E-330, the first live preview model among interchangeable lens digital SLR cameras. Its large, bright LCD gives continuous live preview, so that it can be used instead of the viewfinder if desired.

Specification

The 2½in LCD monitor on the E-330 not only offers live view, but also adds versatility because it can be tilted either up or down. As someone who has spent many an hour lying flat on the ground to take low-level shots,

I certainly found it easier to use the tilted monitor in this situation. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there have been times

when my camera has been on a fully extended tripod in order to clear some foreground obstacle and I have had to stand on tiptoe to see through the viewfinder – again, with the E-330 I can just angle the monitor downwards and see everything much more easily. The viewfinder also displays information about the chosen shooting mode, ISO, focus mode, and various other settings, and I did find it good to be able to see this information at the back of the camera rather than on the top, which can be awkward when the camera is mounted high on a tripod. I felt sceptical about whether the monitor would be much use in bright light, but in fact it gave a good picture in most lighting situations – although in bright sunlight I would have found it hard to focus accurately using the monitor alone. This, however, leads me on to another very useful feature of the E-330.

Just to backtrack for a moment, the camera has a choice of two live preview modes, A and B. In Mode A the LCD is used instead of the



viewfinder, and it is recommended that the photographer closes a manual shutter over the optical viewfinder in order to prevent stray light from entering the camera and affecting the exposure and the image display. In this mode, the camera's autofocus can be used. However, it is in

ABOVE Because this leaf was not flat I used an aperture of f/22 to ensure overall sharpness. The enlarged view mode on the Olympus E-330 allowed me to check the focus accurately Olympus E-330 with 35mm 1:3.5 macro lens, ISO 100, 1/2.5sec at f/22, exposure compensation set at +0.7, tripod



Features at a glance

BACK

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Live view mode button | 8 Focus mode button |
| 2 Live view button | 9 ISO rating button |
| 3 Flash-up button | 10 Metering mode button |
| 4 Auto focus lock, auto exposure lock | 11 Rear LCD monitor |
| 5 Drive mode/custom button | 12 Information button |
| 6 White balance button | 13 Menu button |
| 7 Confirm button | 14 Erase button |
| | 15 Playback button |



TOP

- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Rear LCD screen – extended |
| 2 Dioptre adjustment dial |
| 3 Hotshoe |
| 4 Built-in flash |
| 5 Exposure-release button |
| 6 Shutter-release button |
| 7 On/off switch |
| 8 Exposure mode dial |
| 9 Main dial |
| 10 Supersonic wave filter indicator |

FAR LEFT This campanula was photographed at noon on a sunny day in June, on the shady side of a wall. Setting the white balance on the Olympus E-330 to shady counteracted any cold blue cast Olympus E-330 with 35mm 1:3.5 macro lens, ISO 100, 1/25sec at f/8, tripod



ABOVE These phlox flowers were less than 2cm in diameter, so I was working at almost 1:1 magnification. Coupled with an aperture of f/3.5, this gave me an extremely shallow depth of field. The enlarged view mode on the Olympus E-330 enabled me to choose which water droplets I wanted to be sharp, and to focus on them very precisely

TOP LEFT

Olympus E-330 with 35mm 1:3.5 macro lens, ISO 100, 1/50sec at f/3.5, tripod

TOP RIGHT

Olympus E-330 with 35mm 1:3.5 macro lens, ISO 100, 1/125sec at f/3.5, tripod

Mode B that the feature just referred to can be used. Autofocus is not available in Mode B, but the Enlarged Display mode allows much more precise manual focusing than is usually the case. A couple of presses of a button will produce a green square on the viewfinder which can be moved around the image using the left/right/up/down control; once it is positioned in the part of the image where focus is most crucial, press the OK button and that part of the image will be magnified 10 times, allowing focus to be checked with great accuracy. Once the focus has been adjusted, another press of the OK button will restore the full image in the monitor. This is a particular blessing for macro photographers, as depth of field is always shallow when working at close distances, and there is no leeway for imprecise focusing. Of course to get any true benefit from this facility, you need to be working with the camera on a tripod or beanbag.

Handling

When focusing manually, turning the focusing ring activates the lens focus motor. I felt that this was one minor criticism of the camera: I spend a lot of time looking at various compositions before taking the picture, and can focus in and out without turning the camera on – but with the Olympus system, the camera must be on for the focusing to work, and this is a drain on the battery, however small.

In general, however, the camera impressed me with its ease of

Data File Olympus E-330 £830 inc VAT (body only)

CAMERA TYPE	Interchangeable lens, live view function digital SLR
LENS MOUNT	FourThirds mount
SENSOR	Live MOS (4/3 type MOS solid state sensor)
EFFECTIVE RESOLUTION	7.5 megapixels
VIEWFINDER	Eye-level TTL Optical Porro mirror-type
FIELD OF VIEW	Approx 95%
AUTOFOCUS	TTL phase difference detection system
ISO SETTINGS	100-1600
AUTOFOCUS MODES	Single AF, Continuous AF, Manual, Single AF and MF, Continuous AF and MF
EXPOSURE MODES	Program with program shift, Shutter Priority, Aperture Priority, Manual, 20 scene modes
SHUTTER SPEEDS	P, Ps, A Mode: 1/4000sec-2sec (depending on conditions), S Mode: 1/4000sec-60sec, M Mode: 1/4000sec-60sec, and bulb (up to 8 minutes), Scene Mode: 1/4000sec-4sec (depending on selected mode)
METERING	TTL open aperture light metering with 49 zones multi-pattern sensing system, centre-weighted, spot, highlight spot and shadow spot
STORAGE MEDIA	CompactFlash card (Type I and II), Microdrive, xD picture card. (Dual slot)
DIOPTRIC CORRECTION	Built-in type -3.0 to +1.0
DEPTH-OF-FIELD PREVIEW BUTTON	Yes
BUILT-IN FLASH	Yes
POWER SOURCE	Rechargeable Li-Ion battery pack BLM-1 or 3x CR123A with LBH-1
DIMENSIONS	140mmx87mmx72mm (WxDxH)
WEIGHT	550g (without batteries and CF card)
BOX CONTENTS	E-330 body, USB cable, video cable, Li-Ion battery pack and battery charger, shoulder strap, CD-Rom, instruction manual, warranty

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handling. It seems relatively light for such a high-spec model, and the menus are very easy to navigate. In fact many of the functions can be adjusted without having to enter the main settings menu, as there is a button offering the chance to go straight into the settings menus for white balance, focus mode, ISO, and metering mode, where settings can be changed by rotating the control dial. The E-330 has all the usual options you would expect for these, and I was pleasantly surprised by the result of testing its white balance setting for shooting in overcast weather: the picture of campanula (page 82) was taken at noon on a bright sunny day on the shady side of a wall, conditions

'The large, bright LCD gives continuous live preview, so that it can be used instead of the viewfinder if desired'

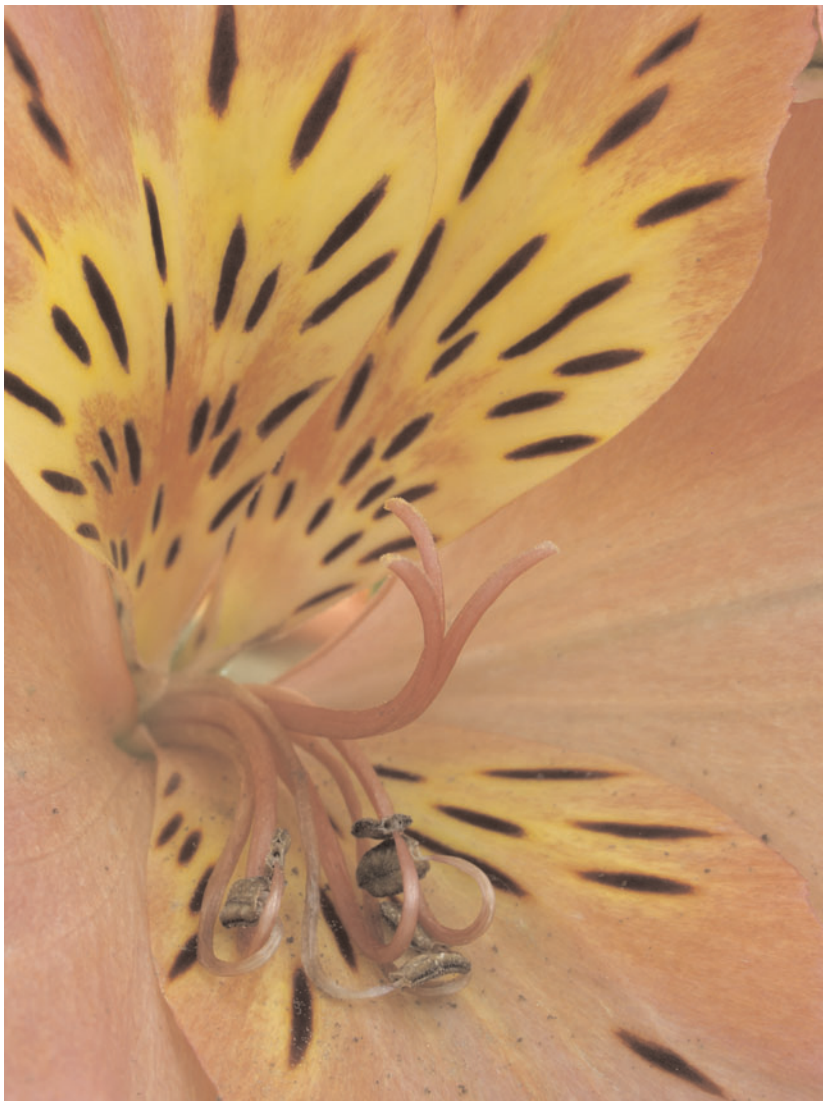
guaranteed to create a cool blue cast if using film; but using the relevant white balance setting gave a natural result without any cast.

Performance

The E-330 uses the FourThirds standard, which means that the focal length of the lenses used is increased by two times. In kit form the camera is supplied with a 14-45mm (28-90mm) lens, and there is a whole range of other lenses available. Another ingenious

feature of this camera, like its predecessor, is the 'Supersonic Wave Filter', which vibrates dust particles off the image sensor each time the camera is turned on.

With so many good features, it seems picky to complain about such a small thing – but I found it frustrating not to be able to use a cable release with the camera. There is a remote control unit, but this has to be fired from in front of the camera, which is slightly less easy than using a cable release. ■



The Verdict

Overall, I found the camera easy to use and was pleased with the quality of the results. It will appeal to photographers 'upgrading' from a compact to a digital SLR because of the familiarity of the Live View, but it is a serious quality camera with all the features and quality one would expect from a DSLR. In addition, macro photographers will find the 10x magnification feature and tilting monitor a true blessing in those low-level, tricky focusing situations!

LIKES

- Bright monitor with adjustable viewing angle
- Enlarged display mode for accurate focusing
- Light and compact design
- Easy to navigate functions and menus

DISLIKES

- Can't use cable release
- Can't focus when camera is turned off



LEFT Even though I was working at very close range, an aperture of f/22 gave me a very good depth of field on this alstroemeria, which I was able to check using the depth-of-field preview button on the Olympus E-330
Olympus E-330 with 35mm 1:3.5 macro lens, ISO 100, 1/3sec at f/22, tripod