

Hybrid Camera Review:

Sanyo Xacti VPC-C5

A Brilliant Hybrid Design Combines MPEG-4 High Quality Movies with a 5 Megapixel Camera!

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Two Is Better Than One

Sanyo is not the first to attempt a hybrid camera venture (digital movie camera/digital still camera), but they have nailed one of the very best implementations of a Hybrid design with the new Sanyo Xacti VPC-C5. Sanyo is no rookie in this market segment—some may recall the C1 a couple of years back (marketed under Sanyo-Fisher brand) which sold through Sears stores across the country. Well, Sanyo learned quite a few lessons from the C1 and rolled all of the upgrades, innovations, and perks into the newly refined and mature C5. I have been using this camera for a month and recently used it for my business trip to Hawaii—I can't say enough good things about the new Sanyo C5. I love this tiny camera! Having a competent digital movie camera combined with a digital still camera in one diminutive unit gives you the best of both worlds. What if I told you with the flick of a button you can access both camera and video camera instantly—back and forth! What if I told you the C5 fits in the palm of your hand (less than 1" thick) can easily be controlled with either your left or right hand, requires no tape, has a 2" stunning color LCD, talking navigation guide, and image stabilizer? Well there is more...much more.

Double the Pleasure

When you visit Sanyo's dedicated site for the C5 (www.sanyodigital.com) you will notice the intro movie touting an overview of the impressive feature set, but there are many more details I need to tell you about. On the Digital Camera side you may appreciate the 5X Optical Zoom (F3.5)—most cameras this size only give you 3X Optical Zoom (the equivalent lens range of 38 to 190mm). You also get the Digital Image Stabilizer to help steady slightly moving hands which make blurry pictures and video a distant memory. The talking navigation guide lets beginners know what mode they're in and gets them acclimated to the simple and intuitive controls. By the way, essentially 3 buttons control the small camera—so this is really the ultimate "point and shoot" plus video camera in one small sexy package.



The Test Drive

A truly simple design, the C5 requires little reference to the included “Quick Start Guide” (or more detailed included 200 page Instruction Manual). The manual is well written and chock full of good hints and tips. I do recommend a brief glance over at least once. The power button is concealed under the LCD screen and once activated, you’ll choose from digital camera (left button) or digital movies (right button). Want a quick preview of your last picture or movie? Just press the “Set” button. Want to review everything you shot so far in the camera? Just toggle the “Record/Play” switch to “Playback” mode. You’re only limited by the amount of SD Memory Card capacity you install in the camera. I recommend at least a 512MB card (the C5 comes with 128MB to get you going). By the way, the 2” LCD display monitor is awesome, boasting a dense 210,000 pixels which is visible even outdoors (you can also manually adjust the LCD brighter or darker and turn the LCD Backlight off). The original C1 only had a 1.5” screen and 110,000 pixels so you can literally see the huge visual quality increase in the C5. Oh yes, back to Hawaii. I started shooting immediately from the moment I stepped off the plane. First stop: Hawaii Convention Center in Oahu. The vibrant colors were spot on and crystal clear thanks to a combination of Sanyo’s proprietary “Image-Adaptive Data Processing” technology and super efficient 5.26 CCD (the digital image stabilizer is a huge help as well). Make no mistake; the C5 is a very powerful little camera—in auto camera mode you’ll get the 5 point AutoFocus System with pre-programmed automatic exposure settings for:

- Sports Mode for fast moving subjects
- Portrait Mode (even has a separate cosmetic filter for skin tones)
- Landscape Mode for shots of distant scenery
- Night View Mode for shooting at night
- Fireworks Mode for capturing cool artsy night shots
- Lamp Mode to enhance low light situations

Don’t fret if you need manual control as the C5 is a very capable performer here as well. With 15 Manual Focus adjustment settings, feel free to tweak until you’re satisfied.

Telling It Like It Is:

A couple of important caveats I need to make about the C5. A plethora of user selectable image quality settings exist in both camera mode and movie mode—5 in each. I don’t recommend using the 10 Megapixel camera setting feature which uses a technique called

“Real-Time Digital Interpolation”. In this mode my shots had some digital artifacts along with a huge file size—try it out and see for yourself. I think the 5 Megapixel setting (with low compression) is best. In “Movie Mode the best setting is “TV-SHQ” and it takes awesome quality MPEG-4 movies (640x480 at 30fps-3Mbps bit rate in full 16-bit stereo) but will gobble up memory space quickly.

A quick word about choosing Flash Memory for your camera needs. I have exclusively used SanDisk (www.sandisk.com) memory for every digital camera I have owned (over 8), as well as for all my other digital electronics. SanDisk is not only the world’s largest supplier of flash data storage card products, but their products are reliable, fast, and very affordable (you can get them at Costco)! For the Sanyo C5, I chose SanDisk’s Ultra II 2GB SD product—they come with a Lifetime Warranty and I can shoot almost 90 minutes of MPEG-4 video at the highest quality setting.



I recommend a least a 1GB SD card and you won’t have to worry about running out of storage. Also, if you’re clumsy like me, you may find your finger getting in front of the lens obscuring your picture—move your finger out of the way and you’ll be good to go! There are a few great things I need point out. The battery life is excellent thanks to the Lithium-Ion long lasting battery. When you close the swiveling 2 inch LCD monitor, the C5 automatically goes into stand-by mode. This not only saves precious battery juice but also keeps you ready to shoot almost instantly when you reopen the LCD. The Super Macro mode is great to get really close up to flowers, ants, or anything else that pops into your view. I also love the fact from within the camera you can easily join and edit video clips! Did I mention you can simultaneously shoot still images in movie mode just by pressing the camera button? I also like the zoom’s visual indicator to let you know you are moving from optical zoom into the digital zoom (digital zoom is close to 60X)! There is also a standard tripod mount at bottom. Software includes Ulead’s Photo Explorer 8.0 and Ulead MovieFactory 3.5 SE (plus other utilities bundled on the included Sanyo Software 7.2 CD). Accessories include everything you need: Docking Station for charging, transferring, or watching your creations directly on your TV, PC, DVD, or VCR. All cables, travel case for the C5, remote control, lens cap, neck strap, and more!



The Life of the Party

I love being the life of the party—folks always expect The Muscleman of Technology® to pull surprises out of his pockets and to be astonished with the new gadgetry they have never seen before (that and a bicep flex will do it every time)! The C5 is a real conversation starter and a great professional Hybrid camera that can competently do it all. If you're looking for great digital movies on the fly (which are also perfect size and format for web usage) and hi-res photos bundled into one slick tiny handheld, the C5 is your ticket. This easy to use point and shoot camera will provide candid memories you'll always enjoy sharing. There is so much more I didn't include in this short review. For more information about the amazing Sanyo Xacti VPC-C5 (MSRP \$599), be sure visit the Sanyo site at: www.sanyodigital.com