



DECEMBER, 2010

Pick of the Litter - 2010

Each December we are asked, "What do you recommend?". As is our custom, we present our recommendations of various products or services we feel are the best values available. Among the criteria used for our evaluations are:

Does the product or service do what its manufacturer claims it does?

Are our customers using the product or service on a regular basis without difficulty?

Does the company whose name is on the item honor its warranties?

Is it a fair value commensurate with its cost?

What is the product's defective rate?

Are the results from the product or service superior to its competition?

Has the company in consideration acted responsibly regarding its products and services for an extended period of time? What is the company's track record?

Is this product or service being praised and recommended by owners?

We do not rate our products or services on the basis of brand name, sales rep, advertisements or profitability. The price is a minor consideration, but a bad \$50 product is not any better deal than a bad \$500 product.

There is no best camera. We recommend the following and offer a brief description of its assets ...



Canon SX20 IS - Although Canon is now producing the SX30 IS, the SX20 has been one of those cameras where everything "just works right". Easy to use - not too big or heavy, a 28-560 lens and the freedom to use nonrechargeable batteries when desired. The only thing really lacking is the 3:2 picture shape. Don't linger if you want this - supplies are running out quickly.



Casio Exilim EX-FH100 compact camera - Excellent optics and a 24-120 zoom lens. Up to 1000 photos on a single battery charge. Shoots RAW as well as JPEG files. Easy upload to Facebook and YouTube. Very good ergonomics. Shoots all three picture shapes



Fuji Finepix Real 3D W3 - 2010's WOW! camera. Spellbinding 3D movie clips and jump off the screen still photos. 3X zoom lens and clear, bright 3.5" screen requiring no 3D glasses. Also shoots traditional 2D stills & video. Eventually all cameras will probably be 3D and this is the biggest step so far.

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Fuji Finepix F300EXR compact camera - Excellent optics and a 24-360mm zoom lens. Easy to hold steadily and manipulate. The brightness of the LCD screen is adjustable and viewable outdoors. Fuji's EXR circuitry blows away everything else for low light conditions or difficult, contrasty situations. Shutter button lag is better than most. Good battery life. Takes photos which require no cropping when printing 4x6 prints (3:2 ratio). Also shoots 4:3 and 16:9 shape pictures & HD video.



Fuji Finepix F80EXR compact camera - Slightly smaller with less zoom than the previously mentioned F300EXR camera. Superior available light photos. Shoots all three picture shapes and HD video. Easy to grip and hold.



Fuji Finepix HS10 - We discussed this camera in depth in our August newsletter (available at www.madisonphoto.com). This midsize camera has an incredible 24-720 zoom and shoots all three picture shapes. It accepts filters, shoots both RAW and JPEGs and is loaded with features. (We don't recommend this camera as a gift for beginning picture takers, but rather for the intermediate to advanced picture maker.)



HGX Digital Filters - When digital SLRs first arrived, no one suspected that older "analog" filters could actually lower the quality of digital photos. Not only are these filters optically superior they offer REPELLAMAX™ Element Resistant Coating – which repels moisture, fingerprints, dust, dirt, and grime. The coating and glass are ultra hardened to give the most lens protection.



Infinity Elite ELX binoculars - These are the best binoculars we have ever carried selling for less than \$1000.00. They feature ED glass, BAK4 prisms, magnesium body, 99.3% light transmission, REPELLAMAX™ Element Resistant Coating – which repels moisture, fingerprints, dust, dirt, and grime. The coating and glass are ultra hardened to give the most protection. They are weatherproof, waterproof, fogproof and nitrogen filled with a no fault, lifetime replacement warranty.

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MyMüvi FaceCam - Once you get past the hokey name, this 5MP online camcorder/camera will flip you out. Unlike its competitors, recording time isn't limited to 1 or 2 hours, but can go on indefinitely. There's a 4X digital zoom and 720P HD images that will play on a TV, not just a computer monitor. A word of caution, however, is that this lower resolution unit is NOT a substitute for a regular camcorder.



Olympus Stylus Tough 6020 - The camera that's OK to drop (or snorkel with, go to the beach, spill soda on, etc.) with a 28-140 zoom. The Tough series have In Camera panorama which is really fun. The 6020 has 1GB of internal storage in addition to accepting SD cards. This is a great camera for the outdoorsman or senior citizens.



Panasonic Lumix G2 - This is the SLR of the future, but you don't have to wait for it. Instead of the expensive, heavy and fragile prism and mirror box, the G2 is still an eye level camera with superb ergonomics, outstanding optics, small size and light weight. It is also one of the very few cameras to offer a choice between a touch screen and conventional buttons. Panasonic will soon begin shipping a new 3D lens for the G2. The images and videos will be compatible with all the 3D TV systems.



Tamron 18-270 / 3.5-6.3 - For Canon or Nikon SLRs. This lens covers the gamut from true wide angle to sports telephoto. This is the best multi use superzoom we've seen, making it our #1 choice for the lens to travel with (when you only want to take one lens).



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Accessories and Stocking Stuffers

as a table pod or a heavy duty clamp for flat or round surfaces, like a door jamb or a fence post.



Energy Sources - Eveready Lithium AA and AAA batteries are the longest lasting, lightest weight replaceable batteries for use in digital cameras and electronic flashes. Nothing else is close. The Go!™ Charger is a unique item which not only will recharge your digital camera's battery, but is a battery itself. Once it's charged from home, car or boat, it will charge your camera, PDA, Smart phone, iPOD, etc. up to 5 times before requiring recharging itself.

Camera Cases - For backpackers, be sure to see the LowePro Versapack 200AW and Slingshot series. The slingshots go over one shoulder and permit quick, easy access to your gear without taking it off your shoulder! The Versapack can unzip and lay flat in a suitcase taking up no more room than a pair of slacks. The ultra slim Promaster L350 and L450 bags can hold a camera system and up to a 17" MacBook without screaming "Steal me - expensive stuff inside". These cases are especially well designed for frequent travelers.



Lighting - Now that SLR cameras are shooting video as well as still photos, the built in flash is useless for video. The LED 28, operated by 2 AA batteries, is a great answer. Its powerful beam reaches about 20' outdoors and beyond that indoors. The flash diffuser above is designed to soften the harsh lighting given by a SLR camera's built in flash. It slides into the camera's flash shoe and flips down covering only the flash - never the lens.



Supports - Lightweight is the key word these days. The T525C carbon fiber tripod works from 5.8" to 53" working heights and weighs just over 2 pounds. When collapsed, it fits into many gadget bags. The Gorillapods can stand like a tabletop tripod or wind itself around whatever to support it's camera or lighting device. The Clamper & Clamper Jr. can support SLR and larger cameras

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A Few Reminders ...

Sometimes we all get so involved with our everyday lives that we forget to apply the knowledge and experience we've gained through the years. Please remember to

Check, change or charge your camera's batteries BEFORE the night before your holiday.

Clean your camera's lens(es).

Minimize red eye by shooting BEFORE the kids start with candy and soda.

When photographing children and pets, bend your knees and shoot from their eye level.

Format new memory cards in the cameras or camcorders which will be using them.

When you zoom your lens from wide angle to telephoto, the flash's range is decreased.

Unless you are shooting 3D, remember to rotate your camera 90° for vertical photos when photographing individual people, couples, or other scenes which go up and down. When rotating the camera, be sure to keep the flash above the lens.

After the holiday, burn ALL your images to a CD before tweaking them. You never know which pictures will be important 10 -50 years from now. Because you don't want them now doesn't mean they won't be valuable later.

And, by the way, hug your family members and friends. When getting down to it, ***nothing is more important.***

Thank you for your support, well wishes and business during 2010. We appreciate each and every one of you. Enjoy your photos and the memories they evoke.

We'll be back next month with our regular format of noncommercial articles.

Peace!

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