

Kodak's Zi8 – Initial Experiences

Today's a quick post sharing some of my first impressions having picked up a new Kodak Zi8 camcorder. A number of you are in marketing, use Flip cameras already, or are just considering one of these new devices.



Chris Brogan, over at www.chrisbrogan.com, was one of the first folks to create any sort of 'spark' for me with this new class of device. Sure, by now we've probably all been to events with Flip cams.

They're neat, cool, but the 'value' wasn't quite there. Part of that I attribute to having a 'good' digital tape camcorder and being put off by the overall process hassles (record an hour, take an hour to download, then process, then encode, then...). Odds are, if you're not a video aficionado you've had the same dying desire to repeat the experience. Not.

It wasn't until I started paying attention to Chris' vlogs and some of his various experiences (Flip, **Zx1**, Zx6...) that I really appreciated their value.

My initial start was a tad slow. To be honest, knowing small format cameras are subject to jitteriness, I had hoped for more from the embedded image stabilization software. Direct play back of handheld video using the supplied HDMI cable to my flat screen HDTV, didn't impress me. But, I've evolved since then. In part, I've found new ways

to hold the camera to *help* reduce jitteriness; it's still a small camera though.

The next epiphany was getting the *current* version of Pinnacle Studio software. I tried making videos with some free offerings, and the free offerings are pretty incredible...but they still left me wanting. So, I picked up PS 14. Let's just say, it makes making video—and posting to YouTube—the closest thing to a breeze you'll experience today.

Here are two thoughts for you. One, it might not rival the quality a 'formal' camcorder can offer...it's not expected to. (Though, use a small tripod and you'll be hard-pressed to tell the difference.) If your 'nice' camera's too big a pain to use, and you never have it with you, it doesn't matter how nice it is. Second,

I've done more, had more fun with this camera in the past week alone (puppy vids, school concerts) than I have in the last *decade* with my 'nice' video camera.

Okay, so here're some quick observations, then I'll let you view my first short YouTube video afterward.

- They're frequently out of stock. Ready to buy one, I checked (2) BestBuys, Amazon, Crutchfield.com, and others—*no one*—had one in stock. I had to stop back after being told when the next truck would show up. All the other camcorder (e.g. Flip) had 3-4 or more in stock. Just no Zi8s. So, what's that tell you?
- Really like the SD memory expansion ability. I put a 32GB card (good for something like 6 hrs video) in it.

- Get a spare battery; you'll need it. Last's for an hour and takes as long to recharge. So you'll definitely want a spare.
- Fits in my shirt pocket.
- Comes with basic video editing software *in the camera*. Plug in to a (PC) USB port, it'll automatically offer to install it (or launch it). So, you've always got 'something' with you to manipulate your videos.
- Creates files in .MOV format. Found with the free tools, sometimes it took two software packages to achieve what I wanted. With the Pinnacle Studio solution, it's one-stop shop.
- The more you use it, the more you'll like it, the more you'll use it...the sooner a big new hard drive is on your shopping list<g>.

Ok, so not really a 'short' post, but if you're in the market for this camera, and the various features it has, you won't be disappointed.

I put together this quick little video as a sort of primer, something useful for folks (looking for this breed dog), while learning how the whole production process works.

Let me know what you think. It's early, plenty to learn expected.

[video available online]