

Camera makers slash prices on new point-and-shoots

January 7 2011, By DANA WOLLMAN , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- To fight dwindling camera sales, manufacturers are slashing prices for point-and-shoots - often below \$100 - and offering more features for the money.

Camera makers unveiled dozens of models this week at the International [Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas, the largest gadget show in the U.S. Here's what to look for once they go on sale over the next few months.

Lower prices

It used to be nearly impossible to buy a digital camera for \$100. Now, Casio America Inc., Canon Inc., [Eastman Kodak](#) Co. and Olympus Corp. all sell them, and other big brands just jumped on the bandwagon.

Sony Electronics Inc., a company not known for discounted cameras, will sell the Cybershot DSC-W510 (\$100), a 12-megapixel camera with a 4X optical zoom - more than what you'll find on most entry-level cameras.

Canon, the market leader, will sell the 10-megapixel Powershot A800 for \$89, albeit with a bare-bones 3X zoom.

Kodak has two budget offerings: the credit card-sized EasyShare Mini (\$100) and the EasyShare Sport, an \$80 camera that can be immersed in

up to 10 feet of water, which is the kind of durability normally found in a \$200 camera.

Fujifilm NA Corp.'s FinePix AV200 (\$90) shoots 720p (1280 x 720) high-definition video, another rarity for cameras this cheap.

HD video standard

It's not unusual for whiz-bang features to trickle down into lower-end products. [Face detection](#), for example, used to be reserved for high-end cameras; today, shoppers have come to expect it. Now, high-definition movie recording is becoming a typical feature on point-and-shoots.

With the exception of some of those \$100 cameras, almost every model [Canon](#), Fujifilm, Kodak, Panasonic Corp., [Samsung Electronics](#) Co. and Sony announced this week records HD movies at 720p or even 1080p (1920 x 1080) resolution.

Fujifilm's \$90 HD number takes the cake in terms of value, but Canon's Powershot A2200IS (\$140) also records HD video for a still-reasonable price.

While we can't vouch for the quality of these movies, the boost in resolution is an improvement because the videos will look sharp on high-definition televisions.

New ways to share photos

We've noticed several companies experimenting with new ways to free photos from the camera.

Samsung's SH100 (\$200) isn't the first camera with built-in Wi-Fi, but it

is unique in that it can send photos directly to a smart phone. Photographers can also use the Wi-Fi-enabled camera to back up their photos to websites such as Facebook.

People can also use their smart phone as a remote-control to trigger their camera's shutter, as long as they're within a Wi-Fi network. Here's the catch: The camera only does this with Samsung's own line of Galaxy smart phones, which run Google Inc.'s Android software.

Across its product line, Kodak has been emphasizing a sharing feature that lets people select photos stored on the camera to be automatically uploaded to sites such as Facebook when the camera is connected to a computer.

Eye-Fi Inc.'s memory cards can already wirelessly send photos from a camera to a PC or to websites such as Flickr. Now, they can also send photos to smart phones, tablets and other devices. It requires a one-time setup to connect the Eye-Fi card to the gadget over Wi-Fi. Android phone or tablet owners then download an app to see the photos.

Eye-Fi won't say if other devices, such as iPads and iPhones, will be supported. The new feature will be available as a free update to people who already own one of Eye-Fi's X2 cards, which start at \$50 for 4GB of storage space.

More megapixels

For a while, camera makers had seemingly called off the megapixel arms race, taking a break from one-upping each other with higher and higher resolution. Now, they're at it again, cramming as many as 14 or 16-megapixels into new models.

This isn't necessarily a good thing: The more megapixels a camera has,

the smaller each sensor is, meaning they can collect less light in dim shooting situations. Nighttime [photos](#) might also look grainier with more megapixels. This is all especially true of compact point-and-shoots, which have relatively small sensors to begin with.

But with higher resolution come cutting-edge extras, such as advanced image stabilization technologies, panorama shooting and the ability to shoot in slow motion, something the new Fujifilm FinePix HS20 EXR (\$500) can do.

If you want those features, go for it. If you happen to see a 16-megapixel camera that costs \$30 or \$40 more than a similar one with lower resolution, though, pick the cheaper one. Even the cheapest cameras today have 10-megapixel resolution, which is more than enough to produce crisp 8 x 10 prints.

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