

Review: TLC200 simplifies time-lapse videos

March 29 2013, by Jim Rossman



"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." Or so says Ferris Bueller. If you'd like to keep track of life and play it back at your leisure, you're probably a fan of time-lapse videos.

We've all seen time lapses - those videos where an entire day is condensed into a three-minute video.

Until recently it was not cheap or easy to shoot a good time-lapse video. Brinno is aiming to change that with the TLC200 Time Lapse camera

that makes shooting those cool videos dead simple.

The TLC200 is a self-contained camera, a bit smaller than a can of soda. It runs on four AA batteries or from a [mini USB](#) cable and stores its videos on an [SD memory card](#).

The resulting videos are high-def ([720p](#)) and look really professional.

After you put the batteries in and power it up, the first thing you'll need to do is set the interval of the time lapse - ranging from a shot every second to a shot every 24 hours.

Then you set the frames-per-second of the resulting video file. Smooth video is 30 frames-per-second, but the videos will be shorter. A 10-fps video is choppy but plays longer. You can play with the different choices to see what you like.

Warning: There are a bunch of numbers in this section.

The AA batteries can shoot 300,000 frames before they need changing.

Using a five-second shot interval, the TLC200 can shoot for 17 full days on a fresh set of batteries, although you'll fill up your [SD card](#) long before you run out of power.

The TLC200 ships with a 2-[gigabyte](#) SD card, but it can handle a 32-gigabyte card.

At a five-second shot interval, the [storage capacity](#) of a 32-gigabyte card is just over 150 hours (six days) of video.

The avi video files have a maximum size of 20,480 frames, so you won't get one six-day-long video. At a five-second interval you can get just

over 28 hours of video in a single file. Playing back that 28 hours of video at 30 fps, you'll get to watch a time lapse that lasts just over an hour.

That's just an example. Nobody wants to watch an hour-long time lapse.

The TLC200 is a fun gadget to play with, and you'll really enjoy trying different shot intervals and playback rates until you find the combination you like. All it takes is time.

The TLC200 has a 35 mm-equivalent lens (wide angle, but not crazy wide). It can shoot [video](#) at resolutions of 1280x720 or 640x480. The minimum focus distance is 29 inches. There is a rear 1.44-inch LCD screen to frame your shots. The LCD turns off after the capture starts.

There are some pretty cool optional accessories including weatherproof housing (\$45), a wide-angle lens (\$79), a motion-activated shutter sensor (\$49) and a stop-motion shutter line adapter (\$20).

The shutter line adapter turns the TLC200 into a stop-motion camera, so you can shoot your own animated videos. I tested the shutter line adapter, and it was easy to create cool-looking animations.

I was hoping to shoot a nice time lapse of clouds zooming by while I was off on vacation last week, but there wasn't a cloud in the sky all week. Maybe next week will be better.

BRINNO TLC200 TIME LAPSE CAMERA

-Pros: Pretty limited in what it can do - time-lapse and stop-motion videos, but makes it so simple anyone can do it.

-Cons: Wish the wide-angle lens was included. Rear LCD is pretty low

resolution.

-Bottom line: This is one of the more fun gadgets I've played with in a while. I just need to find more interesting subjects.

-Price: about \$180 on Amazon.com

-On the Web: brinno.com

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