

Getting the Picture

Here's another early Peek, this time at Sony Ericsson's new slim 5 Megapixel Cyber-shot camera phone, the C902i.

A growing number of 5 Megapixel phones are starting to appear on the market, but few have been slim. An average thickness for mobiles in general is probably about 15-16 mm, with any product around 12 mm or thinner being what we'd class as 'slim'.

This is where Sony Ericsson's C902i ups the ante, no longer meaning that high-end camera phones need to be chunky.

If you'd like to do more research on 'slim', have a look at our Popular Phones reference charts in Volume 9, Issue 5 (p32-36) that lists the thickness for each of a cross section of 60 different phones.

Slim Is In

Stand alone digital cameras went through a similar phase in becoming thinner, and this product feels very much like one of those - think slim Casio digi cams.

It's good that it doesn't feel like you're holding a chunky camera upside your face when speaking on the C902i. Some massive camera phones have been launched in Korea but for every day use - as is the case in telephony, chunky cameras are less appealing than a sexy mobile.

Look & Feel

Sony Ericsson's C902i has a new feel about it, perhaps a little secret-agent-like in being thin and having a snap out lens cover. As you can see in photos below, its lens is revealed through a slide out action, a bit like the cameras that spies carried in 1970s movies.

One of the dangers of slimming down handsets is making them flimsy - both in terms of durability and how they feel to hold. Sony Ericsson has addressed this issue by using a

metal core in the construction of the C902i.

Being metallic on the inside adds a bit of weight, helping firm up the feel of the product.

Buttons seem a little unusual but work well. There's a wedge shape to them and they are coated in a smooth finish.

This product is relatively compact, think a smidge wider and thicker than Nokia's 6500 Classic. Pretty good for a high-end 5 Megapixel imaging phone.

Sony Ericsson say they've added sensory elements through lighting effects behind touch controls along the top and bottom the C902i's screen.

This unit will be available in two different body colours, luscious red and swift black.

Fun Stuff

There's an inbuilt angle (proximity) sensor, which turns the screen view either landscape or portrait (sideways or regular) according to the way you hold it. Handy when viewing photos/videos and browsing the web. Another interesting use of the angle sensor is in gaming. The prototype we tried included a Need for Speed game that allows steering by tilting the phone to move your car around the race circuit.

Sony Ericsson has also integrated Google Maps for Mobile - meaning that even without a GPS, it approximates where photos are taken using network triangulation. Then displays shots on maps.

Impression

This is only an early Peek, and we'll put the C902i through its paces imaging-wise next edition.

There's a James Bond-esque feel about this product due to a metallic core and a hidden camera lens that snaps out, secret agent style.

Sony Ericsson has high hopes for the C902i when it launches in a couple of months.



Actual size



(Left) There's a few things to look at in this photo. Notice how camera touch controls are illuminated above and below the screen. The idea is to make imaging options easier and faster to find - no digging around in menus. Space has been used efficiently - utilising touchscreen strips adjacent to the main display. These controls are close to where you want them, without having to make the phone bigger. Also notice how stand-alone digital camera-like photo menus are. This is due to cross collaboration with Sony's Cyber-shot digital camera division.

Another thing you can see is a lens cover section that slides out on the left. The section where Sony Ericsson's logo is on the left pushes back almost flush with the screen in phone mode.



(Left) If you look closely, the red section that says 5.0 megapixel is actually a cover that slides back into the unit, concealing the camera beneath. This is the latest in active lens covers and adds a bit of a 'James Bond' element. There's also an iridescent blue illuminated light strip that glows. While at it, cast your eye down the the bottom left of the product, just past the Sony Ericsson logo. That's the external speaker which puts out good quality sound when the C902i rings, in hands-free mode or when music plays. (Right) At only 11mm thick, it's the slimmest 5 Megapixel camera phone we've tried to date.



Here's what the swift black version looks like. Above is with the lens section closed, below the lens cover slid open, ready to shoot.

