

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CAMERAS

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Compact cameras are tremendously powerful these days, performing like a champ in every situation, without drawing a lot of attention.

THE BEST CAMERA FITS IN YOUR POCKET, BUT IT'S NOT YOUR PHONE

COMPACT CAMERAS MIGHT SEEM OBSOLETE,
BUT THEY HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE
FOR THE ENTHUSIAST AND PRO

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MATIASH

COMPACT CAMERAS

Now is an especially interesting time in the compact camera space. How can manufacturers win the hearts and minds of photographers when the capabilities of smartphone cameras keep getting better? Photos taken by smartphones are landing on the covers of major magazines and are being blown up to fit massive billboards around the world. Cinematographers are using mobile phones to create entire feature-length films. Finally, the odds are far greater that you probably will have a

smartphone in your pocket than a compact camera. Interesting times, indeed.

But I don't see this as the death knell for these diminutive picture-making devices, not by a long shot. Rather, I'm quite bullish about what's going on in this space. The proliferation of smartphone cameras has forced manufacturers like Fujifilm, Sony and Panasonic, just to name a few, to innovate and focus on how a compact camera can set itself apart from a smartphone. Unlike more versatile, interchangeable-lens camera systems, compact cameras

use a more "take me as I am" approach. You've got your camera body, sensor and fixed lens, but despite this oversimplification, there have been a lot of innovations introduced, from crazy zoom factors to AF systems to sensor performance.

If anything, all of the innovations we're seeing in compact cameras are causing an identity crisis with regard to whom they're meant for. Are they for the casual snapshotter or the pro photographer looking to downsize the gear being packed? I believe they can find happy

GEAR

COMPACT CAMERA OPTIONS

Now that you have a better idea of what compact cameras offer, let's take a look at some of the notable options available now. In terms of feature sets, you'll be happy to know that many of the options you'd find on a larger DSLR or mirrorless camera are also available in compact cameras, too. Most support full manual-exposure control, WiFi connectivity and rugged build design with significant weatherproofing. Some cameras, like the Fujifilm X100F, offer truly unique options, like a clever hybrid viewfinder and physical knobs for exposure control.



SONY DSC-RX1R II

Let's just start with the one compact camera that puts you within spitting distance of even the most robust DSLR or mirrorless camera. It's also the most expensive option and one that provides the largest sensor. Sporting the same image resolution specs that you'd find in the interchangeable-lens version of the Sony a7R II and a7R III (since both a7-bodies share the same sensor as the RX1R II), this compact camera provides a staggering 42-megapixel full-frame sensor and a fixed Zeiss Sonnar T* 35mm $f/2.8$ lens. While you lose out on the convenience of optical zoom, you do end up with an exceptionally capable street photography camera that has blazing-fast AF thanks to its 399 Phase-Detect AF points.

Price: \$3,299. **Website:** sony.com



FUJIFILM X100F

Sticking with the fixed-lens theme, another camera worth looking at is the Fujifilm X100F. Fujifilm made serious waves when it first released the original X100 because of its strong nod to rangefinder-style cameras and physical controls. Fortunately, Fujifilm made great strides to eliminate a lot of the quality issues that plagued the original X100 and introduced more meaningful features with this fourth-generation model. Alongside its 24-megapixel APS-C sensor, the Fujifilm X100F sports a much faster AF system and a charming hybrid viewfinder that allows you to switch between optical and electronic modes. Like the Sony RX1R II, the Fujifilm X100F is also paired with a capable fixed 35mm $f/2$ lens, making it an ideal option for travel and street photographers.

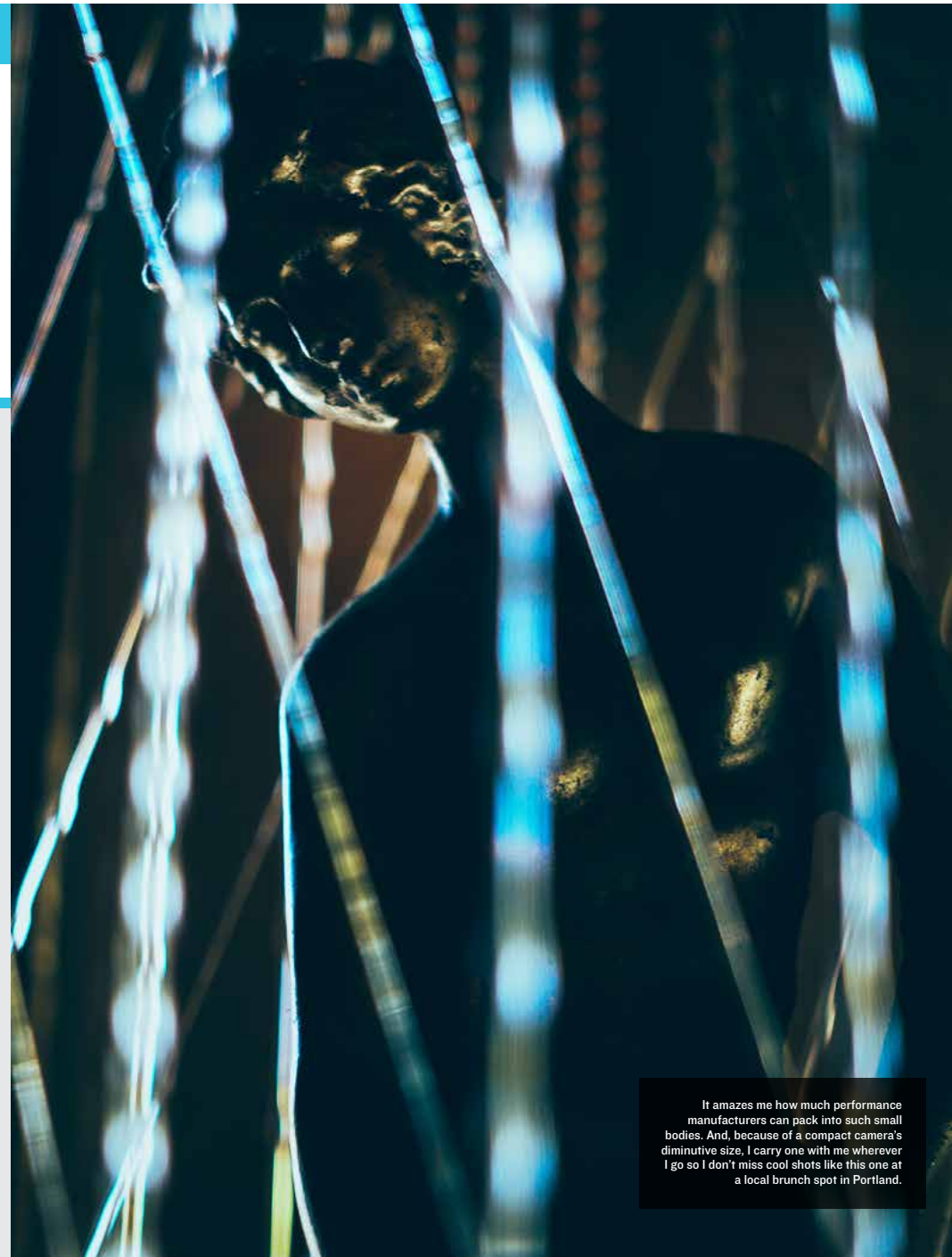
Price: \$1,299. **Website:** fujifilmusa.com



CANON POWERSHOT G9 X MARK II

Taking a more conservative approach to the compact camera with zoom lens option is the Canon PowerShot G9 X Mark II. Unlike the previous two cameras, this one offers a modest 28-85mm zoom (at a 35mm equivalent) with a variable aperture of $f/2-4.9$. Where it excels is in the sensor department, packing a capable 20-megapixel 1-inch sensor and Canon's newer DIGIC 7 image processor. It also offers speedy touch-screen AF and some thoughtful exposure controls by way of dials and a lens control ring. Best of all, this is one of the more affordable cameras that's also very pocketable, which can be an important factor for those on the go.

Price: \$429.99. **Website:** usa.canon.com



It amazes me how much performance manufacturers can pack into such small bodies. And, because of a compact camera's diminutive size, I carry one with me wherever I go so I don't miss cool shots like this one at a local brunch spot in Portland.

COMPACT CAMERAS



I've been a longtime fan of compact cameras because of the versatility they offer in such small packages. Even as early as 2007, they played an important role in my work because of how capable they are.

homes with either type. My approach to compact cameras is that they offer an ideal compromise between performance, capability and size. If I'm heading somewhere that stigmatizes big cameras or I'm extremely limited in the space I have to pack things, a compact camera could be just the thing to take.

There are several factors to look at when considering which route to take with compact cameras. Aside from price as the most obvious, you'll need to decide whether you want to go with the more traditional experience of a prime lens or the convenience of a zoom. Do you want a svelte form factor, or are you okay with something a bit larger that veers toward the size of an entry-level DSLR? Finally, are there any fringe features like filter support or video capabilities that are must-haves? Fortunately, there are plenty of options for you to choose from, and it's a safe bet that there's a camera that will fit most any photographer's needs.

As far as sensor size goes, most compact cameras offer a 1-inch sensor, with some, like the Canon PowerShot G1 X Mark II, offering a larger 1.5-inch sensor, while others, like the Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX100, go with a smaller Micro Four Thirds sensor. You even have the option to get a full-frame sensor with the Sony DSC-RX1R II. Larger sensors will expectedly provide better performance in low-light/high-ISO situations, but another aspect worth considering is the image processing being done. This will vary from manufacturer and can have a notable impact on the image. DP

BRIAN MATIASH is a professional landscape and travel photographer, published author, and podcaster based out of Lincoln, Nebraska. He specializes in fusing photography with experiential storytelling and practical instruction to help others grow their creativity. He also co-hosts the No Name Photo Show, one of the most popular photography podcasts on iTunes.

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SONY DSC-RX10 III

If reach by way of optical zoom is a priority, then you'd be hard-pressed not to consider the Sony DSC-RX10 III. Armed with a lens that starts at 24mm at the wide and zooms to a staggering 600mm, you'll be able to tighten up on just about any subject within reason. The camera has a reasonable variable aperture of $f/2.4-4$ and a 20-megapixel 1 inch sensor. Due to the extraordinary reach of this camera's telephoto zoom lens, it isn't the most pocketable, but that's the trade-off you'll have to make for this level of optical zoom. Video enthusiasts will also be happy to know that the RX10 III can record at 4K and slow motion at up to 960 fps, even at 600mm.

Price: \$1,399.99. **Website:** sony.com



PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-LX100

If low-light shooting is important to you, you'll want a camera with a large aperture. That's where the Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX100 comes in. With a zoom lens ranging from 24-75mm and a variable aperture of $f/1.7-2.8$, you'll be able to capture sharp photos in dim and low-light environments with ease. Whereas most compact cameras come with a 1 inch sensor, Panasonic opted to go with a larger Micro Four Thirds sensor packed with 12.8 megapixels. Now, while you may take a second glance at the seemingly small megapixel count, pairing it with the larger Micro Four Thirds sensor will result in cleaner images, especially at higher ISO settings.

Price: \$599.99. **Website:** shop.panasonic.com

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