Choosing a camera

CS 178, Spring 2012

As I mentioned in class, please direct questions about buying cameras for this course to the TAs rather than me (Marc), or feel free to post them on our online forum, http://piazza.com/class#spring2012/cs178
If I have time, I'll join the discussion.

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Having an SLR is neither
necessary nor sufficient
for taking good photographs.

unretouched pictures from Nokia N95

(5 megapixels, Zeiss lens, auto-focus)

Choosing a camera

- for this course, need manual control over shutter and aperture

- if you have the money, get an SLR, not a point-and-shoot (micro-four-thirds is fine)
  - larger sensor = less noise, especially in low light
  - larger aperture = more control over depth of field
- don't worry about
  - megapixels - most cameras have too many
  - brand - any major brand is good enough
  - body - inexpensive ones are fine (and lighter)
- worry about lenses
  - variable-zooms are convenient but the quality varies
  - avoid large focal ranges (18-250mm) - they're "soft"
  - maximum aperture (lowest f/stop) matters

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Extra goodies

- 50mm f/1.8 “fast” “prime” lens for low-light work
- tripod
  - sturdy is good, but heavy to carry
  - look at mini-tripods, flexible tripods, etc.
- flash
  - external flash aimed at ceiling takes much better pictures than a built-in flash aimed at the subject
- video capability
- count on ≥ $500 for SLR + standard zoom + tripod
- CS 178 loaner cameras are
  - Canon A590 point-and-shoot (takes surprisingly good pictures!)
  - Nikon D40 (or D3000/3100) with 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 (28-88mm equiv.)

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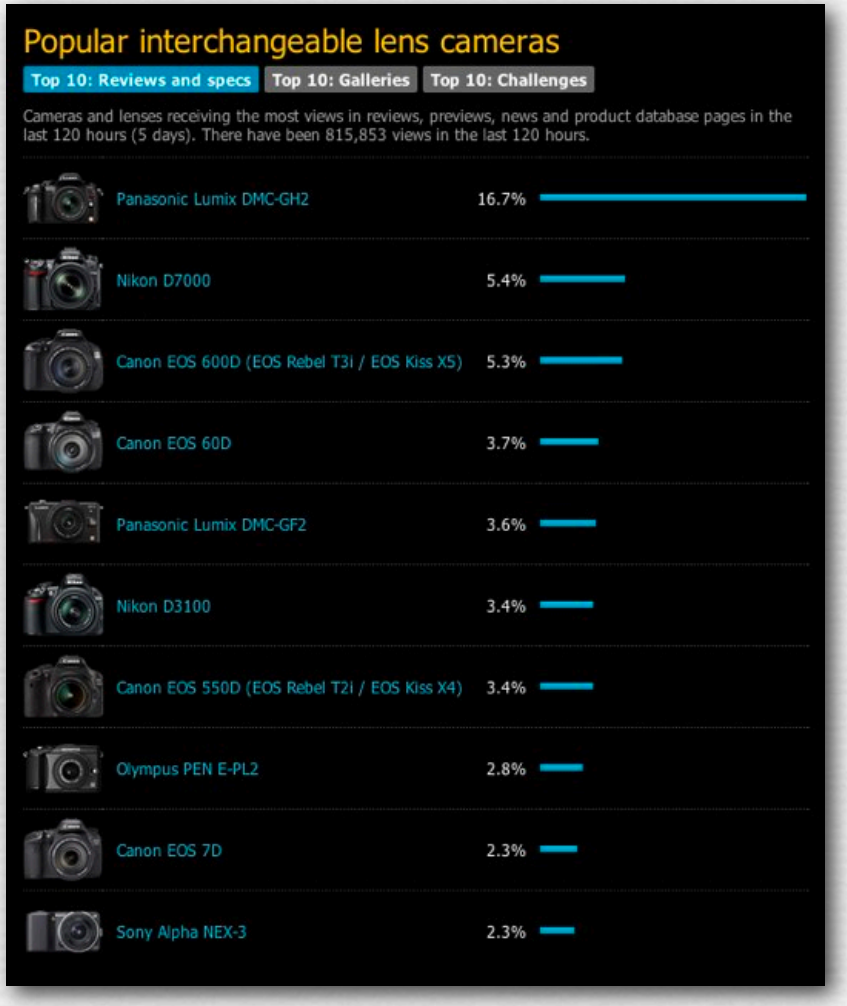
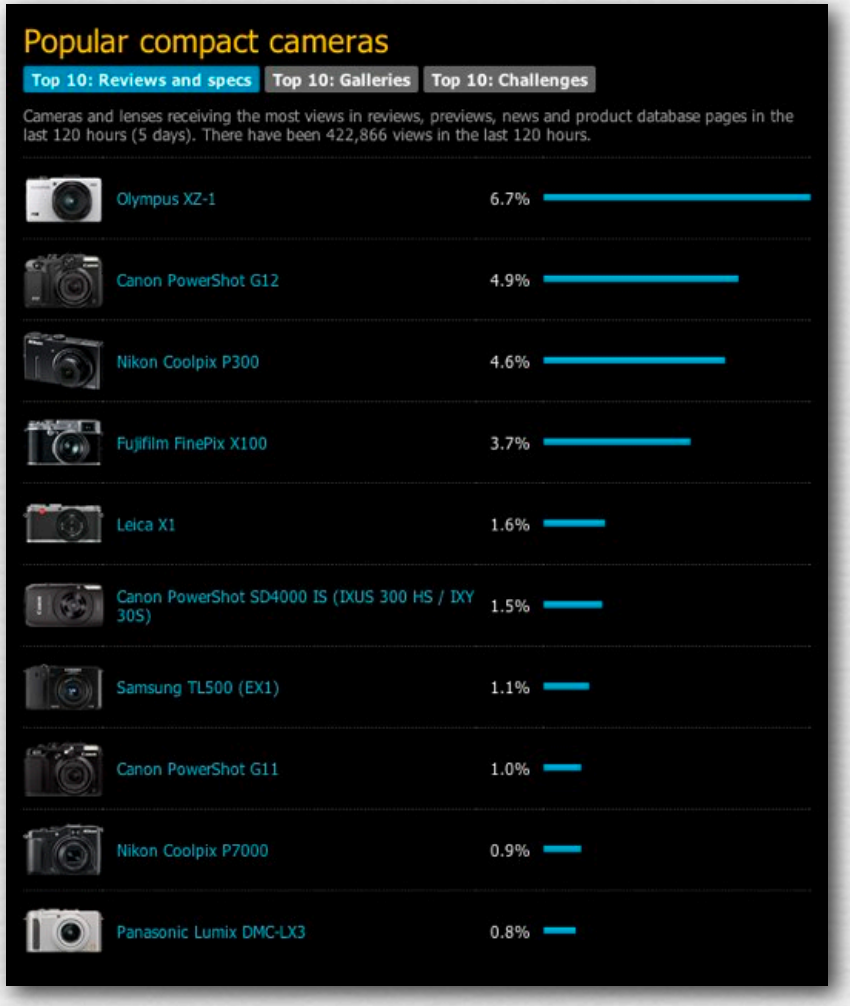
Resources

- http://dpreview.com





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Resources

- http://dpreview.com
- http://www.the-digital-picture.com
- http://www.steves-digicams.com
- http://www.luminous-landscape.com
- http://www.kenrockwell.com

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