

By: ~~April 2008~~ Vasile, Communications News Editor

[LG KU990 Viewty Review](#)

Top-notch camera phone

Last year, the handset market experienced the beginning of a new trend which can be tagged as "the race for 5 (Megapixel)". The main handset makers, ranked top 5 for their sales profit, namely Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Samsung and LG engaged in a battle for supremacy on the camera phones market. Collaboration between these handset manufacturers and some of the world renowned optic lenses producers became suddenly compulsory. Partnerships between Nokia and Carl Zeiss, as well as LG and Schneider-Kreuznach have been agreed upon, so the user can take advantage of the tier 1 camera phones. After high valued devices like Sony Ericsson K850i, Nokia N95 or Samsung G600, there was only a matter of time till LG would give their response. While mobile freaks all over the world were still amazed by the highly evolved Nokia N95 and Sony Ericsson K850i, confused and unable to give credits to any of these two as the number 1 camera phone, LG made a move and announced their 5 Megapixel masterpiece device - LG KU990 Viewty. Announced in August 2007, LG Viewty has been made available on the market in middle Fall (October) 2007. The device can be acquired for the nifty sum of USD 550\$, depending on the location. **Design** It is easy to notice, just checking the Korean company's handset portfolio, that LG pays a lot of attention to its handsets designs. Thus, it's no wonder to consider LG Viewty's design as amazing. Some might say that it resembles its older brother KE850 Prada, but after handling it for almost a week I can say that Viewty has been improved to a level that any similarity with previous LG handsets is simply casual. The material used for manufacture gives the device an exquisite, glamorous look and raises its desirability for various circles of fashionistas users. The lack of a keypad and the large touchscreen enabled display might suggest that LG has just launched its first Pocket PC, but that thought lasts for no more than a second. The device looks compact and features sizes (103.5 x 54.4 x 14.8 mm) that are not out of the ordinary. Its medium weight (112 grams including battery) makes is comparable with Sony Ericsson's K850i (118 grams), but a little bit heavier than other 5 Megapixel handset, Samsung G600 (104 grams). It seems that the phone has been developed especially for right handers, as most of the buttons have been placed on the right side of the device. Starting from the bottom we have the camera key, the lock/unlock key (can also be used to take pictures with image stabilization) and the slider key that sets the camera to video mode, camera mode or gallery. The left side of the phone features the universal port used for charger, headset and USB port - LG proprietary. The port is hidden under a slider cover, which is easy to spot and handle. The bottom of the LG Viewty is a little bit rounded on the edges, so there's no way you can put it upside on a neat surface. If you look closely you'll be able to notice a small gap on the bottom - it's the microphone. At the bottom of the large 240 x 400 pixels resolution touchscreen display, there are three contextual keys: green key (Accept calls), red key (Reject calls) and C key (Backspace key). Above the screen there's a secondary camera used mostly for video calls. The real deal opens up when you actually turn back the phone to reveal the 5 Megapixel monster camera. It features Schneider-Kreuznach optics, strobe flash, focus assist light and a weird jog-wheel that controls the digital zoom. You can also find a small loudspeaker at the bottom left of the camera. One last surprise is waiting for you inside the sales package of the LG KU990 Viewty - a dongle stylus. That's surely a unique feature that LG wanted to share with its fans, but is it reliable? After using the device without the stylus for a few days I have to say that Viewty is a pain to handle with only the fingers. The necessity of a stylus is obvious, but why 'dongle' it? Unfortunately, LG decided to attach a stylus 'the fashion way' binding it by the handstrap eyelet. At first glance, it really looks like a Mascara eyebrow pencil. I think the idea might be aesthetic, but in no way agreeable for those guys that decide to get the phone. Overall, I believe that LG's KU990 Viewty looks, behaves and has a price tag similar to a fashion phone. **Display and Camera** LG Viewty features a large TFT touchscreen display, with a rather unusual 240x400 pixels resolution. Benchmarks revealed astonishing results, which suggests that LG embedded one of the best mobile displays on the market. Even so, Nokia's screens are yet unbeatable in terms of display quality, but it's good that companies like LG are 'threatening' the number 1 spot, which can only mean improved quality for the end user. LG Viewty's display functions differently than its predecessors displays and enables user to control the phone by not only touching it with its

finger, but also with a stylus, pencil or even a metallic object. Bear in mind that the display is not highly resistant to scratches, which means that controlling the phone with hard objects could damage the screen. This is the moment when the stylus comes in handy, especially if you want to scroll your contacts or simply navigate through various menus. When your fingers touch the screen, you'll notice that it features the 'haptic feedback' technology to a more evolved level than LG's KF600 slider. Usually the display doesn't catch fingerprints, but will remain soiled after every phone call. When used outdoors the screen can handle with ease strong sunlight making it usable almost the same as indoors. The backlight is only present for the 3 contextual keys placed on the bottom of the display: Accept calls, End calls and C (backspace) keys. Overall, 8 out of 10 in terms of quality for LG's Viewty display. The 5 megapixel camera features Schneider-Kreuznach optics, but that is pretty obvious if you check some of the pictures taken with the phone. Thanks to these lenses the pictures don't get too much noise and there are no color distortions. Users can take pictures with a maximum resolution of 2592x1944 pixels. There are a total of 4 keys that can be used to control the camera, and which are helping users with various settings. Starting from the upper right we have a slider key that sets the camera to video mode, camera mode or gallery, the lock/unlock key, which starts the digital image stabilization mode, the shutter key, which obviously is the most used and the jog-wheel that controls the digital zoom and has been placed right near the lenses. I have noticed only two downsides related to the camera and that can be easily missed compared with all the positives. The first downside of the camera is the location of the zooming jog-wheel, which can place your finger right in front of the camera, on the lenses. The second, which I believe is not that of a downside, but still it can confuse some of the users, it's the digital image stabilization mode of the camera. This function doesn't have too much functionality and cannot be compared with the much better mechanical optical stabilization used in digital cameras. The interface of the camera is much complex than any other LG phone, and can be compared with top-notch camera phones like SE's K850i and Nokia's N95. Starting with the full preview of the pictures, red-eye reduction and ISO function, LG Viewty features one of the best module camera on the market. Users can also take advantage from a wide array of scene modes (landscape, beach, party, portrait, night, sport, high sensitive) and shooting modes (continuous shot, panorama and frames). The usual White balance and Colour tone settings are also available and can be used whenever is needed. Those who are expecting to shoot high quality clips won't be disappointed by the LG Viewty's recording camera capabilities. Maximum resolution that can be used is 640x480 pixels, but all movies are saved in AVI format and feature DivX 5.0 encoding. The camera supports movie capturing in VGA resolution at 30fps or QVGA at 120fps. Overall, LG Viewty's camera exceeds all expectations and manages to surpass in some areas even dedicated camera phones like Sony Ericsson's Cyber-shot series (including K850i). There's also a secondary camera which is mainly used for video calls. Below are some picture samples taken with LG's Viewty camera:

Menu and Software LG KU990 Viewty features the highly acclaimed Flash UI and can be controlled with or without a stylus. The strong point of this kind of interface is without any doubt the full customization feature. Having a Flash UI really makes a difference, especially if it is backed by a by a stylus that can considerably ease its handling. Layout of the menus did not changed too much and if you are familiar with LG's Prada, you will get used with this one pretty fast. The main difference between the two is the task manager, which has become usual in all Nokia handsets. Besides the basic tools (Alarm, Calculator, Memo, Stopwatch, Unit converter, World clock, Calendar), the phone also features a Picsel viewer application, which supports Word documents, Excel files and PDF files. As it has been already announced the LG Viewty comes with full YouTube integrations, which enables users to upload any movie they recorded directly from the File manager. Also, users can take advantage of the Google package that has been embedded. The package includes Google search, Gmail, Blogger, YouTube mobile web version and Google Maps for Mobile application. The phonebook of the device looks standard and accepts 500 contacts. There is a catch here, as you will probably notice Viewty has received an upgrade compared with any of the latest LG phones and now you will be able to see contacts stored on the phone's memory and SIM contacts separately. Unfortunately, together with LG's firmware, you also get the same bugs that have not been corrected yet. The all time famous 'clock delay' bug makes your standby clock delay for one or two seconds when showing the right time. Most certainly you'll be pleased by the 'haptic feedback' when touching the screen, but you'll get a much better experience when using the stylus. Trying to scroll without stylus using only your finger is a no go. Moreover, the Java emulator 2.0 MIDP fails to work with all Java compatible software. Fortunately, this is regardless of the file size, so even if it is not based on luck, I did not manage to find a logical explanation to

this 'bug'. Some applications will work, while others won't. **Communication** LG KU990 supports GPRS and EDGE connectivity, both class 10, but also HSDPA 3.6 Mbps technology. Data transfer speeds are average, but the integrated browser and the large screen definitely enhance browsing experience. In terms of messaging, the slider is compatible with a wide range of type messages: SMS (300), MMS, EMS, email (no SSL support), and Bluetooth 1.2 with A2DP. The high-speed USB Mass Storage support enables users to synchronize the phone with their PC. Unfortunately, there's no way to access the internal memory of the phone when you are synching it with the PC, so you'll be limited to the memory card. Apart from these, you get the usual handwriting recognition, which doesn't work that great and cannot be compared with the same function running on a Pocket PC. The triband (GSM 900 / GSM 1800 / GSM 1900) network compatible slider has a good GSM signal reception. Sound is pretty loud and clear, so this is another good point scored for LG's KU990. **Processor and Memory** Viewty features a low power ARM9 family processor, which runs at speeds of up to 140 Mhz. This could have been better, especially since LG included a Flash UI that asks for a better CPU than those usually embedded in low-end handsets. When internal memory is full, you'll notice a slight delay when browsing the file manager. The low processor is probably the cause. The phone comes with 100 MB of internal memory, but can be upgraded through the microSD slot card, up to 2GB. Unfortunately, this is not hot-swappable, so you'll need to pull out the battery every time you want to insert the microSD card. **Multimedia** LG Viewty features an enhanced version of Prada's music player, but only in terms of file management. Users will be able to filter their music by artist, album, genres or make their own playlists. Unfortunately, the music player lacks any Equalizer settings and sound seem to be poor in quality. FM Radio features RDS, but can only store up to 12 base stations and sound cannot be played on loudspeaker. The only feature that looks great is the integrated movie player, which supports DivX 5.0 files. Thus, users will be able to watch DivX 5.0 encoded movies on a large screen. LG didn't seem to be interested in embedding high quality multimedia features, so people will get a poor music experience every time they intend to use the phone as a dedicated music player. **Battery** LG KU990 Viewty features a 1000 mAh Li-Ion battery, which depletes pretty fast. The official numbers stated by LG - 430 hours of standby mode and 4 hours of talking - are overrated, but watching movies will not drain the battery as much as you might think. Usually I got about 4 days of use with about 20 minutes of talking everyday. It might take longer, around 5-6 days if you only use it for 1-2 short calls per day and watch 20 minutes of clips everyday. **Impressions** The device impresses through its stylish design, which will surely attract a lot of potential buyers. I believe that LG did a great job by combining the look of a fashionistas pone with the capabilities of a camera phone. The Flash UI also adds to the unique experience that the phone offers to the owner. Overall, Viewty stands on top of LG's camera phones and probably ranks in top 5 worldwide. **The Good** Besides the high quality camera and amazing Flash UI, I believe that a good point is the fact that LG learns from its previous failures (see KG920) and takes into consideration every feedback that it gets from the users. That will surely make future models better, more stable and faster. **The Bad** Unfortunately, I would've expected more from the music part of the phone and was thinking that maybe an operating system would've improve functionality of the device. Also, battery drains pretty fast when phone is used only for talking. Otherwise I believe LG K990 Viewty is a well balanced device that will blow your mind the moment you start using it. **Sales package** LG KU990 Viewty handset Standard lithium-ion 1000 mAh battery Standard AC battery charger USB data-cable Stylus and stylus holster Stereo headphones Plastic screen protector LG PC software User manual *Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com*