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By: Elena Balan, Communications News Editor



Samsung SGH-E210 Review

Modest, good looking handset

Samsung brought with the release of SGH-E210 just another mobile phone that relies mostly on its appearance and less on performances to impress. The handset looks more like a well polished shiny pebble than a communication device and the specification list shows just about the same. It has a highly elegant design and that's its peak. If it mattered only how it looks on the outside, Samsung SGH-E210 would be close to perfection. Still, the clamshell is bound to disappoint once opened and used at full potential. The phone has been announced back in August, this year, and is now out on the market for the price of USD 200. For a mid ranged device such as this one, it's a pretty high cost, although it is fashionable enough to be fully worth it for some people.

Design At this chapter, Samsung SGH-E210 will get all the credit. Its producer planned it more as a stylish accessory than as a mobile phone and the intention becomes obvious when looking at it. First impression matters a great deal and that's exactly what the manufacturer is counting on to get this device sold. The phone comes in two color versions, a gray one that looks incredibly elegant and a strong and fresh blue one that will manage to stand out in a more modern, but slightly less tasteful way. The clamshell features a glossy upper case that turns out to be a genuine fingerprint magnet and will get all smudgy after the first seconds of handling. When wiped, though, the handset looks stunning. The mirror-like reflection emphasizes each line and adds even more class to its sexy look, while its lack of rounded shapes makes the phone suitable for both men and women. Just as to emphasize the handset's lines, there is also a silvery metal frame, surrounding its upper case and adding even more style through a metallic touch. Samsung SGH-E210 looks great and specifications show just the same, as it measures 91 x 45 x 18 mm and weighs 89 grams (battery included). These dimensions reveal a truly compact and comfortable to use device, making it a perfect fit in almost any pocket. The front case might be a scratch magnet, but the back is made of strong plastic and will make marks left on it less obvious to the eye. Now, opening the clamshell, the user will certainly have some surprises. The first one will be the keypad. Some people find the RAZR-like pad to be such a "don't" when it comes to designing mobile phones. Samsung SGH-E210 borrowed only the main navigation wheel, although it looks like there's no intention of ever returning it. The buttons feel comfortable enough when typing long text messages and large enough to make this action easy and even enjoyable. Their design features two lines of glossy buttons combined with some dull ones. It's a nice pattern and a less common one among mobile phones, although nothing outstanding.

Display and Camera The display on Samsung SGH-E210 is one major disappointment. To start with, its 1.9 inch size proves to be an extremely small one that gives a cramming feeling. Still, it turns out to be way too big for the 128 x 160 pixels resolution, as each pixel is visible on the screen and makes the menu and images look terrible. Just to make matters worse, there is also a lag between the moment when a button is pressed and that when the display lights up. The phone also comes equipped with a secondary display screen, although it is only a mono OLED one with a resolution of 96 x 96 pixels. This will prompt the user for an incoming call, but it will display no additional incoming call image to it. It's a real shame to see such poor quality come for a price that now feels as being too high, while the tiny black and white display also ruins the phone's high end look. Expectations from a 1.3 megapixel camera can never be high. Samsung SGH-E210 can shoot pictures at 1280 x 1024 pixels and can also record at 176 x 144 pixels resolutions. The capture quality is rather poor even when outdoors and in perfect lighting conditions. There are also several effects that can be used to add an artistic touch to the pictures, such as Black and White,

Negative, Sepia, Antique or Moonlight. Moreover, the user can also set the phone to shoot a picture or start recording after up to 10 seconds. Still, the clamshell design makes it almost impossible to place the handset in such a way for it to have a stable position. This makes the timer feature almost useless in many situations when there is nothing to prop up the phone to. The sample below has been executed under 360 watts of continuous tungsten light, especially created to test the quality of the camera module.

Menu and SoftwareThe phone's menu is just the same as it has always been with mobile phones coming from Samsung. The main menu is pretty simple and intuitive. Once the user starts browsing, it might be a little difficult to find specific functions, especially if they are placed in subsequent folders. There are high chances that the user will manage to get his way around it eventually and see some advantages in the compact menu.

Samsung SGH-E210 has a problem when it comes to responding to commands. It does just great while browsing through the menu, but when the display is in standby mode and the user presses a button, the response time is quite disappointing. It takes up to a second for the display to react and that's a terrible result for any type of display, as cheesy as it might be. There is little customization possible with the handset's menu and the predefined pictures and ringtones will surely ask for replacements, as they are either too silent, or too annoyingly loud. The user can also transfer an MP3 file on to the mobile phone and use it as a ringtone, although in the case of SMS alerts, he can only choose from a narrow range of 4 terribly annoying sounds. The phone includes a music player and also supports Java, which makes it compatible with a large number of great looking games or useful applications. Unfortunately, you won't be able to launch applications bigger than 300KB in size. Still, Samsung E210 proves to be a handy device, packing all the basic features that even the lower end mobile phones can bring, such as World clock, calculator, converter, timer, stopwatch, memo, voice recorder and calendar.

CommunicationsThe phone acts great during conversations, with clarity and a volume high enough to hear every word on the other end of the line. Should that pose any problem, though, there are always those handy side volume buttons that Samsung usually takes care of placing on their mobile phones. They are quite reliable in adjusting the sound's volume at just the right level, although it might make it sound a bit squeaky when turned up to the max.

Unfortunately, Samsung E210 is not a 3G enabled handset. It's a real pity to see things stand this way, as it drops its value even lower. Considering the fact that the screen is not most suitable for playing videos and displaying images, the user will need high enough data transfer speeds to load websites and make internet browsing enjoyable. GPRS works just fine and EDGE Class 10 even better, with speeds of up to 236 kbps, according to specifications. Connectivity is also available through USB 1.1, which should make it possible to customize the phone with images and ringtones transferred from the PC. Even if mediocre (50 KB/s), the Bluetooth connectivity included makes up for listening to music and carrying on conversations the wireless way. One more interesting and highly useful feature on this phone is that of email and instant messaging support. This means that the user can go for a cheaper solution to communicate by choosing the right Internet plan. Don't expect too much from embedded WAP or xHTML browser as it won't be able to display any pages larger than 300 KB. Even so the Internet pages are displayed pretty good, despite the small screen.

Processor and MemorySamsung E210 features an ARM9 family processor that runs at speeds up to 112 MHz. What saves this mobile phone from being a mediocre one and even turning into a fancy low end one is the fact that it supports microSD cards, because the CPU is one of the lowest. With only 17MB internal memory and without a microSD card, the phone is almost worthless, so it turns out to be a pretty wise investment to make when buying it.

Multimedia If Samsung didn't bother too much about this area why should we? As a matter of fact there's nothing really much to talk about. Sound is low and mediocre, which makes the handset exceptionally dull when it comes to listening to music. There are no settings that could improve sound quality, not even a basic equalizer. The headset included in the sales package has nothing to do with the music factor, so don't expect too much from it. The

music player recognizes MP3, AAC and AAC+ file formats, but if you don't have the money to buy a microSD card (which, by the way, raises the cost of the phone) you can listen to the FM radio. **Battery**One of the greatest surprises with Samsung E210 is definitely its battery. After more than three days, it dropped only one line, after intense using. The phone comes equipped with a Li-Ion 800 mAh battery, which proves to be powerful enough to last for days. There is not all that much that the user can do with the phone itself, which also leads to better preserving of the battery's life for a longer time. **Impressions**Samsung E210 looks sexy in just about any hand, on any coffee table and the gray version that we tested is made of pure elegance. Still, both external and internal displays ruin its classy look. The performance list turns out as being quite disappointing and the price tag almost shocking. The stylish design, ready for showing off, might be just enough argument for many customers to choose it over uglier, improved alternatives, as it usually seems to be the case with fashion phones that look more like accessories rather than communication devices. **The Good**The smooth design with perfect finish is extremely fashionable and might end up as being the most powerful advantage that Samsung E210 has to bring. If someone chooses it over any other mobile phone within the same price range, it will surely be on the account of its good looks and not on that of its performances. The fact that it supports microSD cards is also great, although it would have been excellent if one such card would have come in the box. Another strong point coming from this handset is the long lasting battery life, as nobody enjoys having to recharge on a daily basis or having the phone shut down during the most important calls. **The Bad**One of the major disadvantages on Samsung E210 will have to be the price. 250 USD is not that much to pay for a mobile phone, but when you get a dull specification list for the money, it's not worth it. Another downside should be that the glassy surface is prone to smudges and scratches, which feels annoying to put up with at all times and certainly takes away from the phone's charm. Moreover, the two display screens are terrible and bring up to the surface the low end inner self of this mobile phone. **Sales package**Samsung E210 handset Standard battery Li-Ion 800 mAh Travel Charger Headset User Manual *Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com*