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[Sony Ericsson Z555i Review](#)

Cheap fashion phone

Sony Ericsson continues its fashion phone lineup with a new good looking clamshell - Z555i. Launched together with Sony Ericsson's W380i handset, the Z555i also includes most of its features. There's still a nice surprise, as the fashion clamshell sells for a much lower price than the Walkman series mobile phone. Of course, don't expect to have some high quality multimedia features or high-end module camera, instead expect easy to use phone features and average technical specifications combined in a stylish body. Some might say that Sony Ericsson has been influenced by Nokia's Prism Collection when building Z555i clamshell, but I don't think this should matter so much, as it's only beneficial for users to take advantage of the best traits that a phone can feature.

Announced in January 2008, Sony Ericsson Z555i clamshell has been made available on the market, in March 2008. The clamshell is one of the cheapest in its class (USD 200\$) and is available in two colors: Diamond Black and Dusted Rose.

Design

The Sony Ericsson Z555i is definitely very elegant and combines a rich feature set with striking good looks. The clamshell features an innovative diamond design, which means that any resemblance with Nokia's prismatic handsets may seem a little bit forced. The unique diamond reflective finish on the front is much more subtle compared to Nokia's Prism. That doesn't necessarily mean that Z555i looks much better than Nokia Prism, instead we can regard both phones as unique and choose whatever we like most.

Measuring 95 x 49 x 16.5 mm and weighing 95 grams (including battery), the Sony Ericsson Z555i fashion phone doesn't stand out from the crowd through its size. Unfolding the phone one handed might be a problem, especially if you have small hands. I won't say that it's impossible, but a little bit hard and unpractical. Sorry for disappointing some of you, but both available colors, Diamond Black and Dusted Rose, look pretty feminine, so there's no Black for men and Pink for women this time.

The device features a dual volume key on the right side and the proprietary Sony Ericsson port on the right side. The latter enables users to attach the headset that comes in the sales package, the charger, or the USB cable for synchronization. This means that users won't be able to charge the phone while listening to the music with the headphones attached. Even if unnoticeable, the small external monochrome OLED display (128 x 36 pixels) on the front part of the clamshell lights up when someone's calling you or when the music player is being used. The camera of the phone has a diamond shape and it's been placed above the external screen on the upper right. Unfortunately, there's no protection for this one, so scratches could become a problem. To the left of the camera there's a loudspeaker, which features the same diamond shape as the camera. The back of the phone bears the Sony Ericsson logo on the upper part, and two rubber dots that pin the phone on most of sliding surfaces.

The layout of the keypad is pretty much the standard for Sony Ericsson handsets, with one exception: the power button that can be found right under the big D-pad. There are also 2 contextual keys, the Back key, the C (Correct) key and 2 dedicated keys that gives the user direct access to Internet browsing and Task manager. All side parts of the big rounded button can be configured as shortcuts. The clamshell features a small prominence at the base right under the keypad, much the same as W380i handset, which hinders any possible contact between the 2 parts of the phone, thus keeping the keys clean and safe from scratches. The keys are big and responsive, so you won't have any troubles texting with speed.

The opening mechanism looks solid, which makes the unfolding process a little bit hard at first glance. The same drawback I have noticed with the W380i model is also added to the Z555i device: the back cover, which is so thin that it can break anytime you try to pull it out. Basically, every time you try to pull out the battery to put in a different SIM or want access to the M2 slot card, you have about 50% chance to severely damage the back cover. Overall, Sony Ericsson Z555i seems to be a perfect match of stylish design and innovative features.

Display and Camera

Sony Ericsson only embedded small a mediocre display, which might be a little bit disappointing for SE fans. Besides the fact that it is small (1.9 inches), the TFT main screen only supports 176 x 220 pixels resolution, but 260k colors. Benchmarks revealed that both latest SE models - Z555i and W380i feature the same kind of display, thus scoring almost similarly in performance.

These results are below average, but seem to be better than devices like Nokia's Prism or Samsung's mid-level handsets (e.g. SGH-U100). While the internal display is barely visible, the small mono OLED (128 x 36 pixels) external display is totally useless when exposed to strong sunlight.

The 1.3 Megapixel camera features 4x digital zoom, but only when you choose the highest resolutions (QVGA 320 x 240 pixels or VGA 640 x 480 pixels). The camera lacks autofocus or flash capabilities. It has also been placed on the front cover of the phone and it is totally unprotected, thus raising the possibility of damaging it.

Sony Ericsson's Z555i camera module, just like W380i's camera, has been included mostly for the Gesture Control feature, rather than for taking good pictures. Not to mention that you cannot record any videos, as it lacks video recording capabilities.

The Gesture Control feature enables users to simply wave their hands over the phone without touching it to mute an incoming call or to snooze the alarm. This ability works like magic and opens the door to new technologies.

Anyway, the interface of the camera is very basic and poor in features: Effects, White balance, Self Timer and Night mode are the only options that the owner can use. Samples below clearly show average to low quality pictures which are full of noise no matter light

conditions.

Menu and Software

Sony Ericsson Z555i runs the standard SE firmware with no particular changers. The most attractive feature of the phone is, without doubt, the Gesture control, which requires you to keep the camera module open. As I have already explained above, the concept is very simple: when you get a call and you are in a meeting and want to mute the phone, just move your hand in front of the camera and the phone will simply stop ringing turning to 'Mute'. You can do the same thing when snoozing the alarm. Don't forget to turn ON the feature, as the clamshell comes with the Gesture control feature set to OFF by default.

Besides the usual productivity tools included (Calendar, Notes, Calculator, Image viewer, Organizer, World time, and Tasks), users can take advantage of MusicDJ and Sound recorder features, but can also entertain themselves with some games (FotoQuest Fishing and Jewel Quest II). The phone can be customized to look more stylish by taking advantage of the Flash Lite themes support.

The File manager of the phone does a great job and features 3 list modes: All (both memories), phone memory and external memory. MP3 and MIDI files can be added as ringtones if you want to change the default ringtones. The embedded HTML browser is also poor in features and, because of the small display, it offers a 'crippled' browse experience.

The Java emulator works with just about any compatible application, I had no troubles running any benchmarks, games or productivity software. Nothing really changed into the standard Sony Ericsson's interface, which makes the user forget that he is using an entry-level phone. Overall, SE's Z555i user-interface is very easy to use and offers maximum functionality to a starter as well as to a mobile phone freak.

Communication

Sony Ericsson Z555i clamshell has been gifted with both GPRS and EDGE Class 10 technologies. EDGE speed benchmark revealed pretty good results - 137 Kbit/s download and 24 Kbit/s upload, much better than W380i anyway (107 Kbit/s download and 53 Kbit/s upload).

The handset is also Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP compatible, unfortunately data transfer speed didn't exceed more than 48 KB/s when sending files and 50 KB/s when receiving files, but at least it works and looks to be average (again better than SE W380i).

Sony Ericsson Z555i also features USB 2.0 connectivity and a RSS reader. When connected to a PC in any of the two modes available (Phone Mode or Transfer data mode), the clamshell is also recharging the battery automatically.

In terms of messaging, the clamshell is compatible with SMS, MMS, EMS, RSS feeds,

Push email, POP3 and IMAP protocols, and can be used to send Instant Messages.

The triband (GSM 900 / GSM 1800 / GSM 1900) network compatible handset has a good GSM signal reception. The sound is very clear and pretty loud, so don't be afraid to talk in crowded areas. The vibration alert has also very good intensity.

Processor and Memory

Sony Ericsson Z555i features an ARM9 family processor running at speeds up to 120 Mhz. A low CPU for a low-end Sony Ericsson handset, but the Japanese-Swedish company is renowned for not using powerful CPU's. Not much to talk about it, as the processor does its job, especially that we are handling an entry-level phone. Even if it is a little bit slow, you still get a nice experience when playing some Java compatible games.

The 12MB internal memory is too low even for an entry level handset. Still, this might be enough especially that we're not talking about a phone targeting music lovers, and it's not a camera phone either.

The M2 slot card can be found on the upper right side of the device, but only after you take out the back cover. The memory is hot-swappable, but if you are planning to pull out the memory card very often, take care of the flimsy back cover. If you think higher, you can take a 1 GB M2 memory card for more storage space.

Multimedia

Sony Ericsson Z555i clamshell doesn't have high-end multimedia features, so don't expect more than mediocre sound. It features the same Equalizer options embedded in standard SE handsets, but lacks the Mega-Bass setting specific to Walkman series phones. There is no option for adding new settings if you do not like any of the above-mentioned.

The included HPM-62 wired stereo headset offers mediocre music sound, but can be replaced with any other headphones, which must be compatible with Sony Ericsson's proprietary port (no 2.5mm or 3.5mm this time). Of course an adapter could change that, but SE doesn't offer one in the sales package. The loudspeaker on the front cover of the clamshell sounds medium, but only manages to offer low quality vibes.

There's also a Radio FM that features RDS. It can store up to 20 base stations and can be listened to the loudspeaker. The sound is a little bit louder than that of the music player, but I had minor problems with the reception. There are also a Video player and the usual MusicDJ application. TrackID feature is missing, so don't try to find it. Overall, Sony Ericsson's Z555i offers a medium multimedia experience, but that is understandable as the phone's target are fashionistas and not music freaks.

Battery

Sony Ericsson Z555i uses a Li-Ion 920 mAh standard battery that has a standby time of 360 hours and up to 8 hours and 20 minutes of talk time. In fact, the phone's battery exhausted after about 5 hours of talk time and a little bit over 200 hours in standby mode. I would not expect less from a Sony Ericsson handset battery, and it's good that it has become a standard for the company to include good batteries on all its handsets.

Impressions

The first time I laid my eyes on Z555i, it was very clear to me what target Sony Ericsson's has when launching the clamshell. The fashion phones don't need high-end features to sell, design is what matters most. Exquisite and elegant, with a unique diamond reflective finish on the front, Sony Ericsson Z555i truly reflects a fashionista's personality.

The Good

Besides its design, Sony Ericsson's Z555i clamshell doesn't have too many goodies to offer. The only things worth mentioning are the Gesture control function and the high talk time that it can offer.

The Bad

Most of Sony Ericsson's fans are complaining about the low camera module, but as we have already cleared it up, this camera has been included for a totally different reason: Gesture control. All other features that users can take advantage of are low to medium, so there are not too many things to add. A USB cable in the sales package and a bigger display would have made a difference.

Sales package

Sony Ericsson Z555i handset
920 mAh Li-Ion Battery (BST-39)
Wired stereo headset (HPM-62)
Charger
User Guide
Sony Ericsson PC Suite CD

Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com