

expected to be carried in both camera specialty shops and large electronics retailers.

As far as introductions go, Samsung could've done far worse than the GX-1S, with its nice handling, pleasing picture quality, and compatibility with scads of existing lenses. But it's also an aging platform whose resolution trails that of the rest of the league. And in the hot DSLR category, "good enough" is rarely good enough.

If you want to save \$100 on a Samsung DSLR, you can opt for the Digimax GX-1L, which is, as you may have guessed, essentially the Pentax \*ist DL (actually, the overseas-only \*ist DL2). Major differences: It has a pentamirror viewfinder instead of a glass pentaprism, a simple five-point autofocus array, and a slightly lower maximum burst rate. With the 18-55mm Schneider D-Xenon kit lens, the suggested retail price is \$599.

## OPTICAL PROFUSION

One of the biggest hurdles faced by any company jumping cold into the SLR game is lens availability. Samsung doesn't have that problem. According to Pentax, the number of existing lenses that can fit and function on a current Pentax (or Samsung) bayonet-mount camera body is 24 million. That's a lot of lenses. Although the GX-1S has limited functionality with older glass, there's still a surprising degree of compatibility:

■ Besides digital-only DA-series lenses, all KAF2 and KAF lenses for 35mm SLRs (with the exception of power zooms) function fully on the Samsung GX models.

■ KA lenses (manually focusing lenses with an "A" position on the aperture ring) will work in all exposure and metering modes on the GX cameras, with all AF points usable for focus confirmation.

■ K-mount lenses (no "A" position on the aperture ring) can be used for aperture-priority exposure, with centerweighted or spot metering, only at the widest aperture, with the central AF sensor for focus confirmation. These lenses can also be used for manual exposure at any aperture, with stopdown centerweighted or spot metering.

■ Screw-thread mount lenses (yes, some people still have them) can be used with an S-adapter only at the widest available aperture.

# Best in Breed

## THE TELE KIT ZOOM FOR SAMSUNG'S

Digimax GX-1S, this D-Xenon, except for some cosmetic differences, is nearly identical to the Pentax 50-200mm zoom



## Specifications

50-200mm (51.05-189.39 tested), f/4-5.6 (f/3.89-5.69 tested), 11 elements in 10 groups. Focusing turns 200 degrees clockwise. Zoom ring turns 90 degrees counterclockwise. Focal lengths marked at 50-, 80-, 100-, 135-, and 200mm. ■

■ **Diagonal view angle:** 31-8 degrees. ■

■ **Weight:** 0.58 lb. ■ **Filter size:** 52mm. ■

■ **Mounts:** Pentax KAF. ■ **Included:**

Lenshood. ■ **Street price:** NA.

## Subjective Quality Factor

50mm					
Size	5x7	8x10	11x14	16x20	20x24
4.0	96.9	95.9	93.6	89.0	83.3
5.6	97.3	96.4	94.4	90.6	86.1
8.0	97.3	96.4	94.4	90.7	86.2
11.0	97.2	96.3	94.3	90.6	86.3
16.0	96.9	95.9	93.7	89.6	84.7
22.0	96.0	94.8	91.9	86.0	78.5

100mm					
Size	5x7	8x10	11x14	16x20	20x24
4.5	96.9	95.9	93.6	89.3	84.2
8.0	96.8	95.8	93.5	89.2	84.0
11.0	96.8	95.8	93.6	89.4	84.4
16.0	96.3	95.2	92.5	87.5	81.3
22.0	95.5	94.2	90.8	83.8	74.9
27.0	95.2	93.8	90.1	81.9	71.4

200mm					
Size	5x7	8x10	11x14	16x20	20x24
5.6	96.3	95.2	92.5	87.7	82.2
8.0	96.4	95.3	92.7	88.1	82.8
11.0	96.2	95.0	92.2	87.2	81.3
16.0	95.6	94.2	91.0	84.9	77.5
22.0	94.8	93.3	89.4	81.0	70.4
32.0	94.8	93.3	89.4	80.7	69.6

### key

A+	A	B+	B	C+	C	D	F
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for the \*ist DSLRs. (It even picks up Pentax's unfortunate typographic choice of skipping the "mm" in the measurement in labeling the lens.) Almost certainly produced at Pentax's Hanoi factory, this 76.5-306mm 35mm equivalent is in some respects the best digital kit zoom we've ever tested.

**HANDS ON:** The lens is average in height, girth, and weight for the new crop of digital budget tele zooms, a surprising fact when you see its Pentax AF lens mount is metal, not plastic like Nikon's and Canon's. The barrel proper is a polycarbon hybrid, with a large, knurled-rubber zoom ring, and a much smaller focusing collar. The latter carries large, easily legible subject distance scales: feet in blue, meters in white. The zoom ring turns fluidly, not too loose or too stiff. The focusing ring's turn is somewhat underdamped and noisy, though not objectionably so. Similarly, the quiet AF action is clearly more audible than, say, Nikon's comparable 55-200mm with its Silent Wave Motor.

**IN THE LAB:** SQF results topped out in the Excellent range at all three tested focal lengths, an above-average performance by kit lens standards. (Even pro-caliber lenses in this focal-length range tend to dip into the Very Good SQF zone at 200mm.) Distortion was also very well controlled, according to DxO Analyzer 2.0 tests, with Imperceptible barrel distortion at 50mm (0.09%); and Slight pincushioning at 100mm (0.22%) and 200mm (0.23%). Light falloff was gone by f/5.6 at 50mm, and by f/8 at the longer focal lengths—about average for the kit-zoom class. Close-focusing distances ranged from 39.25 inches at 50mm (1:16.2) to 42.24 inches at 200mm (1:4.4).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Optically, the best digitally-dedicated tele kit zoom that we've tested so far, this Samsung lens produced the sharpness and distortion numbers of a much more expensive, pro-caliber zoom. It remains to be seen, however, whether the plastic body will be able to hold its 11 elements in alignment for the long haul.

—Julia Silber