

NIKON

D5200



POWER TOOL

Nikon continues to roll out new D-SLRs with impressive specifications, and the D5200 joins a growing list of models which are redefining expectations in their various categories.

Report by Paul Burrows.

D4, D800/800E, D600, D3200, D5200 and the most recent new arrival, the D7100. It's an imposing line-up of D-SLR heavy hitters that's revitalised Nikon's fortunes in this market and no doubt given the product planners over at arch-rival Canon something to think about.

Sensors are very much at the heart of what Nikon has been doing with its new generation of D-SLRs from entry-level to professional. The D800 with its 36.8 megapixels 35mm-sized imager is the most spectacular in this department, but the 24.7 MP D600 isn't far behind and Nikon has been pumping up the pixels across the range so the D3200, D5200 and the D7100 all have 24.7 megapixels on tap, albeit with an 'APS-C' size sensor, a.k.a. the DX format.

As it happens, even if the total pixel count is the same, all three models also use different sensors, and the D5200's is sourced from Toshiba. Of course, most of the serious leg work is done by Nikon's 'Expeed 3' processor, and the D5200 isn't just about having more pixels than its rivals, it has more of a lot of things as both its autofocus and metering systems have migrated down from the next level as the D7000 is replaced. Consequently, the compact D5200 packs some 'big camera' specs, giving it broad appeal from entry-level to enthusiast. Converts are probably also going to like the colour of our test camera, which is a metallic-look red finish that's actually very classy in a similar way to the Pentax K-30's blue. The alternatives are the standard black and a bronze colour that also looks quite smart, but is more subdued than the red.

TAKING CONTROL

The D5200 basically follows the Nikon template for its compact entry-level D-SLRs so there's a main mode dial, but no top deck LCD read-out panel.

The main controls are a rear input wheel and a four-way navigator keypad, supported by a smattering of buttons – those related to capture located atop the handgrip and those related to playback situated on the rear panel. The viewfinder is a penta-mirror design with the pop-up flash built around it. The 7.62 cm LCD monitor screen has tilt and swivel adjustments, and a resolution of 921,600 pixels. There are no touch controls. The camera's single memory card slot supports

the SD format, including SDXC and UHS-I speed data transfer. Like the rest of the compact Nikon D-SLRs, the D5200 doesn't have a body-integrated autofocus motor so it requires the motorised AF-S Nikkor lenses for AF operations. Given the step up in its overall capabilities, that the D5200 still lacks a depth-of-field preview facility seems a bit like unnecessary penny-pinching.

As noted earlier, the D5200 inherits the 'Multi-CAM4800DX' AF module from the D7000, but it doesn't offer quite the same level of controllability. However, it still employs 39 focusing points, nine of which are cross-type arrays located near the centre of the frame. The 12-15-12 point pattern provides pretty wide subject coverage, but there's also a provision for reducing the number of active points to just 11 primarily for more selective focusing. Switching between the single-shot and continuous modes can be done manually or automatically (but there isn't an external control for this), and there's the choice of manual or auto AF point selection. Points can also be selected in groups of nine or 21, and '3D Tracking' operates in the continuous AF mode, switching the points as the subject travels across the frame.

CONTROL SYSTEMS

Exposure control is based on the 2016-pixels RGB sensor which is also inherited from the D7000, but is still used in the D7100. The alternative measuring methods are a centre-weighted average pattern with a fixed centre zone diameter (unlike the D7100's variable one) and a spot meter which is 3.5 mm in diameter and so represents 2.5 percent of the frame area.

The standard 'PASM' control modes are backed by program shift, an AE lock, up to +/5.0 EV of compensation and auto bracketing which operates over three frames with correction of up to +/2.0 EV per frame. All the exposure-related settings can be made in either one-third or half stop increments, preselected in the camera's custom menu.

Nikon's 'Scene Recognition System' is operating behind the scenes all the time – based on an extensive built-in database of image scenarios – to optimise the exposure, focusing, white balance and flash control. It needs to be understood that this isn't automatic scene mode selection, merely analysis and optimisation. However,

the D5200 *does* engage auto scene selection in its full auto mode, using data derived from its metering and autofocus systems.

There are a total of 16 subject/scene modes with the five standard ones (i.e. portrait, landscape, sports, etc) selectable via positions on the main mode dial, while the rest of them are accessed via the 'Scene' position. These are shown in the LCD monitor screen as sample images and selection is made via the rear input wheel.

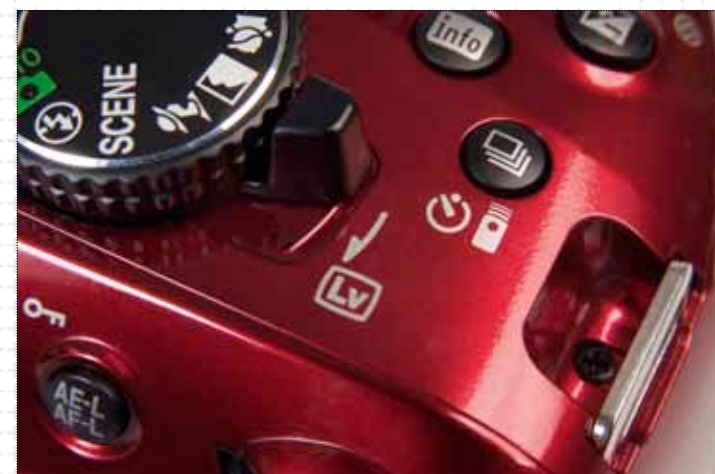
The shutter has a speed range of 30-1/4000 second with flash sync up to 1/200 second. The D5200's i-TTL flash metering is based on the 2016-pixel sensor – with Scene Recognition also at work – to enhance the accuracy with situations such as balancing daylight and flash. The built-in flash has a metric guide number of 12 (at ISO 100) and can be operated in a manual mode which allows the power output to be reduced to 1/32. Alternatively, flash compensation is available over a range of -3.0 to +1.0 EV, again in either 1/3 or 1/2 stop increments. However, unlike on the next model up, the built-in flash can't operate as the commander for a wireless TTL flash set-up.

The RGB metering sensor is also used to measure colour balance and the auto correction mode is supplemented by a total

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✚ The D5200's main mode dial is used to access the camera's seven special effects. The five standard subject modes have their own positions while the remaining 11 are accessed by turning the dial to 'Scene'.



✚ The lever located alongside the main mode dial is used to activate the live view function, and from here video recording is commenced via a dedicated start/stop button adjacent to the shutter release (out of shot here).



✚ All the curves and sweeping lines evident in this image of the rear control panel give a good impression of how classy the red finish really is. For once, we'd select this colour over the basic black any time. Although it isn't weather-proofed, the D5200's polycarbonate bodysell looks and feels very strong.



of 12 presets, of which seven are for different types of fluorescent lighting. One custom measurement can be made and stored, and all the presets can be fine-tuned in both the blue-to-amber and green-to-magenta colour ranges. There's also a white balance bracketing function, again operating over three frames with an adjustment in the blue-to-amber range of up to plus/minus three steps. However, there is no provision for manually setting the colour temperature.

The maximum continuous shooting speed is 5.0 fps – up from 4.0 fps – with the option of a slow speed setting which operates at 3.0 fps. The self-timer is programmable for both the delay time (between two and 20 seconds) and the number of frames (up to nine).

IN THE PROCESS

The new CMOS sensor has an imaging area of 15.6x23.5 mm and a native sensitivity range equivalent to ISO 100 to 6400 with a two-stop 'push' to ISO 25,600. The maximum image size is 6000x4000 pixels with the choice of two smaller sizes and three levels of JPEG compression, labelled 'Fine', 'Normal' and 'Basic' (respectively, 1:4, 1:8 and 1:16). RAW files can be captured at 14-bit per RGB channel and RAW+JPEG capture can be configured to any of the JPEG compression settings, but only with the largest image size.

The image processing options start with Nikon's standard set of six 'Picture Control' presets – five for colour and one for B&W. The colour presets are called Standard, Neutral, Vivid, Portrait and Landscape, and have adjustable parameters for sharpness, contrast, brightness, colour saturation and hue. Each of these can be manually fine-tuned either separately or collectively via a 'Quick Adjust' function. The Monochrome 'Picture Control' has adjustments for sharpness and contrast plus a set of contrast control filters (yellow, orange, red and green) and a selection of toning effects – nine colours in all, each with seven levels of intensity. The modified 'Picture Controls' can be saved and, if desired, renamed, plus there is a provision for saving one customised preset. It's also possible to download new presets to the camera (via a memory card) and these are created in either Nikon's View NX2 software (which is supplied with the camera) or Capture NX2.

The D5200 also has a set of special effects which are applied at

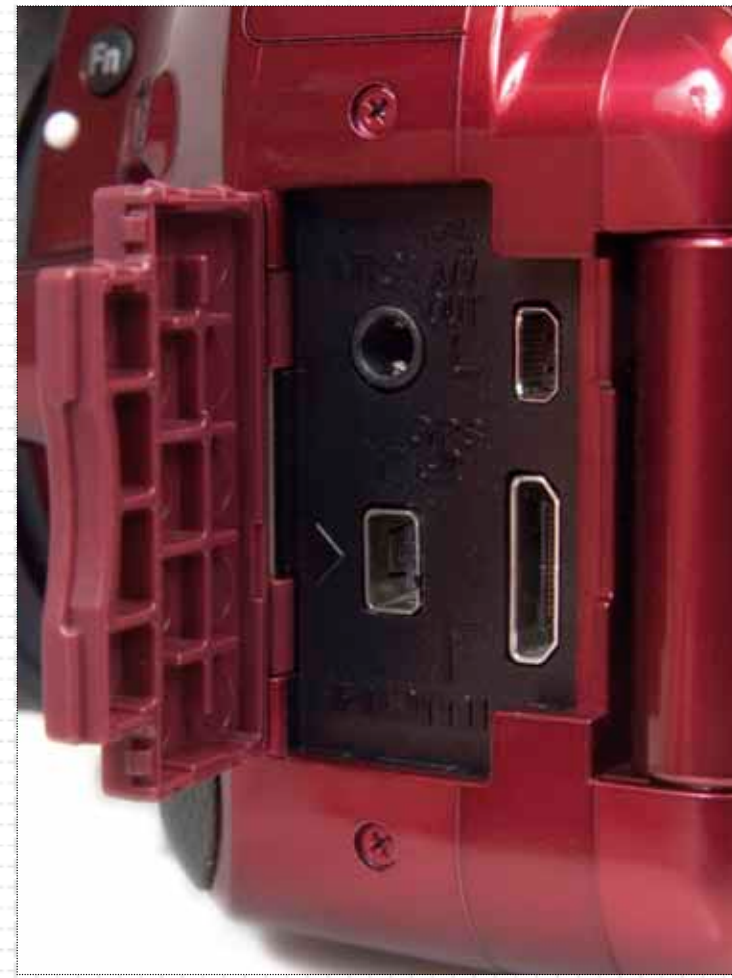
the point of capture and selected in the same way as the subject/scene modes. There are seven of them, namely Night Vision, Colour Sketch, Miniature Effect, Selective Colour, Silhouette, High Key and Low Key. Selective Colour, Colour Sketch and Miniature Effect have to be first configured in the live view mode. Interestingly, Night Vision captures an image at ISO 102,400, albeit only in B&W. With all the other effects the exposure control, ISO and white balance setting are locked to automatic, so it's likely many users will opt to use the effects available in the D5200's 'Retouch Menu', particularly as doing it this way retains the original image file unmolested. The 'Retouch Menu' has been growing steadily over the years, and on the D5200 it now comprises 18 items (19 if Edit Movie is included). This list includes Colour Outline, Colour Sketch, Miniature Effect, Selective Colour and Fisheye, plus a choice of filter effects, including Soft, Cross Screen and Skylight. There are corrective functions such as Straighten, Distortion Control, Perspective Control, Colour Balance and Red Eye Correction. These provide manually adjustable corrections, and most of the special effects and filters are also adjustable.

Both in-camera B&W conversion and RAW-to-JPEG processing are available in this menu – the former with the option of sepia or cyanotype toning, and the latter with adjustments for image size/quality, white balance, exposure compensation, the 'Picture Control' preset, the colour space, high ISO noise reduction and D-Lighting correction.

Nikon's 'D-Lighting' dynamic range expansion processing can also be applied post-capture as an alternative to the 'Active' at-capture function. ADL analyses the image for brightness and contrast with the choice of automatic correction or four manual settings – Low, Normal, High and Extra High. Underexposure is applied to preserve more detail in the highlights while the shadows are selectively brightened. There's also an ADL bracketing function which captures one frame with ADL at work (at the set level) and one without. When the 'Active D-Lighting' processing is engaged, both the contrast and brightness adjustments in the 'Picture Control' presets are disabled. Importantly, Active D-Lighting can be switched off as the extra image processing required will slow the camera down.



➤ The single SD format memory card slot supports the SDHX and SDXC types as well as UHS-I high speed data transfer and Wi-Fi-enabled devices.



➤ The connection bay includes a stereo audio input for connecting an external microphone and an HDMI terminal which can output a 'clean' uncompressed video feed.



➤ The D5200's LCD monitor screen is adjustable for tilt and swing which enables it to be folded away faceplate first.



✚ The updated 'Graphic' user interface now includes three symbolic displays for the shutter speed (which rotates when a change is made), aperture and the ISO. This last graphic briefly converts to a virtual main mode dial when selecting a shooting mode using the real control.



✚ The live view screen includes a set of capture-related icons along its upper edge.



✚ Among the review screens is one which includes a full set of brightness and RGB channel histograms.



✚ The alternative screen shows a brightness histogram along with a set of capture data.

The D5200 also has a double-shot HDR capture function which can be set to either auto exposure adjustment or one of four manual settings – Low, Normal, High and Extra High.

Active at-capture processing is also available for lens distortion with compatible Nikkor optics, and the D5200 has a multiple exposure facility which can be set to either two or three shots with the option of auto exposure correction.

GOING TO THE MOVIES

Video clips are recorded at the Full HD resolution of 1920x1080 pixels at 50 fps interlaced – which is new on the D5200 – or either 25 or 24 fps progressive. Interestingly, the interlaced framing is matched to the sensor's framing rate. Something that hasn't had much fuss made about it so far is that, like the D600 and D800, the D5200 can deliver an uncompressed video output (YCbCr 4:2:2, 8-bit) to its HDMI connection which can then be fed to an external recorder or an external monitor.

Nikon continues to use the MPEG4 AVC format and H.264 codec. Video can also be recorded at 720p/50 fps and in standard definition at the VGA resolution. There are also 'High' and 'Normal' quality settings for each movie mode. The D5200 steps up to stereo microphones, which are located just in front of the hotshoe, and it retains a 3.5 mm stereo audio input for connecting an external mic. Usefully, the audio recording levels can be manually set over a range of 20 steps.

The maximum clip duration is 30 minutes or a maximum file size of 4.0 GB, whichever comes first. The image stabiliser in a VR lens is automatically activated during movie recording.

The level of video functionality is reasonably good, with a 'Manual Movie Settings' control enabling the manual adjustment of shutter speeds and sensitivity. Continuous

autofocusing is available, but speed issues (as well as noise) mean that manual control is generally the better option. The special effects, the 'Picture Control' presets (with any fine-tuning adjustments), the white balance settings and the 'Active D-lighting' processing can all be preselected. As on the D7000 and the D5100, however, the anomaly continues that whatever aperture is set at the time the camera is switched to live view mode is the aperture that will be used when shooting video, regardless of whether it's subsequently changed or not.

There's a dedicated movie start/stop button, and the D5200 is switched to live view operations via a lever set next to the main mode dial.

The image review options comprise the standard Nikon fare of three pages of shooting data, a highlight warning and a thumbnail accompanied by either image data and a brightness histogram or, alternatively, a full set of RGB histograms. This is configured in the playback menu and each element is selectable separately. During review or replay, the navigator pad's up/down actions cycle through the review screens.

The playback modes include 4/9/72 thumbnail pages, thumbnail calendar display, a zooming function which magnifies the image by up to a massive 38x and a slide show function with adjustable image display times.

IN THE HAND

As on the D5100, the monitor screen is used as the main information display, and has provisions for making adjustments to a wide selection of capture-related settings. Pressing the 'i' button – which is located on the back panel adjacent to the viewfinder eyepiece – switches the display from passive to active.

There's a choice of 'Classic' or 'Graphic' display styles and three background colours for each (blue, black or white). The main difference is that the 'Graphic' display includes visual representations of a lens diaphragm (which opens and closes according to the aperture setting), a shutter speed dial (which 'turns') and an ISO selector which is also circular (and briefly converts into a virtual main mode dial when the shooting mode is being changed). Each shows the actual setting within their circular graphics. Additionally, the display can be

separately configured for when the camera is in the 'PASM' modes or the Auto/Scene/Effects modes.

Both displays provide 'plain English' warnings – for example, "Subject is too dark" – and have a help function which either expands on these warnings or provides an explanation when a setting adjustment is selected on-screen. Additionally, the sub-menus for these settings are accompanied by illustrative images which mostly change to reflect the adjustment (for example, darkening or brightening with exposure compensation).

Both displays also have two strips of tiles which serve as an interactive control panel that's activated when the 'i' button is pressed. These include adjustments for the image quality and size, white balance, ADL processing, 'Picture Control' preset, metering method, the autofocus settings, flash modes and exposure compensation. Navigation is via the key pad or input wheel which highlights a selected tile and then pressing the 'OK' brings up the relevant sub-menu which, again, is accompanied by illustrative images. It's not as efficient as some control screens, but still quicker than trawling through the menu system. That said, Nikon's D-SLR menus are pretty logical in both their layout and navigation... progressive right-clicks access the submenus and settings, with the 'OK' button sealing the deal. Backtracking is via the 'Menu' button which, as on the D5100, is located all on its own on the left-hand side of the viewfinder eyepiece where it isn't entirely convenient in terms of access. In terms of image capture there are dedicated buttons for the drive modes (including the self-timer), exposure compensation, flash compensation and the AE/AF lock plus an 'Fn' button that can be assigned one of 14 functions, including (importantly) the ISO, white balance, ADL, auto bracketing, AF area mode and image quality/size.

Overall though, the D5200 is comfortable to handle and generally comfortable to operate. The restyled polycarbonate body feels strong and looks to be exceptionally well screwed together for this level of D-SLR, although it isn't weatherised. However, the lens mount is stainless steel.

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SPEED AND PERFORMANCE

It's easy to forget in this age of super fast shooting speeds that

5.0 fps is still pretty respectable for a sub-\$1000 D-SLR. Loaded with our Panasonic 16 GB Class 10 Gold-series SDHC reference memory card, the D5200 fired off a sequence of 15 JPEG/large/fine frames in 3.034 seconds. This represents a shooting speed of 4.94 fps, which is as close to the quoted rate as makes no difference. The typical file size was 13 MB.

The 39-point AF is already proven in the D7000 and is both fast and unerringly reliable. The 2016-pixel '3D Colour Matrix II' metering is also exceptionally reliable, even in challenging situations where an extreme contrast range would confound lesser systems. That both these systems are now available on a very affordable D-SLR is an indication of how far D-SLR design has come over recent years. So is having 24.7 megapixels on tap, and the D5200 uses them well, delivering beautifully crisp-looking images that are rich in well-defined fine details, accurate colour reproduction and nicely smooth tonal gradations.

The 'Picture Control' presets provide plenty of scope for tweaking images if more colour saturation, sharpness and contrast are desired. Noise levels are negligible up to ISO 1600, minimal at ISO 3200 and acceptable at ISO 6400. Both the expanded sensitivity settings exhibit enough noise to compromise both the colour saturation and the sharpness, but aren't entirely unusable provided big enlargements aren't required. The dynamic range is reasonably good without any expansion processing, although ADL does make a small, but noticeable difference to the highlights.

THE VERDICT

The D5200 continues Nikon's sparkling form in D-SLRs and is yet another model offering a high level of capabilities at a very attractive price. While there are a few niggling omissions, the D5200 definitely doesn't give the impression it's been built to a price and, in reality, there's nothing really serious missing from its long list of features. On the plus side are its compact dimensions, excellent ergonomics – helped along by the improved user interface – and strong imaging performance.

In essence, the D5200 may just be a remixing of a number of existing Nikon ingredients, but this new recipe undoubtedly produces a very appetising result. 🍴

NIKON D5200 \$1069*

Type: Fully automatic digital SLR with Nikon F bayonet lens mount (AF-S and AF-I lenses fully supported, all others with manual focusing only).

Focusing: Automatic 39-point wide-area system using phase-detection type CCD sensor arrays (nine cross-type arrays). Focus points may be selected manually or automatically by the camera or automatically by the camera with auto tracking. Auto or manual switching between one-shot and continuous AF modes, the latter with a predictive function. Face priority and auto tracking.

Sensitivity range: EV -1 - 19 (ISO 100). AF assist provided by built-in illuminator.

Metering: 2016-point '3D Colour Matrix II', centre-weighted average, spot (3.5mm/2.5%) and i-TTL flash. Metering range is EV 0 to 20 (ISO 100/f1.4). Spot metering range is EV 2 to 20.

Exposure Modes: Continuously-variable program with shift, shutter-priority auto, aperture-priority auto, metered manual, i-TTL auto flash and TTL flash. Plus 16 subject/scene modes.

Shutter: Electronic, vertical travel, metal blades, 30-1/4000 second plus B. Flash sync to 1/200 second. Exposure compensation up to +/-5.0 EV in 1/3 or 1/2 increments.

Viewfinder: Coverage = 95% vertical/horizontal. Magnification = 0.78x (50mm lens at infinity). LCD display and LED focus point indicators. Fixed focusing screen. Eyepiece strength adjustment built-in.

Flash: Built-in pop-up unit with GN 12 power (ISO 100). Auto, fill-in, red-eye reduction, front/rear sync and slow speed sync modes. External flash units connect via hotshoe. Flash compensation range of -3.0 to +1.0 EV in 1/3 or 1/2 stop increments. Manual control down to 1/32 of full power.

Additional Features: AE lock, auto exposure bracketing (over three frames), multiple exposure facility (up to three frames with auto exposure adjustment), 'Classic' or 'Graphic' display styles (with a choice of three colour schemes), multi-mode self-timer (2 to 20 second delays, one to nine exposures), intervalometer, wireless remote triggering, wired remote triggering, quiet shutter release, audible signals, auto power-off, 22 custom settings. Nikon's VR-equipped lenses have built-in optical image stabilisation.

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DIGITAL SECTION

Sensor: 24.71 million (total) pixels CMOS with 23.5x15.6 mm imaging area and 3:2 aspect ratio. Sensitivity equivalent to ISO 100-6400 (extendable to ISO 25,600).

Focal Length Magnification: 1.5x. **Formats/Resolution:** Three JPEG compression settings, RAW output (lossless compression) plus RAW+JPEG capture. Three resolution settings; 6000x4000, 4496x3000 and 2992x2000 pixels. 24-bit RGB colour for JPEGs, 42-bit RGB colour for RAW files.

Video Recording: Full HD = 1920x1080 pixels at 50 fps interlaced and 16:9 aspect ratio. Full HD = 1920x1080 pixels at 25 fps progressive and 16:9 aspect ratio. HD = 1280x720 pixels at 50 fps and 16:9 aspect ratio. SD = 640x424 pixels at 25 fps and 3:2. High and Normal quality modes. MPEG 4 (H.264) AVC format. Clip length of up to 30 minutes in duration or 4.0 GB in file size. Built-in stereo microphones with stereo audio input.

Recording Media: SD/SDHC/SDXC memory cards with UHS-I speed support.

Burst Rate: Up to 35 frames at 5.0 fps in JPEG/large/fine mode, up to eight frames in RAW mode (14-bit, lossless compressed). Low speed continuous shooting mode operates at 3.0 fps.

White Balance: TTL measurements using the 2016-pixel RGB metering sensor. Auto/manual control with 12 presets and one custom setting. White balance fine-tuning available for AWB and all presets. White balance bracketing (up to three frames).

Interfaces: USB 2.0, mini HDMI, NTSC/PAL video output, 3.5mm stereo audio input.

Additional Digital Features: Live view with contrast detection AF, built-in sensor cleaning (active and passive measures), variable-angle 7.62 cm LCD monitor (921,600 pixels), Adobe RGB and sRGB colour spaces, long exposure noise reduction (On, Off), high ISO noise reduction (Off, Low, Normal, High), seven special effects modes (Night Vision, Colour Sketch, Miniature Effect, Selective Colour, Silhouette, High Key and Low Key), six 'Picture Control' modes (Standard, Neutral, Vivid, Monochrome, Portrait and Landscape), adjustable picture parameters (contrast, sharpness, colour saturation and colour hue with 'Quick Adjust' option), nine

custom 'Picture Controls', B&W contrast filters and toning effects (nine colours/seven levels), 'Active D-Lighting' processing (Off, Low, Normal, High, Extra High, Auto), ADL bracketing (two frames), multiple exposure HDR capture (Off, Low, Normal, High, Extra High, Auto), 'Auto Distortion Control' (On, Off), luminance/RGB histogram displays, highlight alert, adjustable image display time, auto image rotation, in-camera editing functions (D-Lighting, Red-Eye Correction, Trim, Monochrome/ Sepia/Cyanotype, Colour Balance, Image Overlay, RAW Processing, Resize, Quick Retouch, Straighten, Distortion Control, Fish-eye, Colour Outline, Colour Sketch, Perspective Control, Miniature Effect, Selective Colour, Edit Movie), adjustable filter effects (Skylight, Warm, Red Intensifier, Green Intensifier, Blue Intensifier, Cross Screen, Soft), 4/9/72 thumbnail displays, thumbnail calendar display, zoom playback (up to 38x), slide show with variable image display time, DPOF support, PictBridge support. May be fitted with the optional WR-R10 Wireless Remote transceiver, WR-T10 Wireless Remote transmitter, the WU-1a Wireless Mobile Adapter and the GP-1 GPS receiver.

Power: One 7.4 volt/1030 mAh rechargeable lithium-ion battery pack (EN-EL14 type).

Dimensions (WxHxD): body only = 129.0x98.0x78.0 mm.

Weight: body only = 505 grams (without battery pack or memory card).

Price: \$949 body only. \$1069 with AF-S DX Nikkor 18-55mm f3.5-5.6G VR zoom. Estimated street prices. Available in black, red or bronze body colours.

Distributor: Nikon Australia Pty Ltd, telephone 1300 366 499 or visit www.nikon.com.au

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