



Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7

Small can be beautiful, and still effective. **Anthony McKee** reviews this smaller, but more highly optioned nifty Four-Thirds camera.



As a documentary style photographer I'm more interested in photographing people – other people, than myself! So when I was asked to review a camera designed, among other things, to photograph 'selfies' I was a little concerned. Would this camera survive testing...on me?

The new Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7 is the latest successor in a line of entry level Four-Thirds cameras which started in 2009. The 12.2-megapixel DMC-GF1 was one of the smallest Four-Thirds cameras around at the time of its release, being 35% smaller than other G cameras. Six years on, the new GF7 is smaller than the GF6 (though not the GM5), and it features a 16-megapixel sensor capable of delivering image quality comparable to its larger siblings.

By comparison to many other Micro Four Thirds cameras, the GF7 is relatively simple in its design. The top deck has just one large function button on the upper left, while on the right is the shutter-release button with the power switch fitted around it, a main mode dial and an Intelligent Auto Button. Just behind the top deck is a video record button and a tiny slider switch which activates the small built-in TTL flash (guide number 5.6 at

200 ISO/metres). There is no hot-shoe or external electronic viewfinder options.

The key selling point on this camera is a 3in (75mm) 1.04-million dot LCD panel that is hinged along the top edge of the display. It can be rotated 180 degrees upwards to face forwards so that the user can make 'selfies' of themselves and their friends. As the LCD panel nears the vertical position, the image is rotated into the correct orientation. When you push the shutter release button a three-second self timer counts down to get everyone ready for the big moment, or you can hold the camera away on a 'selfie' stick. I did test out the 'selfie' feature on this camera; it works, although I think I look better when I'm behind the camera!

Most readers are unlikely to be obsessed with making 'selfies', but the LCD panel is also well suited for street photography. Rotating the LCD up 90 degrees brings the screen level

with the top deck, and if you cup the camera in your hands you could easily treat it as if you were working with a waist-level viewfinder camera, similar to those used in 1950s and 1960s by the likes of Diane Arbus and the recently discovered Vivian Maier. Because you're looking down on the camera, rather than holding the camera out in front of your face, you can work rather discreetly without drawing too much attention to yourself.

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7 is available in a kit with a 12-32mm Lumix G lens (equivalent to 24-64mm in the 35mm format) for \$699, or for \$999 with the addition of the 35-100mm (equivalent to 70-200mm) Lumix G lens. *

More info: www.panasonic.com.au

ABOVE Exposure is good out of the Panasonic GF7, even in some of the tricky situations.

Specifications

Sensor: 16-megapixel Live MOS Four Thirds.	Stills format: JPEG, RAW and JPEG + RAW.
Lens: Micro Four Thirds type interchangeable lens. Kit lens is a 12-32mm f/3.5-5.6 ASPH.	Movie format: 1080P. Also HD and SD video.
Shutter: 60 sec to 1/16000s.	WiFi: IEEE 802.11b/g/n
Burst Rate: Up to 5.8 frames per second for up to 7 frames.	Battery: Li-ion Battery Pack (7.2V, 680mAh).
ISO Range: 200-25,600 (expandable to ISO 100).	Dimensions: 106.5 x 33.3 x 64.6 mm (Body Only)
LCD: 3in (75mm) 921,000-dot Touch LCD screen (Tilttable 180°)	Weight: 266-grams body only/336-grams with lens, battery and SD card
Flash: Built-in flash with GN of 4-metres / ISO 100.	Price: \$699 with the 12-32 (24-64mm equiv.) lens.

Results

HANDLING ★★★★★
The Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7 is a small camera and very easy to keep in a pocket. It lacks an electronic viewfinder, but its option to angle up the LCD touch screen and shoot from the waist, Vivian Maier style, makes it ideal for street and travel photography.

FEATURES ★★★★★
The most appealing feature of this camera is its compact form and minimal control layout. Unlike many cameras, this has a modest layout and yet it's still capable of good control options via the camera's 3in (75mm) touch screen. The 'selfie' option is going to appeal to younger users, but the rest of us will just enjoy it as a handy LCD screen.

EXPOSURE ★★★★★
Intelligent Exposure gets the image right most of the time. Turning the camera onto any of the other exposure modes, including manual mode is still worthwhile though, particularly if you are the thinking type of photographer.

IMAGE QUALITY ★★★★★
Above-average image quality at the low to mid ISO settings. JPEGs out of the camera are in most instances above average, however best image quality is achieved when you shoot in RAW mode and again, you take control of the image-making decisions.

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
Small cost, but the GF7 is actually very capable. At \$699 including a lens, this camera is a little dearer than some compact cameras, but its Four Thirds sensor will deliver quite a bit more quality.

FINAL WORD
The Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7 is not going to replace your main camera, but it's an ideal sidekick. It's small enough to carry everywhere, and with an amazing range of lenses to choose from it is a versatile street and travel camera.

SCORE
8.6

Photography
★ GOLD AWARD ★