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# CALLING FOR ATTENTION



From desirable gadgets to status icons of adolescents, and functional communication devices to conversation pieces—different people have different reasons for buying cell phones. We test the best of them to help you satisfy your needs

Michael Browne



**W**e've been testing cell phones for quite some time now. In fact for us Test Centre blokes cell phones remain one of the tests that involve the most work, and the most fun. Although the fun aspect has always prevailed, the work aspect is something that has seen increments over the past three years or so. The reason—convergence—cell phones have evolved from bricks with number pads to smaller bricks with number pads, to devices with number pads, multimedia capabilities and cameras to the tiny all-in-one computers they've become today. So we have more to test, more aspects to look at and more parameters to grade. No complaints here—double the features—we'll have double the fun!

Just when we thought more features be crammed on to a device, we see the devices themselves become sexier, something you'd want to own not for the go, but the show. All brands have become more conscious of consumers needs. Today, a user doesn't just want a cell phone with 8 GB of internal memory, PMP capabilities, 5 megapixel camera, and GPS that looks like a miniature brick. He wants style he demands a work of art—a Ferrari on a Ford's budget. Sounds impossible? Well it isn't, thanks to a little help from our oriental neighbours, who can manufacture at half the costs that we, in India, can. With most brands having moved their manufacturing units to China over the past two years cell phones have become radically cheaper. The falling costs means that vendors can finally push better products through the pipe, as consumers expand their usage patterns. So the features that you paid Rs 20,000 for two years back will be obsolete now, or at best you can get more value for money off a phone that will cost you no more than Rs 10,000 today. That, friends, is more power to the people, and India's booming cellular market with a sale of more than 85 million handsets last year is a strong contributor the 1+ billion phones sold globally in 2007. At just 18 million odd handsets sold in 2003, we've seen a tremendous growth rate of over 400 percent

over the past four years, a trend which we fully expect to continue.

## Walkie-talkies And Little Else?

Rs 3,500 to Rs 8,000

**B**asic cell phones may be far from flagships but they rule the volumes game. Falling prices have affected cheap cell phones too, so better technologies have trickled into this price point as well, and these phones are offer a lot to someone making his first foray into the world of cell phones, or anybody looking for something basic. A far cry from the high end multimedia smartphones these little jewels fight fiercely for a market that is at best ruthless, where any lacunae in their performance is fully exploited by other market players.

## Features

LGs KE770 Shine is easily the most attractive cell phone amongst these minnows. It's very well built with a full metal body, something which belies the price. The screen is also a mirror finished affair, although at a resolution of 176 x 220 pixels the finish is the only impressive aspect of the display. The keypad is well laid out, although feedback is entirely another matter. Sony Ericsson's K550i and K530i are obviously siblings although the higher model (K550i) has a semi metal body while the other is purely plastic. The K530i does have a larger, more comfortable keypad though. The Intex Aura i2224 is a decent looking phone, but the



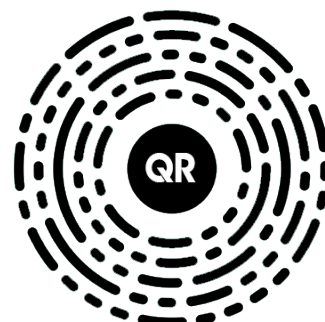
LG K195 - Value Winner



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build quality isn't as inspiring. In fact the cheapest phone in the test (LG KG195) is better built, although to be honest this LGs build quality really surprised us, so the Aura 12224 isn't shabby or anything. All these phones are reasonably compact and will fit even the tightest pocket the KE770 is the slimmest here.

Aside from the LG KE770 and SE's K550i and K530i which have 2 megapixel cameras all the other phones sport lower-end cameras with either VGA or 1.3 megapixel sensors. Intex's IN3333 and LG's KG195 had a surprise waiting—these phones can be used in offline mode, unlike many of the higher-end phones, which need SIM cards to be inserted before the menus become available for use. Although of little use to most, this may be significant to some. Bleu's 466x is a simple phone with no frills save one—it has a full 80 minutes of the famous religious TV serial Ramayana—although the screen quality or size isn't too great and we feel this little add-on will be ignored by most users, it merits mention.

## Performance

The LG KE770 and both Sony Ericssons (KE550i and KE530i) have superior cameras, although at this price point you will get very nominal quality from all these phones. What we liked was the call clarity of these three phones, although the KE770 has very limited potential as a music player owing to lower quality sound than both the SE phones.

In the lower half of this category the Intex Aura 12224 battles with the LG KG195 and loses out mainly because the LG is a better performer all round, although the 0.3 megapixel camera will disappoint all camera lovers

who buy the KG195. Bleu's 466x and Intex's IN3333 are decent

## Who Won, And Why?

Our prestigious Best Buy award goes to the LG KG195, which at Rs 3,990, is fiercely competitive at its price point. It even manages to steal the limelight away from costlier models in this category. The fact that it is the cheapest phone in the entire test just goes to show that value and performance can coexist.

## Smartphone Entry Points

Rs 8,001 to Rs 15,000

This category is perhaps even bigger than the previous one, as quite a few metropolitan people who go cellphone shopping have their sights on this price range. This is because devices in this price range are mostly smartphones, and everybody who has seen one or used one, wants to own one. The average college kid, the teenage with an attitude, the executive making a flashy purchase after saving his first 2 months' salary—all these people are likely to be found seeking a phone in this price range. Here's where the features start to emerge, and the phones start to get bigger, crisper screens, better cameras, more memory, not to mention

## Features

The Sony Ericsson W380 caught our attention first. A cute clamshell phone, this one features a high quality matte purple body with some pink shortcut buttons. Now before you think Playboy (the pink does resemble the magazines favourite shade) this phone isn't necessarily aimed at females, a fact which may not become apparent the first

time you see it. When we saw other colours of the phone i.e. silver and black, we knew for sure that SE has designed something totally unisexual. The OLED embedded into the front of the phone comes as a shock at first, because looking at the body one expects it to be an opaque fibre, and not translucent. Nevertheless this display is pretty useful when the phone is closed, as it shows you the time, battery status, missed calls, unread SMSes, etc. Besides the utility it's also ultra cool, and adds a little more value. The SE K660 is another excellent looking phone, white with light, fluorescent green trim on the sides. It also feels remarkably solid to hold, and looks like a K850i clone, albeit smaller, and of course much cheaper. Other than the two Sony Ericsson phones the Nokia 5310 Express Music is also noteworthy. It's very slim, in the same league as the sleek Sony Ericsson W890 in this regards, and the body is entirely made of aluminium. The media player buttons on the front bezel, to the left of the screen are very visible, and very usable. Its main shortcoming is the flat keypad that exudes a wooden feedback—SMS junkies beware! LGs KF510 is another sweet looker—made of shiny metal available in glimmering red and black the KF510 is superbly built and has a great slider mechanism. Also worth mention is the Motorola ROKR U9, which is a cute, oval shaped clamshell phone that looks a little like the Motorola PEBL (named because it resembles a pebble, evidently) We'd give the beauty award to the W380 though, and the best build prize would be claimed by the K660—so that's two for Sony Ericsson. Nokia's 5610 Express Music is also available, but this one doesn't impress with its build too much, although the slider quality is good. Nokia's 6500 Classic is another sleek, slim phone with a decent keypad and good build quality—although we didn't like the battery cover's removal procedure—a simple grab and yank cannot be good for the long run, where some sort of play between surfaces is bound to develop. This phone also has 1 GB of inbuilt memory and no mem-



**LG K195 - Value Winner**

ory expansion—a shame considering the falling prices of flash storage. The Samsung D780 is a plain looker, well built, but simple.

The Nokia 5610 and LG KF510 have the best cameras, the resolution of both are 3.2 megapixels. Both also have excellent screens. With VGA resolution video capture the Nokia 5610 does take the lead when it comes to video shooting.

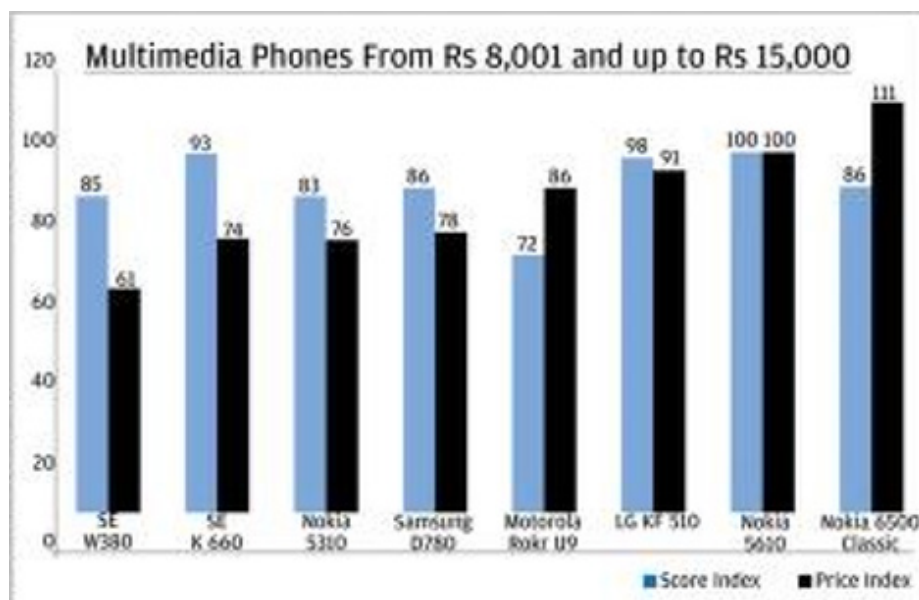
## Performance

LGs KF510 has a superb antenna inside and the voice clarity is testament to this—we enjoyed clear call quality even in zone 2 which absolutely butchers cell phone radio signals. In terms of music quality it lags behind though, and both Sony Ericssons and Nokia's Express Music duo outperform it easily. The KF510 does get back in the camera quality tests—understandable since it does have a better camera, and was the only other phone besides the Nokia 5610 to sport an autofocus—which does do wonders for image sharpness. A surprise performer in the music test was the Sony Ericsson W380 this cutie has a great voice too!

## Who Won, And Why?

Sony Ericsson's W380 is just too good a phone to pass units damn good looking, is suitably feature rich, has great music quality, a very usable keypad, and it's a clamshell—good clamshells are rare! We're awarding it our Best Value award, the absolute clincher for it being the fact that it's the cheapest phone in this category at a price tag of Rs 8,195, and the nearest competitor in terms of price is costs around Rs 1,700 more. This phone makes a superb buy for those looking for a phone without a good camera. If you want a decent camera phone that also has good music quality then you should look at the Nokia 5610 or the LG KF510, we prefer the LG phone though, its much better built. If by chance neither phone attract and you want something solid (not a slider) then take a look at Sony Ericsson's K660—it's a superbly built, solid little thing

and also quite feature packed.



## Feature-rich, Fancy Multimedia Phones

Rs 15,000 and up to Rs 19,999

### Nokia N78

Nokia's N78 is another device formed out of the thought process that brought about the N82—a convergence of features, in a nice compact body. Although if you compare features you'll see the N78 bears striking resemblance to the much older N73 instead. With a 3.2 megapixel camera, a sleek body that's slim and ultra compact and a tiny keypad (sadly) the N78 is one of the best looking, best finished phones we've seen. The steel grey finish is absolutely top class, and the quality of accessories is also excellent—a very good bundle in all. The phone itself sports a great screen that's unfortunately small—2.4 inches is no substitute for a 2.8 inch screen and once you've used the latter, anything smaller seems microscopic.

In terms of connectivity the N78 has it all—WiFi, GPS, superb

MP3 player, great camera as well as a snappy processor to get everything done. While the keypad initially looked tiny, it actually works better than the N82, and despite the keys being little more than oblong ridges, you can use this phone without fingernails playing a major role in pressing keys.

At Rs 19,999 just a hairsbreadth separates the N78 from the premium, Rs 20,000 plus category of phones—and in that category itself we must say this phone would hold its own. Its not the best all-round phone, and neither does it have

the best camera or the best keypad, but for someone looking for something that's downright handsome, feature rich, and compact you have



a definite winner at the price point.

**LG K195 - Val-**



## Samsung SGH-i450

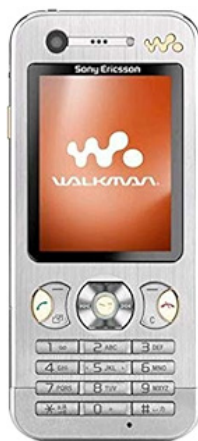
Another Samsung, another slider phone the 1450 is how ever, based around a Symbian S60 platform which is rare for Samsung phones. The slider mechanism isn't the best we've seen and by Samsungs standards is quite mediocre to be honest. Build quality is good, but once again the pizzazz that was present in the costlier phones is curiously absent and sorely missed. The keypad is well laid out and easy to use. The large buttons on the front facia are also rather difficult to misuse, and the menu system is very intuitive—typical Symbian. The high resolution screen measures 2.4 inches diagonally, but uses an outdated panel (256,000 colours). The 2.0 megapixel camera is also strictly included simply for the sake of including a camera—it's only good for the odd shot or so. Music quality is good, and music aficionados won't be disappointed.

Overall, the SGH i450 is a phone that is overpriced in our opinion, although it's not a bad phone. Sadly the price puts in a league where it gets hammered by some unrelenting competition. Such features and performance can be found for

## Sony Ericsson W890

The W890 is one of the newer walkman phones around. Its dimensions are extremely compact, and the phone is very slim (half the thickness of the N95 8 GB!). The screen although small (2 inches) sports a high resolution of 240 x 320 pixels and at 78 grams the W890 won't damage your shirt pocket. Build quality is also pretty good, and although metal (quite obviously)

hasn't been used in the construction everything feels solid and well put together even after a week of usage.



The W890 is a snappy phone, and it has a snappy 3.15 megapixel camera that offers some good results, although not as good as a dedicated camera phone would offer. In terms of connectivity the W890 is loaded, and WiFi is the only trick it misses out on. If you're

looking for a very compact, light phone with good music quality and a good camera for the price point of Rs 15,000 or so then the W890 makes a good buy at Rs 15,495. If the dimensions and

## Nokia 6500 Slide

Nokia's 6500 has the best slider mecha-any Nokia phone barring Sirocco. Its outer body is built out of brushed steel, which exudes a quality feel. Needless to say the phone's heavy, although you'd be hard pressed to find better build quality. The keypad is well laid out, although the buttons are a little flat-wed like a little more bevelling to impart feedback. The quality of accessories is as good as we've seen, and a TV out cable has been provided; just like the N95 8GB and the N82—both

much costlier phones. The 2.2-inch screen features a high resolution of 240 x 320 pixels and has a rich 16 million colours. Camera and music playback quality are well above par, although not enough to sway a purchasing decision solely on their performance. GPS and WiFi are the only features that the 6500 Slide misses out on. Although it's built well, the look itself is unexciting, and may not inspire interest when com-



pared to its beautiful siblings.

At Rs 15,219 the 6500 Slide makes a good buy for someone looking for a feature-rich, usable and very sturdy cellphone. Expect too much

## Nokia 6110 Navigator

The 6110 has been graced with the suffix navigator mainly because of the inbuilt GPS and the fact that it supports Nokia Maps. While also a slider phone like the 6500 Slider, build quality of the slider mechanism and the device itself is no match for its superior sibling. The body is made of cheaper, plastic materials. The keypad is flat, but reasonably well laid out and using it is largely ergonomic. On the multimedia front the 6110 Navigator has a 2.0 megapixel camera that is largely cosmetic. It has decent PMP capabilities and music quality is good, as is video playback, courtesy the crisp 2.2 inch screen that could have been bigger especially considering the GPS function. It's priced identically to the 6500 Slide (Rs 15,219), and has a couple of additions and a couple of reductions. Build quality is nowhere as good, and if cellphone integrated GPS is really your thing there are better, albeit costlier, options. Those who want a good camera phone that's flashy looking, will look elsewhere. It makes a sweet buy for those looking for a cheap, reliable GPS-enabled phone.



The background is a light gray field filled with a repeating pattern of various icons related to technology, gaming, and digital media. These icons include computer monitors, laptops, game controllers, keyboards, mice, smartphones, tablets, cameras, microphones, USB drives, and cooling fans, among others.

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# GOOGLE 8A

## BODY

Dimensions

152.1 × 72.7 × 8.9 mm  
(5.99 × 2.86 × 0.35 in)

Weight

188 g (6.63 oz)

Build

Glass front (Gorilla Glass 3), aluminum frame, plastic back.



# DISPLAY

Type	OLED, HDR, 120Hz, 2000 nits (peak)
Size	6.1 inches, 90.3 cm <sup>2</sup> (~81.6% screen-to-body ratio)
Resolution	1080 × 2400 pixels, 20:9 ratio (~430 ppi density)
Protection	Corning Gorilla Glass 3

# PLATFORM

OS	Android 14
Chipset	Google Tensor G3 (4 nm)
CPU	Nona-core (1×3.0 GHz Cortex-X3 & 4×2.45 GHz Cortex-A715 & 4×2.15 GHz Cortex-A510)
GPU	Immortalis-G715s MC10

# BATTERY

Type	Li-Po 4492 mAh, non-removable
Charging	Wired, PD3.0 7.5W wireless

# PRICE

128 / 8 GB

₹ 52,999

256 / 8 GB

₹ 59,999

