

Nokia 6131

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Flipping out

With so many mid-range phones saturating the market, you've got to have that certain X-factor to stand out from the crowd. Does the Nokia **6131** possess the flair to thrive?

NOKIA and the clamshell have always endured an uneasy relationship. The Finnish giant has never really flourished with the flip phone approach, instead gaining considerably more success with the candybar and slider forms. With perhaps the exception of the furry fashionista, the 7200, past clamshell efforts like the ergonomically challenged 6260 and the staid but functional 6101 haven't really set the world alight. So we're always intrigued, and also a little wary, when Nokia marches out another flip phone. Thankfully, its latest flame, the mid-range 6131, sees the manufacturer getting it right at last.

The 6131 sports some curious design features that makes for an attractive phone. Firstly, it's coated in a soft-touch paint that transmits a lovely tactile quality. More unusual is the mirrored underbite. This extended curved lip is nothing but a design flourish but nicely echoes the mirrored trim around the front display and camera lens panel.

Nokia has also included a one-push opening mechanism, a crowd-pleasing feature that's only really been prevalent in Panasonic's X400 and VS6 handsets. With the release button located on the right-hand side of the clam's hinge, we have to admit the action is sturdy but swift.

Open up the 6131 and Nokia's run of form continues. Not only is the screen QVGA-quality but it projects 16.7-million colours. We haven't seen this since Panasonic's VS6 and while the quality is superb, especially at this level, it does lack the crisp definition of its Japanese rival. Even so, you won't be disappointed.

One criticism that can't be levelled at Nokia's clamshells is its keypad design. Following on from the 6101, the button footprint, spread and responsiveness is highly accommodating and, in short, great for fast texting and data input. It's a dream to operate.

Similarly, the 6131 uses the Symbian Series 40 user interface, essentially a watered down version of the Series 60 platform, but Nokia's intuitive streak always shines through. There's nothing here to alarm Nokia veterans or virgins.

So far the 6131 has impressed but sadly it falls short on the camera front. The 1.3-megapixel camera is unremarkable and in



line with most similarly specced lenses. It shoots at a maximum resolution of 1280x1024 pixels and while the snaps are decent enough, it does tend to overcook the colours. Similarly, video quality is below average, shooting in a QCIF format at 176x144-pixel resolution.

The built-in music player fares a little better with seven equaliser settings to boost and adapt an otherwise solid, all-round sound through the supplied in-ear headphones. The 11MB of internal memory will hold nothing of musical worth so investing in a larger capacity microSD memory card (2GB cards are now available) is essential.

The 6131 also arrives loaded with trimmings including a built-in FM radio with Visual Radio support and Push-To-Talk plus the quad-band capabilities for use in the US.

Nokia has finally designed a cracking compact and user-friendly clamshell, brimming with the right mid-range features. About time too.

Nick Renshaw
nick.renshaw@nhmedia.co.uk

Nokia has finally hit upon a winning clamshell design formula with the 6131



Features

- 16.7m colour main display
- 1.3-megapixel camera
- Quad-band capabilities

Pros

The auto-open, soft-touch body work and 16.7-million colour screen complement the handset's feature set nicely.

Cons

- The camera isn't the best we've seen.

Stats

Size: 92x48x20mm

Weight: 112g

Display: Internal: 16.7 million, external: 262,000 colours

Resolution: Internal: 240x320, external: 128x160 pixels

Camera: 1.3 megapixels

Video recording/playback: Yes/Yes

Audio playback: MP3, AAC, AAC+, eAAC+, WMA

Connectivity: Bluetooth, USB, infrared

Internal memory: 11MB

Memory card slot: MicroSD

Java: Yes

Games: Snake III, Soccer 3D, Sudoku

Ringtones: Polyphonic, MP3

Messaging: SMS, MMS

Email client: POP3, SMTP, IMAP4

GPRS: Yes + EDGE

Internet browser: WAP 2.0, xHTML

Frequency: Quad-band

Talktime: 3.4 hours

Standby: 240 hours

Verdict

After a couple of clamshell near-misses, Nokia has hit the sweet spot with this mid-range gem.



85%