

MadisonPhotoPlus the Photo Summit **e-Photo Newsletter**

March, 2006

The Race to Mediocrity

Having just returned from the annual PMA Convention and Trade Show, we were amazed at how some of our best known companies are abandoning the high quality they were once known for. Hewlett Packard, for example, showed several new cameras, new printers, and, for the first time, print ordering stations. With these stations they plan to dominate the digital photography printing business. One main problem - the prints are mediocre at best. The machines' screens are not very user friendly, and the printers are noisy. They are, however, versatile; attempting to be a digitally photographic jack of all trades. With just a modicum of scrutiny, they are masters of none. To be certain, HP will soon dominate some areas of retail, especially the "big box" stores. HP's money and business acumen will bring success to the company, with a lowering of photographic standards to all of us.

It is also apparant that camera makers are doing whatever they can to make their cameras cheaper - and less expensive. As previously mentioned, most cameras no longer sport a viewfinder, just a larger LCD monitor on the back, making it very difficult to hold the camera steadily enough to take a sharp picture. Some makers claim that their cameras have an (non electronic) anti shake feature. This is a software band aid achieved by increasing the ISO of the camera's sensitivity on a picture by picture basis to permit the use of a higher shutter speed to reduce camera shake. The problem is that the images aren't as good due to increased noise in the photos. (Remember when TVs had "rabbit ears" antennas which had to be aligned to get the best picture? When the image was bad, white specks referred to as "snow" sparkled across the screen. The correct name for this condition is "noise".) Again, high quality pictures become mediocre.

Each of us bought a camera to take the best pictures possible (within budgetary limits) and had the best quality, long lasting prints made. It is too bad most manufacturers don't understand that.

Some manufacturers have come up with some new, wonderful cameras. Olympus has a new camera which not only is submersible, but is warranted to work after being dropped on any surface (up to a 5 ft. drop)! Pentax introduced a model where the large LCD screen just about fills the back of the camera. There are no buttons or dials to complicate using this camera - all the controls are touch screen with simple common words and pictures telling us what to do.

Nikon showed their own small camera which can play back up to 30 photos in a multimedia slide show. Casio now has 3 models with an "eBay" mode, automatically setting themselves to photograph items for on-line auctions. Sanyo now offers a shirtpocket sized HD-TV camcorder / 5 megapixel still camera combination yielding amazing results.

Minolta News

When personnel at the Sony booth were asked about Minolta Maxxum cameras and accessories, no answers were given (just dumb stares). Each mumbled the official corporte line that announcements would be made April 1st, 2006.

B.I.P.S. News

Seats are still available for the March 15th workshop on SLR photography. This is designed for beginning SLR users as well as people considering purchasing an SLR. Both film and digital SLR cameras and their use will be covered. For more information, call Eric at Madison PhotoPlus - 973-966-2900.

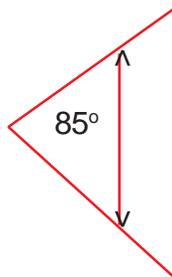
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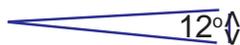
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When is a Door Not a Door?

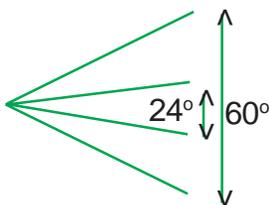
Or, more accurately, when is a zoom not a zoom? Many people are confused by the terms “optical zoom” and “digital zoom” regarding digital cameras. All lenses view at a particular angle, just as our eyes do. It can “see” at very wide angle (wide angle) or a very narrow angle (telephoto). A zoom lens is a lens which is capable of changing the angle it sees.



wide angle



telephoto (narrow angle)



zoom (variable angle)

When a zoom lens is used, the image is recorded on the entire surface area of the pickup chip, and all the pixels receive image information.

A digital zoom has nothing to do with any lens. It is a software trick performed by programmers. Pretend the camera being used is an 8 megapixel (8MP) camera. If a 2X (2 times) digital zoom is engaged, the image is only being recorded on the central 50% of the chip. A little fast math says that only 4MP are being used ($8MP \times 50\% = 4MP$).

The camera will enlarge the image to the full print size, so the image quality is only half as good as you paid for. Using a 4X digital zoom yields only a 2MP quality image, or about that of a state of the art camera dating back to 1997! Some cameras have up to a 24X digital zoom. Using the example camera above, the resolution would be only 240 pixels wide by 204 pixels tall (0.0468 megapixels). Using an optical zoom of the same magnification would still yield an image of 3,264 pixels wide by 2,468 tall (all 8MP). Quite a difference. By the way, you need about 2 megapixels to make a respectable 4"x6" print.

Why do cameras have digital zooms? One reason is that they are much less expensive to make than optical zoom lenses, which translates to a better bottom line for the camera maker. Secondly, the early digital camera makers, Apple, HP, Toshiba, etc., had no access to lenses, but had programming technology they felt was an adequate substitute (Mediocrity, here we come again!), and to these makers, a digital camera is just another computer peripheral (Cameras are still listed as peripherals in their catalogs and databases.) The only really good news about digital zooms is that you can turn them off!



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Read Between the Lines

Before ending this month's newsletter, there is one more observation made at this year's PMA Trade Show. No new films were introduced this year. In fact, very little film was on display. To show how completely the "digital revolution" has overtaken traditional film photography, consider the extent of the following film companies displayed their film (both amateur and professional):

| | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Kodak | 0 |
| Fuji | about 40 rolls |
| Agfa | out of business |
| Konica | out of business |
| Ilford | 0 |
| 3M/Scotch | 0 |
| Polaroid | 0 |



Enjoy March.

It will be the only March, 2006 you'll ever have!

Take pictures for yourself
and someone else's tomorrow.
Enjoy the fun of photography!

Lynne & Jerry

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Newsletter Special

For the month of March, we are offering Newsletter readers (and no one else) a special rate for printing 4"x6" prints from digital files in our stores. Your prints will be on 200 year rated matte paper, borderless or with bordered. There is no extra charge for red eye correction, cropping, color corrections, and type setting. All prints will be ready for pick up in 48 hours. There will be no limit on the number of prints you can order at this price, whether you order in the store or from your home computer (PC computers only). Print out the coupon on the last page to receive your special price.

**Confused about SLRs?
Don't be!**

B.I.P.S.

The Better Imaging Photo School



**back by popular
demand**

Madison PhotoPlus and the Photo Summit are pleased to repeat the SLR-101 photographic workshop on **March 15th**, 2006. The program is geared towards Single Lens Reflex (**SLR**) camera owners. Topics will include camera handling, exposure control, composition, filtration, flash, interchangeable lenses, file formats, digital files, color balance and more. Owners of film as well as digital SLRs will benefit from this session. Our next program will be about close-up photography. For information about other seminars, please ask any of our staff for details.

The cost of the workshop will be \$30,
payable in advance not later than 2 days before the session.*

It will be held at **Madison PhotoPlus** in Madison, and will start at 7:00pm. Seating is limited. Refreshments will be served.



*Failure to attend will result in loss of payment. No refunds will be available.

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