

## IS YOUR'S AN INNIE OR AN OUTIE?

Mr. and Mrs. Smithe stopped by recently before leaving on a European vacation. It seems neither of them could find the battery charger for their point and shoot camera. They'd looked high and low at home and at Mr. Smithe's office to no avail. They had this little box with them (about 2"x2"x1") that had a slot on one side and 2 holes on the opposite side. "This", they pronounced, "is the charger."

After the explanation that it was merely a voltage transformer which required both an a/c cord and a USB to Mini USB 4 pin connecting cable, the Smithes looked like deer in the headlights. The battery, it seems, charged inside the camera - a new concept to them. Mrs. Smithe, snapping out of her stupor, asked the unfathomable ... "Why?"

After a few minutes of discussion, the truths seemed to be evident:

Recharging batteries creates heat. In most camera manuals, users are told to keep their camera(s) away from heat. By enabling battery charging within the camera, the manufacturer is putting the camera owner in a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation.

If the battery is being charged in the camera, nothing else can be done with the camera. Even if there is a second, fully charged battery, the camera can't be used for anything else during the charging cycle.

As in many cameras, the Smithes's camera's memory card slot is directly next to the battery. During recharging, therefore, the plastic memory card is being subjected to (excessive?) heat. Nothing good can come from that. The camera in question, in fact, is one of the active lifestyle, water and shockproof models. The rubber seals which keep the insides dry are right next to the battery, expanding and contracting from the heat at a different rate than elsewhere in the camera. Maybe this isn't too smart.

Mrs. Smithe spoke up again, saying, "Now that we've covered a whole lot of 'why not's', the question of 'why' remains unanswered".

Mr. Smithe now piped up. "I guess it costs less to make the camera with internal charging than including a separate charger, and that the consequences of that arrangement are secondary to them," he remarked.

*Editor's note: Perhaps this is the same reason cameras are still shipped with USB download cables, as they were back in 1999. The few cents savings in cost not to include a USB card reader makes a lot of sense to the manufacturer - once the customer is removed from any consideration. Be cool! If your camera only came with an internal battery charging cable, prolong its life by getting an external charger.*

Caveat Emptor.



## CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW REPORT 2013

Having spent last week at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, one thing was very clear - there are entirely too many iPhone case makers out there. One couldn't take more than a few steps without stumbling upon yet another booth with a slightly different line of phone / pad cases.

The general consensus was there was no "WOW!" item at the show, photographic or otherwise. As previously mentioned, we will start seeing the next generation of "4K" HDTVs hit the stores. With 4 times the quality of current HDTVs, the difference was quite impressive, but as of now no one is broadcasting any 4K signals, so there's no need to rush. Sharp even showed off a prototype 8K TV. 3D TVs were present, of course, but not overwhelming. "Smart" TVs with internet connectivity, widgets, WiFi, etc. seem to be the next wave of upgrades this year.

Within the photography world, there was a curious lack of new products announced - Nikon only showed one "new" conventional DSLR, the D5200, already announced to the rest of the world late last month. They did show 2 new mirrorless cameras, the S1 and J3, along with new lenses and accessories. Anyone with fears that

Nikon was not going to expand their mirrorless lineup can rest easy.

Canon showed new point and shoots, but no DSLRs, including no 60D / 7D replacement. Rumors abounded that these models, along with others, will be coming this spring or summer. The most "revolutionary" point and shoot from Canon was their new "N" camera, which seemed like an odd piece- not very comfortable or easy to operate.

Sony remains committed to their mirrorless NEX system, and the NEX 6 is beautiful. Look for it to be in store soon. Paired with their new collapsible 3x kit lens, it's a great piece. The other interesting piece from Sony is their "Action Cam" - imagine a GoPro wearable HD camcorder, but for an additional \$100 you can lock an LCD screen on the side to use it more like a conventional camcorder. A very neat design.

Fuji and Olympus showed off new point and shoots, and Fuji also had 2 new "X" pieces, the X100S and X20. These are refined, updated versions of the excellent X100 and X10, respectively. Looking at the new features and menus, Fuji appears to really have listened to a lot of the issues people had with the older versions! Fuji also showed off their latest XP "tough" cameras - the new XP60 is available in a great looking yellow color. Very sharp looking, and I'm usually not a big Yellow fan!

Within the photo world, expect to see more cameras connect wirelessly to your home computer, printer, tablet, and phone. We were also told off the record to expect more large-sensor P&S later this year, including some with APS-C sensors.

We also went to the show looking for solutions to some of the questions/problems we get asked regularly. For example, have you wanted an easier way to get pictures and videos on and off your iPhone? We think we found some solutions. Want to be able to have more printing options for our web site? Stay tuned. And more...

If you'd like to know more, feel free to email us or stop in. If we listed everything this column would be a very long read!

## BEH

## THINGS MAY LOOK THE SAME (FOR AWHILE)

We recently received a compliment on our Gallery Wraps. We created one from a customer's digital file about a year and a half ago. Late last summer her husband had another made elsewhere at a lower price. We found this out when our customer ordered another Gallery Wrap from us a few weeks ago. It seems that the one her husband had made was showing small cracks where the canvas bent around the wrap.

The explanation is that (a) our stores do not use lowest bid media, and (b) we varnish and cure each canvas to ensure lasting quality.

## GET SHARPER PHOTOS AT NO EXTRA COST

From time to time, especially after gift giving seasons, customers come into our stores complaining that the pictures from their new cameras are not sharp. We normally can tell what the problem is just by taking a photo or two.

If the photos we took are not sharp, we suspect a camera problem. In this case, the cause is typically an incorrect setting in the setup menu - rarely is there physical problem with the camera.

Most often the photos we take are sharper than the ones the customer took. In almost every instance, we find the customer is not holding the camera properly. Cameras are designed to be held in a specific way - which sometimes is not obvious to many people.

99.9% of all cameras are designed for right handed users. This means the fine movements, such as slowly depressing the shutter button, are to be done with the right hand. The left hand, therefore, is used to support the weight of the camera. Support comes from below, not above. The two examples on the next page show the correct and one of many incorrect ways to hold a camera. Any camera! An easy way to remember how to hold it correctly is "Thumbs up! Thumbs out!"

Holding the camera this way also

makes it easier to slowly depress the shutter button or touchscreen instead of shaking the camera by poking at it.



As we spend our long winter doldrums evenings, spend some time with your photos. Look at your prints or images on your computer. Ask yourself how each and every photo could be improved. Be critical, but don't demean yourself. When you go to take photos in the future, you'll be surprised at how improved they will be.

Have fun with photography. Be back in February.

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Try this yourself. Walk over to a mirror hanging on a wall. Turn your camera's flash off (usually done by taking it off the green auto position) and take a series of pictures of yourself in the mirror. Hold the camera the way you usually do, and also the way described above. When finished, review the photos on the LCD screen and see which ones are sharper. Look at how the camera was being held. Keep holding that way. Sharper photos every time. Voilà!