

Did you know that November gives us the best sunsets of the year? No one seems to know why, but it is true anyway. Maybe one of us will get that once in a lifetime picture of something like a snow covered fence with red berries showing through the snow, all lit by fill-in flash with a strong well-exposed sunset in the background. It's actually pretty easy to shoot, assuming the snow-covered fence is there and you are aware it is sunset. Just be sure to use your flash!

I'd like to devote some time and space to answering some questions I've been asked. I'm confident that some are questions you'd like the answer to.

Should I buy a film camera or a digital camera? It depends (don't you love that answer?). It depends on your needs. If you want to replace a Polaroid, you probably want a digital camera. It allows you to see if you actually got the picture you want, if someone blinked, etc. It permits you to make prints immediately with some of today's newest printers, which use battery power. If you have time and energy to be your own "darkroom person" you can print via your computer. If you are looking for long term cost savings, digital is the way to go.

If, however, you want no decrease in picture quality, short-term savings and more permanent negatives, select film. Selecting film also allows you to have someone else doing the laborious film processing and printing. The qualities of today's cameras and films still surpass digital, and will for some time to come. For most people, a conventional film camera is the better answer, and using a scanner to get the images into a computer if you so desire. Film scanners start as low as \$199.95 and we sell lots of them to people who want their images digitized.

If your images are solely to be viewed online, please buy a digital camera. Relatively inexpensive cameras will get you 640 x 480 resolution, which is perfect for the web and e-mail. These cameras are \$99.95 and are in stock today!

Should I believe Consumer Reports ratings? This is a touchy subject I'd really rather avoid, so let me be as tactful as possible. I applaud any outside authority for testing and appraising merchandise or services so that we may all be better consumers. I frequently have troubles with the findings. Recently CR tested compact, point and shoot AF cameras. Of the cameras tested and approved, more than one was long discontinued by the manufacturer. In other situations, the same manufacturer made the same camera sold under more than one trade name. One such camera received a high rating, a so-so rating, and an unacceptable rating. How could this be? Either the testers just blew it, or the manufacturers' quality control was non-existent (regardless of brand name). Either way, do you really want to buy this product?

There have been instances where best buys were from manufacturers that were out of business, with no repair parts available, and pairing camera bodies with lenses that were incompatible. I think following CR blindly is as foolhardy as

following all my opinions blindly. No one is correct 100% of the time, including CR.

Why are some similar featured cameras priced so far apart? (Why should I spend \$299 for a camera that's the same as one costing \$99.95?) Easy question, easy answer. They are really not the same. Let's pretend and say two identical appearing cameras sell at the mentioned price points. Both sport similar features. Differences to look for include the range of the zoom, how fast the lens is at wide angle and at telephoto, how many shutter speeds are available, how "variable" is the zoom lens, how accurate is the exposure meter, and so on.

Most cameras today have computer chips in them, and the chips are frequently the same in most cameras a factory turns out. The chips, however, are not necessarily wired to anything. You could have a chip that can control exposure up to a 10 f/stop range, but not be attached to a circuit allowing the camera to use that feature. A point and shoot camera does not have a zoom lens that allows you to zoom and rest at any focal length. If you notice, there are points where the zoom will not stop, and others where it will. There is now a camera with a three to one zoom ratio that only has 15 positions where the zoom will stop. That's a long way from 15 to infinite. Guess which camera costs less.

All autofocusing systems are not created equal. Some can differentiate between 2 or 3 subject distances, some hundreds or thousands. The more accurately the camera focuses, the sharper the pictures **and** the more accurate the flash exposures will be. Which one would you say is the better choice? Guess which camera has which autofocusing range. Yep.

You (usually) get what you pay for.

Why don't my reprints look like my original prints do? Tough one to explain easily, but here goes. When any photograph is printed, there are certain variables that are critical to the final appearance of the photo. Some of these are the age of the lamp (bulb) in the printing machine, the specific emulsion of the paper, the **exact** temperature of the chemistry, the chemistry's freshness, and the subjective judgment of the printmaker. All of these conditions must be precisely met a second time for the new print to look exactly like the original. Such conditions rarely replicate themselves, and we should all be happy when the prints are very close. A curious fact is that most people compare all prints they see from a given negative with the original. If the original is terrible, say a portrait with purple skin and stained hair, people will reject subsequent, correctly made reprints because it doesn't match the original (which must obviously be correct). Sometimes there's just no pleasing everyone. And now a few words from our sponsors:

Kodak is introducing a new camera, the Preview. This Advanced Photo System jewel features a digital screen in back, to show you the picture just taken. You can then order more or fewer prints. Let's say you see someone's eyes are closed in the picture. You can tell the camera to make 0 prints.

Pentax has shown a new digital SLR camera using a chip the same dimensions as 35mm film. For the first time, digital camera bodies will be seamless in an SLR system.

Epson has lowered the price of the Stylus Color Photo 870 from \$299.95 to \$249.95.

As most of you are aware, we gladly check out your cameras before the December holidays at no charge. This newsletter allows me the opportunity to ask you to bring yours in before Thanksgiving.

Let's all tip our hats to Ed Babbott, who won 1st and 2nd prize in our Renaissance Faire photo contest. Congratulations, Ed! All the entries should be available for viewing on our web sites by November 6th.

Lastly, we all have our convictions and opinions on the candidates running for public office. Each of us is somewhat right and somewhat wrong, just like they are. Whoever you favor, please find time to cast your ballots on Election Day.

Jerry & Lynne