

Having just returned from the annual PMA show, we have seen many new developments in photography that will affect us all (no pun intended). Whether it is in photo albums, cameras, films or memory, picture taking and storing is evolving. Here's some of the news ...

Many of the camera manufacturers are making fewer of the products, which carry their brand names. This is true of cameras, lenses, flashes, accessories, etc. Strategic alliances are being made between the brand names we cherish and manufacturers we don't associate with the quality we receive. For example, have you ever noticed that there are no Sanyo digital cameras? Yet Sanyo is a leader in digital camera manufacturer. If there are no Sanyo branded products on dealers' shelves, what happened to them? That's right, they have other brand names! Premier, Goko, Haking, and other oriental companies make a huge percentage of cameras of all types.

Digital SLR cameras will be coming down in price. Canon, Fuji, and Nikon are introducing 6+ megapixel cameras which will be under \$3000.00, about 40% below the models they are replacing. Today's lenses, flashes, etc. are fully compatible with the new bodies. These new cameras should be available summerish.

35mm SLRs will be coming down in price. Canon, Pentax and Nikon are lowering prices and bringing out less expensive, more feature laden and easier to use cameras. Some of the new models will be entry level only; some allow photographic growth. The quality does not seem to be as high as the current models, but many of the items we examined were prototypes. As Aesop probably said, "you get what you pay for".

Compact digital cameras are proliferating. There were no price shocks at the show, but some slick new models coming later in the year. The biggest growth area seems to be in the 2.0 megapixel area (which can make prints up to 4x6), and the cutting edge 5-6 MP cameras. An emerging problem is each generation spawns a new battery size. You could buy a camera today, a spare \$40-80 battery, and find its 2003 replacement takes an entirely different power supply. Yes, this might be progress, but at the consumer's direct expense. As mentioned last month, the new Minolta Dimage X is a truly revolutionary design, and will probably be the "hot" camera in 2002.

Compact 35mm cameras have some new bells and whistles, including a system where the camera automatically focuses on the nearest person in the viewfinder! We'll have to see if this is a good feature or not.

Kodak showed a new Advantix camera due out in 2003 – the Preview Easyshare. This camera uses Advanced Photo System film, but has enough onboard memory that it stores electronic images of the last 75 pictures taken. You can scroll back and see your entire roll, picture by picture. You'll be able to

select what pictures will be printed when the film is processed at the touch of a button. When placing the camera in its Easyshare cradle, you can immediately email and upload your pictures via the web. Nice.

The “Shoot Out” (camera tests) for digital cameras went to a Toshiba model (for web ONLY use), the Minolta Dimage 5, and the Dimage 7 models, and Fuji FinePix 2600. In the “Print Out” test for photographic print quality, Epson won all categories it entered, from the \$99 (as of this writing) model 820, through the wide roll model 10000 (\$8000 prox.) H-P and Canon were the strongest contenders.

Many companies showed digital printing kiosks, making prints from digital camera memory cards or CD-ROMs. Some were much better than others, and there was little standardization between them. Some produced odd sized prints like 6”x8”. Try finding frames for those! We will continue to send your digital images to Kodak for overnight printing, as well as making inkjet or dye sublimation photos while you wait.

The industry is also moving further from ISO 100-200 speed films. Kodak, Agfa and Fuji were all showing more pictures taken with ISO 800 speed films. Many of these were 16x20 – 30x40 inch enlargements. Expect very low prices on ISO 800 film in multipacks this spring. Don’t knock them if you haven’t tried them (especially the Agfa and Fuji). Almost all cameras (selling for \$50 or more) bought since 1990 are designed to handle ISO 800 films correctly.

Sony showed a new, smaller digital tape format called Micro-DV. The tape is about the size of a dictation tape, and records for an hour. If you haven’t noticed, Sony tries to establish its own sizes in many electronic media, to all but monopolize consumable and accessory products. So far the rest of the world is sticking with Mini-DV tapes.

Our government is making it more difficult for you to make copies of your own photos, or online images. The copyright offices have tightened the restrictions on such copies, as well as eased establishing copyrights. You may not be aware of it, but you cannot legally copy school pictures, cruise ship pictures, prom shots, wedding pictures, etc. Some studios and or photographers advise of this when you hire them; some hide it in the small print within a contract. Ask about a copyright release BEFORE you sign on the bottom line. If you are concerned enough about protecting your rights to copy what you paid for, contact your congressional representatives in Washington now, as more regulations are due to be voted on in the near future.

During April, we will start an evening workshop series with a session about “What is digital photography?” We will cover the basics of understanding what digital

imaging is all about, how it is the same as film photography, and how it differs. There will be a charge for the evening, with a discounted rate for those who receive this e-newsletter. At this time, it will be held in Madison PhotoPlus, and conducted by Steve Durnin from the Photo Summit. As soon the final information is available, we will advise you.

If you haven't been to TakeGreatPictures.com, here's a link to a wonderful site. Enjoy it. <http://www.takegreatpictures.com/content.html>.

Happy shooting!
Lynne & Jerry