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“Rude, aggressive, arrogant snobs ...”

There are old adages, such as “You Are What You Eat”, “Clothes make the man”, etc. Marketing studies have been made for decades trying to define what kind of person would buy which kind of product or service. Photographic gear is not exempt from this possible invasion of privacy, as was recently demonstrated at dpexpert.com.au. The author sends the reader to another URL where the “ugly truth” is to be learned. As our society has determined, this and other “truths” must be true because they are posted on the World Wide Web.

The truth is, simply put, that the brand or model camera a photographer uses has less of an impact on the photographs than most people think. Assuming several products of similar quality but different sizes and designs, one will be the easiest to use and record the best images ... for certain people.

Two neighbors were chatting over the fence about a newly purchased screwdriver, with the owner telling his friend how great it was. The size, weight, edge sharpness and balance were said to be incredible and the user certainly used it to its limits. There came a time when the other neighbor asked to borrow it for a short project, mostly to see what made it so great. The anticipation of using such an auspicious instrument was more than the neighbor could bear. Imagine the disappointment when a Phillips #2 screwdriver was needed, and the neighbor’s wunderdriver was a flat blade. (Substitute washing machine, car, camera, lens, lawn mower or whatever for the screwdriver.)

The lesson here is that the item is so often confused with its hype.

Not all people are the same size, shape, mindset, or other statistic. Viva la difference! Cameras, lenses, etc. are not all the same, either. Viva la difference. Below are some accurate qualifiers to keep in mind when considering a camera:

- The steadier a camera is held, the sharper the picture will be (and its corollary - a picture taken with a camera on a tripod using a remote release is always sharper than the picture taken with the camera hand held). If it’s too small, too big, too heavy or too light, it cannot be held steadily. investing in a camera billed as “the World’s Smallest ...” might indicate pride of ownership, but says nothing of taking high quality images.

- If you cannot see the subject while taking the photo, don’t expect much. As cameras are becoming smaller, usable viewfinders are going the way of the dodo. One small camera now on the market has a viewfinder window measuring about 1/4 of an inch. Not very usable, and useless to an eyeglass wearer.

Most cameras today rely on the LCD panel on the back to view the subject when shooting. Some are visible in bright daylight, many others are not. Remember that advertising hype doesn’t take the users’ vision and situation into account.

- Most cameras today have zoom lenses either attached or built-in. Very simply put, all lenses see at a certain angle (which varies from lens to lens). A zoom lens is capable of varying the angle it can see. A lens that makes the subject look twice the size from one end of the zoom to the other is called a 2X zoom. If then the next lens’s image looks half again as large, it is a 3X (or a 3:1 ratio) zoom. Different cameras have different zoom lens ratios, with 3X being far and away the common ratio zoom today.



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One camera on the market now has a 26X zoom, using previously impossible technology. How much zoom is optimal varies from person to person, even though the hype is “the more the better”. As a consideration, be aware that the more variable a zoom lens camera is, the shorter the workable distance is for flash photography.

- Some photographers (especially tourists, realtors, and family picture takers) need a wider than average lens as part of their zoom lens. Sometimes one cannot back up enough in a smaller room and still get everything desired into the picture. The hyped adage of “the more the better, the most is best” probably doesn’t apply here.

- Speaking of “the more the better, the most is best”, marketers and advertisers have a field day with megapixels. Having the most or more is almost irrelevant to image quality today. As was mentioned in previous issues of this newsletter, the number of megapixels a camera has is a meaningless number without knowing the size of the image sensor. Even with that knowledge, the lens quality and other camera tolerances as well as its internal software are usually a greater factor than the number of pixels.

To summarize, personality traits have little to do with what camera you should use, but some personal physical attributes do. Ask any lefty. If you can’t see it, touch it, hold it, shoot with it and see the results, then don’t buy it. Remember the neighbor’s screwdriver. The satisfaction of a friend or neighbor with his or her own biases is not valid criteria in determining the correct product for **YOU!**

New Printers

Both Madison PhotoPlus and the Photo Summit are getting new digital printers this month. We’ve been testing a prototype since December, and are investing in the future. We’ve been **very** impressed with the fabulous color, sharpness and contrast we’ve seen on both glossy and matte surfaces. Also, the print longevity has been rated at over a century.

Vacation Considerations

Please do all you can to avoid many of the common problems we see when customers bring in cameras after vacation:

- Do not take your camera or camcorder to the beach or get it wet unless it is a model designed for such use. Olympus, Pentax, and Fuji offer these cameras at reasonable prices, starting at less than \$200. Cameras are electronic and have batteries, neither of which can tolerate moisture or salt.

- Never ever walk around with a camera’s zoom lens extended out front. The slightest impact can (and usually does) knock the rack and pinion focusing assembly out of whack, rendering the camera unusable. If this should happen, DO NOT manually push the lens back in!

- Remember that the most common reason a camera is dropped is because it is without a strap. All cameras come with a strap, be sure to use it.

- If you are not actually using your camera, keep it in its case. The rear screen (LCD panel) is the most delicate part, and a deep gouge or scratch not only will make the camera unusable, but beyond economical repair. If you don’t have a case, get one designed for a digital camera. Also be sure to get screen protectors for the LCD.

- If your camera uses AA or AAA sized batteries, check them often to make sure they aren’t



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leaking. They can leak even when they have power to run the camera. If you have a digital camera suffering from battery leakage, throw it away!

•Review your photos frequently on the LCD panel of your camera. There have been too many times where simple problems (such as a finger over the flash or a lens cover that only opens 90%) can ruin a whole trip's photos. Make sure you check the panel occasionally.

•Working through menu options, be sure your camera is set for its maximum resolution and minimum compression to assure getting the best images your camera can deliver. Rarely does a camera come out of the box set as such.

•Be sure your memory card has been properly formatted in your camera (and nowhere else).

All of us wish you and your families a great vacation or staycation, and hope that we've helped you take better photos. Taking pictures is fun. Looking at photos at some time in the future is an incomparable experience.

Watch for our July newsletter!

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Most Madison customers know Eric by now, and appreciate his high quality photography. Eric recently returned from a trip to the Tuscany region of Italy and we are proud to display several of his photos in the following pages. (All the photos are copyright Eric Kazmirek, 2009.)

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