



May 2010

Spoiled Are We

So just the other day Charlie and I were standing around chewing the photographic fat, magnifying the minutiae of cameras, film, digital technology and the world's other pressing issues. "You know," he continued, "I can't tell how good my pictures really are."

Like a trapped animal, I didn't know where that came from or what was coming next. I knew there was going to be a barb, followed by this great big hook. I was forming hazy ideas of where this conversation was heading. I didn't know whether I was being recruited as the passenger or engineer on this ride. I looked Charlie square in the eye and said as clearly as possibly, "Hmmm?"

"Forty years ago, when I looked through my cameras' viewfinders, I could very clearly see my subject, background and all just as clearly as if I wasn't even holding a camera in my hand. I can't do that any more. I'm looking at this small TV set next to my eye, and I see a vision of reality, but not reality itself", said Charlie.

"Vision of reality? All visual reality is perception! It is different for each of us, just like we don't see exactly the same thing with each eye. Maybe you need glasses, Charlie".

"No! No! You don't understand," he added. "When I look at this screen, the image isn't really continuous. It's like looking at specks and dots. I see my picture being lotsa dots, like grainy film used to be. I can't tell how really sharp it is, and how good a print it'll make".

"You know that when your camera is in playback mode, you can magnify the image like 20 times or

so and you can really see how sharp your photo will be." I counseled.

"I know I can do that, he mused, "but then the dots just get bigger and more pronounced. I guess I want a smoother image."

"Charlie, how sharp are the prints you have made from this camera's digital files?" I asked.

"Oh, they're plenty sharp, alright, but I just can't be sure when I look into the camera like I could with a negative ..." Charlie kind of slid off into a trance after this last remark.

"You know, Charlie, we've been talking about all this stuff for almost 40 years now and the best you can do is complain that a low resolution liquid crystal display doesn't make as clear an image as the naked eye with 20/20 vision? C'mon now, you remember when cameras didn't even have an on-board, forget about built-in exposure system, beyond the basis 'click'. Right?"

And so this went on for about 20 minutes, and we agreed that photographers have it easy today. Putting our collective heads together, we came up with the following inventions / discoveries, etc., which make things as simple as they are today ...

1906: Availability of panchromatic black and white film and therefore high quality color separation color photography. J.P. Morgan finances Edward Curtis to document the traditional culture of the North American Indian.

1907: First commercial color film, the Autochrome plates, manufactured by Lumiere brothers in France.

1914: Oscar Barnack, employed by German microscope manufacturer Leitz, develops camera using the modern 24x36mm frame and sprocketed 35mm movie film.

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1917: Nippon Kogaku K.K., which will eventually become Nikon, established in Tokyo.

1921: Man Ray begins making photograms ("rayographs") by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing the shadow cast by a distant light bulb. Eugene Atget, aged 64, assigned to photograph the brothels of Paris.

1924: Leitz markets a derivative of Barnack's camera commercially as the "Leica", the first high quality 35mm camera.

1925: André Kertész moves from his native Hungary to Paris, where he begins an 11-year project photographing street life.

1927: The flash bulb was introduced by General Electric Co. (The concept of camera flash existed much before but was based on the use of a flash light powder that was invented by German researchers).

1928: Rollei introduces the Rolleiflex twin-lens reflex producing a 6x6 cm image on roll film.

1931: The development of strobe photography by Harold ("Doc") Edgerton took place at MIT.

1932: The Inception of Technicolor movies, where three black and white negatives were made in the same camera under different filters. Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Willard Van Dyke, Edward Weston, et al, form the Group f/64 dedicated to "straight photographic thought and production". Henri Cartier-Bresson buys a Leica and begins a 60-year career photographing people. On March 14, George Eastman, aged 77, writes a suicide note--"My work is done. Why wait?"--and shoots himself.

1934: Fuji Photo Film is founded. By 1938, Fuji is making cameras and lenses in addition to film.

1936: Kodachrome film is developed, the first color multi-layered color transparency film. Ihagee makes the initial model of Exakta, the first 35mm single-lens reflex (SLR) camera.

1935 - 1941: Kodak starts marketing Kodachrome film and subsequently launches Kodacolor negative film. Canon released the Hansa Canon in 1936, the first 35mm focal-plane shutter camera.

1937: Kodak made the fully-automatic Super Kodak Six-20 which sold for \$225 (about \$3500 in 2010 dollars).

World War II: Multi-layer color negative films are created. Margaret Bourke-White, Robert Capa, Carl Mydans, and W. Eugene Smith cover the war for LIFE magazine.

1947: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, and David Seymour start the photographer-owned Magnum picture agency.

1948: Hasselblad in Sweden offers its first medium-format SLR. Polaroid sells instant black and white film. Dr. Edwin Land introduced instant photography.

1949: Zeiss begins making the Contax S, the first SLR with an unreversed image in a pentaprism viewfinder.

1955: Edward Steichen curates Family of Man exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

1957: Jaques Yves Cousteau invented the first waterproof 35mm camera for underwater photography.

1958: Introduction of the first automatic return lens diaphragm (Exakta's was external, Zunow's [only sold in Japan] was internal).

1959: The Nikon F was introduced. Kilfitt 36-82/2.8 Zoomar is the first zoom lens for a still picture camera.

1960: The German Mec 16 SB subminiature camera became the first to put the light sensor behind the lens for more accurate metering.

1963: Tokyo Optical Co. (Topcon) introduced the world's first camera with through the lens metering. Polaroid begins to manufacture instant color film. Kodak delivers 126 cartridge film and Instamatic 100 camera.

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1967: Nikon introduced the Nikonos, the first underwater camera with interchangeable lenses and flashes. The Olympus Pen F half frame SLR system reduces cameras' size and weights by close to 50% without jeopardizing quality.

1967: Honeywell introduced the Strobonar 660, the first automatic electronic flash

1968: Konica Autoreflex - First 35mm SLR to expose different shape images with the flick of a switch

1972: 110-format cameras introduced by Kodak with a 13x17mm frame. Olympus releases the OM-1 35mm SLR system - 1/3 lighter than other full frame SLRs. Polaroid produces the SX-70 instant picture SLR

1975: Kodak made the first working CCD-based digital still camera. Olympus created the OM-2, 1st camera to control flash exposure by reading the light as it falls on the film (OTF).

1976: Canon began selling the AE-1, the best selling 35mm SLR in history.

1977: Konica made the C35 AF - the first compact autofocus camera with built-in flash. The Minolta XD-11 SLR came out - the first SLR with computerized programmed exposure control.

1978: The SX-70 Polaroid used Sonar for autofocus - the first non optical AF system.

1979: World's first SLR with built-in motor and winding was introduced - the Konica FS-1.

1980: Nikon F3 becomes the first camera with a LCD display in the viewfinder.

1981: Sony started selling the Mavica, an analog filmless camera which recorded electronic images on a mini floppy disk designed to be viewed on a TV.

1983: Nikon FA premiered the first multi-segmented, patterned metering system.

1985: Minolta introduced the Alpha (Maxxum) 7000, the first autofocus SLR camera and system. Kiron manufactured the first "superzoom" lens - 28-210mm.

1986: Fuji manufactured first single use cameras.

1987: The popular Canon EOS system was introduced, with new all-electronic lens mount.

1989: Yashica came out with the Samurai Z and ZL (left handed model) 1/2 frame horizontal formatted SLR camera.

1990: Adobe Photoshop was released. Kodak introduced Photo CD.

1991: Kodak made the DCS-100, the first digital SLR, which was a modified Nikon F3.

1992: The Joint Photographic Experts Group established the .JPEG (.JPG) image file standard. Aldus Corp. established Tagged Image File Format (.TIF).

1994: Chinon offered the 1st mass produced digital camera, sold under the Chinon, Kodak, Apple, Ritz Dakota and other brand names. Compact Flash card (CF) premiered. Canon released first image stabilized binoculars.

1996: Advanced Photo System (APS) was inaugurated. Minolta Dimage S-1 SLR system made cameras even smaller and lighter. The APS negative size is still used in today's digital SLR sensors. The .PNG file type was standardized.

1997: The Joint Photographic Experts Group created the stereoscopic photographic file format .JPS.

1998: Sony developed the Memory Stick.

1999: The Nikon D1 SLR, a 2.74 megapixel body for \$6000, was introduced. It was the first digital SLR designed by a leading manufacturer.

2001: Polaroid goes bankrupt. Secure Digital memory cards hit the market.

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2002: Fuji and Olympus pioneered the xD picture card.

2003: The Four Thirds standard for compact digital SLRs was introduced with the Olympus E-1. The Canon Digital Rebel came out, selling for less than \$1000 including lens.

2004: Kodak ceased production of film cameras.

2005: Canon released the EOS 5D, the first consumer-priced full-frame digital SLR, with a 24x36mm CMOS sensor for \$3000.

2006: The Secure Digital format spawned SDHC cards.

2008: Nikon introduced the D90, the first SLR camera to shoot high definition video. Olympus and Panasonic premiered Micro Four Thirds interchangeable lens cameras.

2009: Fujifilm shipped the first EXR technology cameras. Higher capacity (up to 2 terabytes) SDXC memory cards were announced.

2010: The season ending episode of "House" is recorded in high definition using a Canon 7D camera and lenses.

2011+: Sensors with unbelievably high gigapixel counts overwhelm humanity.

... I can hardly wait to see Charlie again. I hope it's soon, or I might not remember all this.

Snap Shots

An advantage of digital photography is knowing when a photo doesn't come out well. The photographer has the ability to immediately take the picture again. A common problem is when the automatic camera exposes for a contrasting background, making the foreground subject too bright or too dark.

If the background is much darker than the subject, the camera will overexpose the subject in an attempt to evenly expose the entire scene. A spotlight actor on a darkened stage is an example of such a situation. In this instance, one wants to **subtract** exposure. On the camera is a setting which looks like



Using this control, move the cursor to a minus number. The greater the contrast, the farther from "0" you need to set. A little trial and error will help to learn this function.

If the lighting is the opposite where the subject is too dark, you need to add exposure, or move the cursor towards the "+" sign.

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Another issue has come and gone. Enjoy your May picture taking. We'll be back next month with more news and hints!