

MadisonPhotoPlus the Photo Summit e-Photo Newsletter

March, 2007

U.S. Camera Show Report

This year's installment of the U.S. Photo Show and Convention just concluded in Las Vegas, Nevada. The digital cameras have won the battle this year, 682 - 1. There were plenty of films on display, from Kodak, Agfa, Fuji, Polaroid, and Ilford. There were even darkroom supplies from Ilford, resurrected from the dead companies of years gone by. There were quite a few camcorders (some using tape, memory card, mini-DVD or hard drives).

The biggest innovations were found in digital SLR cameras. Entry level cameras tend to offer 6 MP (megapixel) resolution, full automation, semi automation or manual use. The cameras are getting smaller, lighter and faster than ever before. These cameras are the easiest to use and yield the best pictures of all amateur cameras. And, they are getting considerably smaller than ever before. The Olympus E-410 and E-510 are barely larger than many point and shoot cameras.

Two years ago there were 2 - 3 companies that offered digital picture frames. These look like conventional desktop frames, but have a screen where the photo would normally be. These screens use the same technology as notebook computer displays (backlit LCD panels), but vary tremendously in size, shape and resolution. At least 30 companies now offer them with huge quality and price differences. These will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent newsletter.

On display at PMA (behind glass only) was the great descendent of the slide projector. It is a LCD projector which can be hooked up to a computer or DVD player and project the photo onto a screen several feet away. Businesses have been using this technology for some time now, but this unit is small enough to fit in a sport jacket pocket, weighs a few ounces and cost a few hundred dollars instead of thousands. It is made by Premier, and

will undoubtedly appear under many different brand names within a year or so. What goes around comes around.



A relatively new feature in cameras is face recognition. This software innovation searches the subjects the lens sees to determine if there are any human heads or faces in the field. If any are found, the camera locks its focus and exposure on the face (or faces) regardless of where in the frame it may travel. A rectangle highlighting the face is visible on the rear LCD panel of the camera. Some cameras can keep track of a single face while others can keep track of up to 9 faces. Most cameras have the software embedded on the main computer chip, while several Fuji models have a dedicated smaller chip to keep track of the faces (saving time and energy).

Many companies demonstrated that digitized photos can be printed almost anywhere: blankets, shirts, pillows, tapestries, napkins, fashion accessories, neckties, doormats and even bathroom tissue. Just as there is tremendous variation of places to print, so is there a variation in print quality. Some throw blankets could hold up to machine washing, many could not. Some bound photo albums would

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fingerprint easily, others would not. One photo diaper bag on display had photos which were liquid stained because the fabric was far too permeable. It was hard deciding which firms to do business with because these printed items should last for decades, not just until the convention was over. Both



Madison PhotoPlus and the Photo Summit should be supplying the finest quality of these products beginning in April.

The above were Jerry's impressions of the show's highlights. Bret's report begins on the next column.

The following photo was taken in Las Vegas from a monorail station looking towards the Harrah's Hotel. The camera was set down on a railing and used in self timer mode.



Another PMA has come and gone. Lots of new items and services, but nothing that really made us stop in our tracks and go "Wow!". There were, however, still many items of interest.

In the point-and shoot world, 7 megapixels looks to be the magic number for this year. Casio showed a 7 MP camera with a 7X optical zoom lens that is totally self-contained (no lens barrel extending from the body). It looks very nice, should be out in the next couple of months.



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Canon introduced the TX1 (pictured), a combination digital camera / HD video camera that records to memory cards. We got some hands on time with it, but we won't have a firm recommendation until we have made some prints and movies with it.

Olympus showed a point and shoot with an 18x optical zoom, the SP-550 UZ. Feels great in the hand, and has dual image stabilization. This model is in stock right now!

Speaking of which, the hot phrase in point and shoots was image stabilization. As we have previously mentioned, there are several different types of image stabilization, with inherent advantages.

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Digital SLRs were interesting not only for what cameras were introduced, but what cameras were not. We were all expecting a Nikon D60 and a replacement for the Canon 30D. Neither one was there. Nikon presented a D40X, basically just a higher megapixel D40. Canon's only new DSLR was the EOS 1n Mark III. It felt great in the hands, and the continuous shooting and focusing were outstanding. With an MSRP in the \$4000 range, one would expect no less!

Olympus introduced two new DSLRs, both look fantastic. The E-Volt 410 and 510 are both incredibly small, and the 510 features in-camera image stabilization similar to the Pentax system. Both cameras are serious contenders for anyone looking for a DSLR camera. A couple of pictures can be seen below:



E-Volt 410



E-Volt 510

Every brand had at least one new lens. One notable lens is a beautiful Pentax 16-50 f/2.8 lens that when used on the K10D body is just as fast and silent as anything from Canon or Nikon. Expect to see it in the summer. Tamron also showed their new 18-250mm zoom lens for DSLRs, which just arrived in stock. They also showed (under glass) new lenses with the drive motor in the lens barrel, a la Canon USM and Nikon AF-S lenses. No firm release or pricing has been announced. And as Jerry already noted, Sigma showed a 200-500 f/2.8 zoom lens – we took a couple pictures because you can't appreciate the size of the lens until you see it. Note the camera body visible in the side view picture.



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Digital photo frames and portable photo / video viewers are hot, with many new models at the show. We will be bringing in new models with new features, so be sure to stop in for a demonstration!

Also stay tuned for exciting new products and services such as bound photo books, mugs, mouse pads, even pillows and throw blankets with your pictures on them! These services will be just as easy as ordering a 4x6, and allow you to create one-of-a-kind memories far beyond just the traditional photo album!

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This is but a small sampling of the products and services we have seen, if you are curious about any item in this column, or in another product or service you've heard of that we haven't mentioned, please stop in or respond to this email with questions. As we all move forward into the new horizons of imaging, we need to know what YOU are interested in!

Thanks again for your input of what you'd like to read about in this newsletter. Have a great February and enjoy taking pictures.

Lynne, Bret & Jerry

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