



By
Stu Gershon

If Your Digital Camera is Two Years Old... You Might Want a New One This Christmas

In the past two years, the hobby of digital photography has exploded with many innovations, both in the hardware (the cameras and equipment) and the software (the photo-editing programs). This month's column will deal specifically with the new hardware innovations.

More Power

Two years ago, the average digital point-n-shoot camera had a three- to five-megapixel sensor and three-times optical zoom. The current crop comes in many different shapes and sizes, from sub-compact to dSLR's (digital Single Lens Reflex) with sensors ranging from five and six megapixels to up to 12 in the dSLRs. This increase in "power" provides us with much greater resolution, which supplies us with more detail in every picture. Couple this increase in megapixels with far more powerful zoom lenses (up to 12x opti-

cal zoom) and you can capture a mosquito at 1000 yards with the greatest detail you could ever want.

Image Stabilization

Adding to the great increase in resolution power is Image Stabilization – an automatic feature (in many different methods) to steady the longer lenses so your photo images are crisp and clear. If you think about holding a broom handle with your fingers, the further out you look at the broom handle, the more that point will be moving or vibrating. To get a good aim, you have to steady the broom handle. This broomstick analogy translates into: the longer the optical lens, the more it will magnify, but it will also vibrate more. Some cameras steady the sensor, and other methods actually provide small servo-motors within the lens to physically stabilize the lens.

Face Detection

Many of the new cameras have "FD" or Face Detection, which automatically senses (in some cases) up to 36 differ-

ent faces within the frame, providing better lighting and focus on this important subject. Therefore, if you have a group of people, FD insures that all the faces will be in sharp focus and properly lighted. This is great for taking photos of many subjects at one time.

Storage

The innovations in photo image storage have been improved in two ways.

Firstly, for the first time in the history of digital photography, the camera manufacturers *seem* to be agreeing on a specific format for memory cards — SD (Secure Digital). Most of the new cameras coming on the market are using SD cards for their image storage medium. This has evolved, it is thought, because SD cards have been used in PDAs (Trios, Blackberrys, Palm Pilots, etc.) for many years. Many cell-phone manufacturers are also using SD cards for increased memory capabilities, as are the new GPS navigation systems. The camera makers have come on board because, theoretically, you can take the picture with your

digital camera, modify it with your Palm Pilot, and send it to someone with your cell-phone. I understand there is a redundancy in this line of thought, but that appears to be the reasoning.

Secondly, with increase of resolution and power in the camera, you now need large storage for the large photo files. SD cards now come in 1GB (Gigabyte) and 2 GB sizes, and they are currently making even larger SDHC (High Capacity) cards which can store as much as 8GB of information. (Ten years ago, the size of your entire computer hard drive was 200-300 MB (megabytes).

Next month we will discuss how to shop for a new digital camera.

Stuart Gershon is known as "The Digital Doctor." He has given over two hundred and fifty classes at 57 different venues in Nassau and Suffolk. You can get more information and the schedule of his classes at: www.DigitalDocOnline.com. If you have any questions for the Digital Doctor, please send them to digitaldoc50@optonline.net.