

Bigger is Better

By Stan Gendelman

When judging a digital camera, the more megapixels, the better.

Not necessarily so, there are other factors to take into consideration.

The pixels measure the quantity of data captured, not the quality. The pixel size is important. Think of the pixels as shallow buckets that catch the light image. These sensors then convert the light to electrical energy which is then saved to flash card as a picture. So the larger and deeper the pixel, the more information can be captured. Here is where the type of light sensor is being used. Some cameras use a CCD sensor and others use a CMOS type sensor. They are both good. It all depends on the rest of the package.

The third factor to be considered is the LENS. Depending on their design, lenses may have different characteristics. Generally the high-speed lenses which have a larger aperture (f2 or larger) are better for available-light photography, but tend to lose more data near the picture's edge than slower lenses (f2.8 or below) when shooting wide open.

The zoom lenses are every bit as good as fixed focal length lenses, but pictures shot at wide angles have slightly more barrel distortion (where straight lines bow outward from the image center), while telephoto pictures tend to produce the opposite pincushion distortion.

Some inexpensive cameras have plastic lenses as opposed to the more expensive glass lens. These lead to more distortion. Cleanliness of the lens is very important. Use the proper cleaning cloth, not tissue paper.

All digital cameras must capture the analog picture and CONVERT it to electrical data. The better the converter the better your picture will be. A 12 bit or 16 bit converter is better than an 8 bit converter.

How the image is saved is important. Most cameras save the picture as a jpg. Format. The jpg compresses the picture. In order to do that it gets rid of some of the areas which decrease the quality of the picture. Cameras with lower compression ratio tend to have cleaner images. When image quality is of prime importance try to shoot in RAW format. This is where there is no compression.

The key factor is how the manufacturer's color and imaging scientists program the camera to interpret that data that it sees and then converts to pictures.

Some cameras come with shake reducing features. This may be important to some people. Some people hold the camera out at arms length looking at the screen to take the picture. There is too much instability. Better look through the view finder holding the camera against your cheek.

When you find a camera brand whose images you like, you will probably do well to stay with it..

Editor's note: Never buy any camera without first trying it out. If one store will not let you handle it, go to another that will. Make sure your fingers are not too large to feel the very small controls that some digital cameras have today.

Why athletes can't have real jobs!

Torrin Polk, University of Houston receiver, on his coach, John Jenkins: "He treats us like men. He lets us wear earrings."

New Orleans Saint RB George Rogers when asked about the upcoming season: "I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first."

Stu Grimson, Chicago Blackhawks left wing, explaining why he keeps a color photo of himself above his locker: "That's so when I forget how to spell my name, I can still find my clothes."

Lou Duva, veteran boxing trainer, on the Spartan training regime of heavyweight Andrew Golota: "He's a guy who gets up at six o'clock in the morning regardless of what time it is."