

Photokina 2006

John Henshall has been walking miles of aisles at the world's largest photographic trade show

In the early days of digital imaging, all the new products at Photokina could easily be seen in just one day – even if they were hidden between the new enlargers and other film-based stuff.

Today it's simply impossible for one person to see everything in the six days during which the 'World of Imaging' Trade Show is open. That's why other magazines have teams of reporters.

I was there for only three days, during which I also took part in a panel at a conference on **Imaging with Mobile Devices**. I believe that this is the future of consumer photography and will affect us all, even in the professional sector.

Forty four percent of people already use their cellphones as their main camera. No wonder that **Carphone Warehouse** is the largest supplier of digital cameras in the UK.

Nokia had a stand at least five times bigger than two years ago – its first appearance at Photokina.

In 2004 Nokia's cameras produced a 6 x 4 inch print which could hardly be called photographic quality.

This year's **Nokia N93** has a **Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar 3x** optical zoom, 3.2MP and produces 2048 x 1536 pixel images which will print to 7 x 5 inches at a full 300 pixels per inch, or to 10 x 8 inches at 200 pixels per inch. It will also produce good quality 640 x 480 pixel video at a full 30fps. To show this, Nokia had the N93 mounted on a professional camera crane. (See top of facing page.)

It does not have automatic red-eye removal or face tracking – the new buzz feature which finds and optimises the exposure and focus of human faces in the picture.

Here **Chip Shop Award 2006** winners **FotoNation** were ahead of Nokia, demonstrating a N93 phone complete with face tracking installed.

In operation, face tracking draws a box around faces on the viewfinder screen, to show that it has identified them. These boxes follow changes in framing as people move within the frame. The boxes do not, of course, appear on the captured images.



Panasonic Lumix L1



Canon EOS 400D



Nikon D80



Hewlett-Packard Designjet Z-Series Printers



Phone? Or video camera?



The tiny Nokia N93 on a professional camera crane

Face tracking works especially well with flash, ensuring perfect exposures of faces even when close to the camera.

I borrowed FotoNation's modified Nokia N93 and went to show it to the Nokia engineers, who watched with jaw-dropping incredulity as they saw face tracking on one of their existing models.

I somehow feel that Nokia will have face tracking on their next model.

In fact Nokia's 2007 model was shown at Photokina. It's the N95. (Below right.)

In a way this is more like a tiny computer-cum-mediacentre than a phone or even camera phone. It has built-in GPS Navigation, Music, Mobile TV, Stereo FM radio, full web browser, eMail and a still and video camera.

The camera is 5MP, producing 2592 x 1944 pixel images which will print to 13 x 10 inches at 200ppi. The prints I was shown were superb – with good contrast and edge sharpness, probably thanks largely to the Carl Zeiss lens.

There is no doubt that cameraphones such as the N95 will render many dedicated compact cameras redundant.

Five years ago, '9/11' was photographed largely on film and large video cameras. Last year both still and moving images of the '7/7' bombings were photographed on cameraphones.

The BBC website www.bbc.co.uk says, 'News can happen anywhere at any time. We want you to be our eyes. We have received thousands of images from around the world and we'd like you to send us yours. If an event is unfolding before your eyes and you capture it on a camera or mobile phone, either as a photograph or video, then please send it to BBC News.'

People carry their cellphones with them every day. Even professional



Nokia N93



In shooting mode



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Nokia N93



Sony Ericsson 800i



Nokia N93 at 300%



Sony Ericsson 800i at 300%

photographers are more likely to carry their cellphone than their professional camera equipment.

The chances are that, whenever a big story breaks, there will always be someone close by with a cameraphone.

This is opening up the world of photojournalism to everyone.

Improvements in cameraphones mean that the quality of the images is fast becoming as good as today's compact digital cameras. And yet most of the cameras are given to you 'free' when you sign a mobile phone contract.

And note that I haven't even mentioned cameraphones at weddings...



I took a look at two of the current leading 3.2MP cameraphones for Don Franz's *Photo Imaging News* (www.photo-news.com) conference on **Imaging with Mobile Devices**.

The **Nokia N93** has a 3x optical zoom, the **Sony Ericsson 800i Cyber-shot** has a fixed focal length lens. The results are very similar. Both handle the high tonal

range of the 'standard' Bear House shot with sky reasonably well but neither can resolve the house's nameplate.

Maybe things will be different by the next Photokina? Let's not be churlish, these cameras produce incredible quality for their size. And the quality is getting better all the time.

In fact they are catching up with their larger dedicated counterparts from the photographic and electronics companies at a rate which must be making these companies very worried.

Users of these products aren't interested in f-stops or ISO. They just want pictures of what they see in front of them, without any fuss.

Over in the world of DSLRs, the incredible news from Canon and Nikon was that there was no news. No new DSLR from either company.

An update of the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark II had been expected, perhaps using Canon's new Digic III technology, but there was a deafening silence. Canon's main professional imaging capture product was a back-up device to rival those from Epson and Jobo.

Rumours said that the next big 'un from Canon might be announced at the professional Photo Plus Expo in New York 2-4 November, or at PMA in Las Vegas 8-11 March 2007.

Unlike PMA in the US, Photokina is not exclusively for the trade. Trade is

filtered, often by a small reception area around the back of the booth, with a separate team of receptionists and a heavy to block the way to 'undesirables'. This system seems to work well.

Round the front, the booths are show-biz, like Panasonic's Formula One racing car with models and a photographer.

So Canon and Nikon were still majoring on their two pre-Photokina announcements: the Canon EOS 400D and the Nikon D80. Tee shirts and giant models promoted these products – presumably to the end users who turn up at Photokina.

Neither the 400D nor D80 are professional products – though you might want to buy them as cheap insurance in case your 30D/5D/1DsMkII or D2x/D200 develops problems.

Time there was when Photokina would see the launch of just about every important photographic product. But the increased pace of digital development means that products are now launched as and when they are ready – whether or not there is a trade show imminent.

New DSLRs did abound though.

Fujifilm announced the advent of its death defying **FinePix S5 Pro**.

No, you did not blink and miss the S4. I say 'death defying' because I believe that the S4 model number was probably avoided on purpose.

Four is considered unlucky because

the word for four sounds like the word for death in Japanese.

There's no point in tempting fate. The F4 was Nikon's least popular film SLR.

So, enter the S5, not to be confused with the Nikon CoolPix S5, announced earlier this year at PMA.

The **Fujifilm FinePix S5 Pro** – to give it its full name – is due on dealers' shelves early next year.

The camera was shown in a glass case – either as a mock-up or early prototype – and by a small stage presentation which didn't really say much about it. A four page leaflet gives quite a lot of 'preliminary' information, so presumably the following may be subject to change.

At first glance the camera body looks something like a Nikon D200 with Fujifilm on the pentaprism but of course the electronics inside are quite different.

The camera will feature a **Super CCD SR Pro** sensor with 12.3MP 'effective' pixels – 6.17M high sensitivity S-pixels and 6.17M low sensitivity R-pixels – the same pixel count as in the S3.

Powerful dark noise reduction, enhanced moiré reduction, low noise at high ISO and wide dynamic range with smooth tonality are the advantages quoted by Fuji for its **Real Photo Technology Pro**.

The dynamic range can be set either to 'Auto' mode or to one of six optional range settings. A **Film Simulation Mode** is the equivalent of changing film types – 'F1' simulates professional colour negative film for smoother tonality, while 'F2' creates highly saturated, high contrast images similar to Fujichrome colour reversal film.

An interesting new feature, based on facial recognition, is the **Face Zoom In Function**.

With the press of a single button, the camera will zoom in to the face in a captured image to permit a check of expression, detail and focus to be made on the LCD screen. Very useful.

The camera will feature monochrome and colour **Live View** for more precise focussing in the studio. A local Area Network (LAN) adapter will allow the sending of images at high speed over Ethernet or wireless LAN.

Fuji seems to have abandoned the use of AA batteries in favour of a Li-ion pack – possibly a pointer to its Nikon cousins.

The mount is Nikon F, allowing the use of Nikon AF-D/G and AF-S lenses.

And pictures from Fuji's DSLRs always have the look you would expect from a company with such a big heritage in film.



Panasonic Lumix L1



Panasonic's Leica lens



Panasonic Loan desk



Pentax K10D



Pentax K10D kit



Fujifilm FinePix S5 Pro camera



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Sigma SD-14 DSLR with DP-1 compact



There were DSLRs from just about every manufacturer but can we count them as professional? Indeed there are so many DSLRs now for all levels and tastes that we really should discount 'bridge' cameras from now on, in the same way as we have ignored compact cameras – unless they fit the bill of the perfect little pocket companion with great lens and the ability to shoot in raw mode.

Sigma announced its SD-14, unique among DSLRs in that it employs a Foveon X3 sensor. Foveon sensors have three layers and produce a red, green and blue signal for each pixel without the need for interpolation.

Alongside the SD-14 in the picture at the top of this page is the Sigma DP-1 compact, which uses the same sensor.

I would like to take a look at this interesting little camera. Could it be the pocket camera many of us have been waiting for?

The Foveon X3 sensor is difficult to describe in megapixels. Its 20.7 x 13.8mm area is said to be made up of 2652 x 1768 effective pixels, which only works out at 4.47MP.

In a conventional sensor, each pixel senses only red, green or blue by using coloured filters over each pixel. So, for example, a red filtered pixel can only measure the red signal at that pixel position. That's only one third of the required data because red, green and blue data is required for each pixel.

So where do the other two thirds of the essential data come from?

They are made up from the colour values of nearby pixels. Coupled with the anti-aliasing filter, this effectively reduces the resolution of most cameras which use conventional Bayer pattern filtration.

In Foveon sensors, this interpolation is not required, because the sensor

produces actual values for each colour at each pixel position – exactly what we need for display on our monitor screens.

So the Foveon has three times 4.47MP, stacked on top of each other. That's around 14MP.

The important thing to bear in mind is that these are all real data, whereas two thirds of the data from conventional sensors are, well, there's only one way to describe it – faked. OK, let's be kind and say that it is created intelligently. But it's still artificial.

With the Foveon sensor – unique to Sigma – you don't have this problem. The Sigma SD-14 and DP-1 are the only cameras which don't need to fake two thirds of the image data.

Now I think that's quite something and I look forward to putting the SD-14 through its paces.

The SD-14 takes Sigma SA Mount lenses and the sensor size gives these an apparent 1.7x focal length multiplication factor.

Medium format digital cameras are dominated by European manufacturers: Hasselblad, Jenoptik, Leaf, Phase One, and Sinar (now controlled by Leica).

Well Leaf is from Israel, but as Israel takes part in the Eurovision Song Contest I suppose that makes them European.

From Japan there's the Mamiya ZD and the possibility of the Pentax 645D.

All the European manufacturers announced improvements, with Hasselblad introducing the world's first 48mm full-frame DSLR camera system, the H3D. There'll be more about these in a future issue.

Perhaps the most significant new products announced at Photokina were four new wide-format printers from Hewlett-Packard – the Designjet Z2100 and Z3100.



At last the Japanese leader in this field has some competition. And competition it really is.

The HP Designjet Z-Series is the first to use an embedded spectrophotometer using X-Rite i1 Color Technology.

Mounted on the printer carriage with completely self-contained optics and electronics, the embedded spectrophotometer greatly simplifies accurate colour-matching, enabling automated ICC profiling and HP Advanced Closed-Loop Colour Calibration.

This means that the user can create colour profiles in minutes rather than hours and expect exact colour matches throughout the printing process.

The Z2100 and Z3100 use 8-ink and 12-ink HP Vivera pigment ink system, respectively, and will be available in both 24 inch and 44 inch widths.

The HP Designjet Z-Series printers are designed to deliver intuitive, dependable and repeatable colour accuracy for 24- and 44-inch museum-quality prints with 200 years' photo permanence.

Prices range from €2,700 for the Z2100 24 inch 8 ink machine to €6,900 for the 44 inch 12 ink machine.

Independent tests have already shown that if William Henry Fox Talbot had had one of these new printers in the mid nineteenth century, his prints would still be as fresh as the day they were printed.



Leaf Aptus 75 back on Hasselblad H2 body.



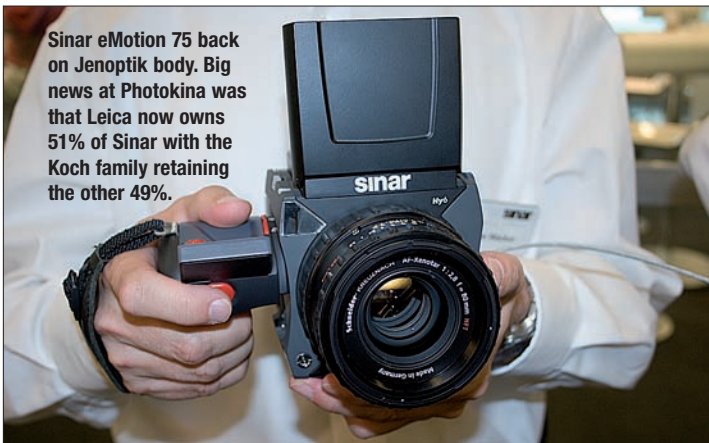
Hewlett-Packard's revolutionary new Designjet Z2100 and Z3100 wide format printers with built-in calibration were new stars at Photokina.



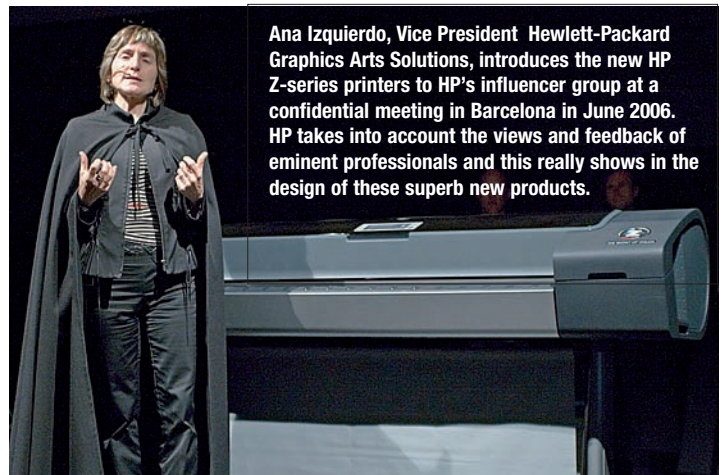
Leaf Aptus 75 back on Jenoptik body.



Britain's Martin Parr introduces the new HP printers to the world's press.



Sinar eMotion 75 back on Jenoptik body. Big news at Photokina was that Leica now owns 51% of Sinar with the Koch family retaining the other 49%.



Ana Izquierdo, Vice President Hewlett-Packard Graphics Arts Solutions, introduces the new HP Z-series printers to HP's influencer group at a confidential meeting in Barcelona in June 2006. HP takes into account the views and feedback of eminent professionals and this really shows in the design of these superb new products.



Where have all the pro products gone?

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