

TOOLS

DIGITAL INNOVATIONS: Joe Farace

Best Products *Not At* photokina

There's More To Imaging Than Those At The Big Show

"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it."—Pablo Picasso

I've attended many photokina shows since my first in 1978 where I met two men whose work affects me to this very day. One was Norman Rothschild who wrote a popular magazine column called "Offbeat" and the other was Jean Coquin who had just invented a modular filter system he called *Cokin*. While photokina has gradually drifted from what the late Burt Keppler dubbed "the world's fair of photography" in favor of a more European focus, there's no doubt it's an important show where all the big guns show off their latest products. But what about the "little guns," those companies who can't afford an exchange rate that's not dollar friendly or perhaps have other reasons for not attending? They haven't stopped making new and cool digital imaging gear. In this special column I'll introduce you to products that didn't make it to the photokina floor but are still worthy of your attention. *So hier sind die Digital-Innovationen, Januar 2009.*



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OLED Is Here

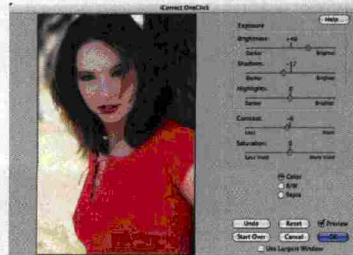


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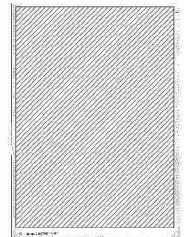
Remember OLED (Organic Light-Emitting Diode) technology? Remember Kodak's press conference at PMA 2003 when they showed the EasyShare LS633 camera with an OLED preview screen? Remember how they forgot to tell us it would *not* be sold in the U.S.A.? You can get OLED gear now and you won't find it at photokina. Digital Foci Inc. (www.digitalfoci.com) is shipping the Pocket Album Deluxe OLED 2.8 with a 2.8" OLED screen that holds more than 4000 photos and the Pocket Album OLED 1.5 with a 1.5" OLED screen that stores 124 photos. Photos can be viewed by scrolling manually or viewing a slide show that has adjustable intervals with transition effects. The Pocket Album OLED Series includes Photo Viewer software that lets you crop and rotate photos and will automatically re-size the photos for storage and display on the viewers. These compact devices use lithium-polymer batteries with five hours of battery life and can be recharged with the bundled AC adapter. The Pocket Album OLED 1.5 costs \$49 and the Pocket Album Deluxe OLED 2.8 costs \$99 and both are lots cheaper than an iPod touch.

One Click To Better Color

PictoColor's (www.pictocolor.com) iCorrect OneClick 1.5 color correction Photoshop plug-in automatically corrects white balance, exposure, and saturation with just one click. With a single click on any neutral color (black, white, or gray) in the image preview in the simple interface, you instantly correct the white balance and automatically remove color cast, correct tonal range, and adjust overall brightness. You can even fine-tune the exposure and recover extra detail by adjusting overall brightness a.k.a. luminance, shadows, and highlights or create more vivid-looking photos by boosting contrast and saturation. It's available for Mac OS or Windows computers and costs less than \$50. PictoColor has always been known for its affordable and easy-to-use color correction tools and iCorrect OneClick 1.5 not only works great but is a useful tool for converting color images into lush black and white or nostalgic sepia tone.



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Out-Of-Bounds EFX

The distance between Athens and Köln is about 1120 miles, or about the same as Denver to Houston, but Panos Efstathiadis (www.panosfx.com) is bringing *Shutterbug* readers a free Action you won't find at photokina. Efstathiadis is a Greek graphic artist and designer whose Photoshop Actions are popular with Photoshop and Photoshop Elements users. His new OoB+ (Out of Bounds plus) Action is software that simplifies the steps needed to create the popular OoB effect. This flexible Action begins by letting you define the area of the photo and its shape. It then lets you set the size of the border and establish the out-of-bounds areas before adding the shadow effect. The Action makes use of layer masks, which allow you to edit the final overall look at a later time. This is not a one-click Action so I urge you to download the tutorial movie and have some fun with this 3D-looking effect.



Your Digital Passport

Laptop hard disks never have a large enough capacity and getting new drives installed when your needs change can be an expensive proposition. That's why whenever I travel I always take two important laptop accessories: My fast Lexar UDMA card reader and a Western Digital (www.wdc.com) My Passport portable USB drive. Instead of placing image files on the laptop's hard drive they're stored on the external drive, which gets hooked up to my desktop machine when I get back home where I have the choice of either transferring the image files to one of my Mac Pro's four installed hard drives or copying them to a DVD or Blu-ray disc. Weighing less than 7 oz and bus powered, the new 500GB My Passport Elite drive is small enough to fit in a pocket or backpack and is available in Bronze, Titanium, Westminster Blue, and Cherry Red. The My Passport family of portable drives with 400GB and 500GB capacities ranges from \$179.99-\$219.99. Don't leave home without one.



Digital Leica Luxury

Leicatime's (www.leicatime.com) Luigi Crescenzi won't be at photokina because he hates to fly and "even more, to smoke any other fellow's cigarettes or cigars!" So while Crescenzi won't be at photokina, you can order products from his shop in Roma, Italy, and he even takes PayPal. Leicatime's cases and straps for the M8.2 and other digital Leicas are available in elegant hand-stitched leather and finishes with lots of options, depending on your style and protection preferences. One of Leicatime's innovations is a flush case screw (50 euros) that allows the camera to sit flat, unlike anybody else's—including Leica's—cases. It's handmade of stainless steel like the soft releases (12 euros) he makes for the M8, including a special version for Voigtlander's Bessa. My



perfect scenario for the dream M8 I've yet to own is his black half case with optional red stitching (10 euros) and a Thumbs Up grip. In the absence of a wind lever to brace against, Thumbs Up provides the Leica M8 with a balanced and secure ergonomic grip. Thumbs Up's manufacturer won't be at photokina *either* but you can order one from Robert White (www.robertwhite.co.uk).

Data To Go

With Secure Digital fast becoming almost the *de facto* memory card standard—the Leica M8.2 uses SD and the Nikon D90 loves SDHC—Kingston Technology Corporation (www.kingston.com) announced that it's shipping a 32GB Elite Pro SDHC Flash memory card for use with digital video camcorders and "other high-resolution imaging devices," like your friendly neighborhood D-SLR. The new 32GB card is the largest capacity in Kingston's Elite Pro line of SDHC cards, which currently also includes 4, 8, and 16GB capacities. Kingston's 32GB memory card can store thousands of photos and "hours," although I think that's optimistic based on my experience with the D90, "of high definition video." The 32GB SDHC card has a suggested price of \$308.



Kingston's 32GB DataTraveler 150 (DT150) USB flash drive lets you store a ton of image files in a small yet stylish package. No bigger than a pocketknife, the DT150 flash drive can store thousands of songs, image files, and hours of video clips, depending on resolution, backed by a five-year warranty. Kingston's highest capacity flash drive can be used in most Windows computers (including Vista and XP) as well as Mac OS and Linux operating systems. The drive is available now and has a suggested price of \$139.

For The Birds

One of my favorite shows on TV's History Channel is *Monsterquest*, where the show's hosts chase down legendary creatures. Their most used tool in trying to photograph these elusive beasties is a motion-controlled digital camera that they attach to a tree and place near sites where *Sasquatch* might come bopping through. I've always wanted one of these cameras for more mundane purposes such as photographing birds and now Wingscapes (www.wingscapes.com) comes to my rescue with their weatherproof BirdCam. The \$249 camera shoots 2048x1536 JPEG files or 640x480 AVI files. It has 32MB of built-in memory but accepts SD cards up to 4GB. The lens is the equivalent of 46mm on a 35mm camera and is in focus from 18" to infinity. You can set it to be tripped by motion or capture using intervals from 30 seconds up to 45 minutes or even in hourly or daily intervals. The BirdCam uses four D-sized batteries or can be powered by an optional AC adapter. Also optional is a Mounting Arm for attaching the BirdCam near your bird feeder. 🐦

