

# Photography

Joy Enriquez takes a good look back at life as it was for professional photographers 10 years ago.



©MICHAEL AMENDOLA

It was the same year that Ricky Martin had women swooning to *Livin' la Vida Loca*, moviegoers were applauding *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Phantom Menace*, and everyone was in a frenzied panic that the Y2K bug was going to end modern life as we knew it. That's right, it was 1999 – the turn of the century, and an era marked with digital SLRs and translucent lime-green iMacs.

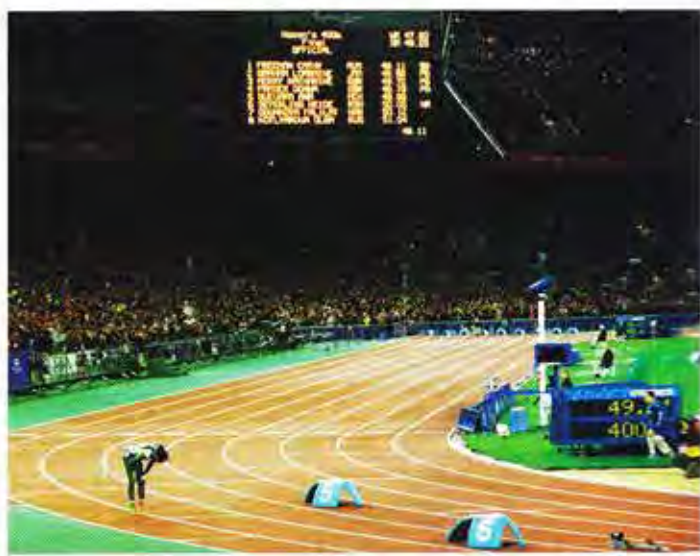
With technology changing rapidly in the past decade, we rarely look back at just how far the industry has come since the first digital cameras were hit the Australian market in the 90s.

## Rolls and rolls of film

It was the year Kodak unveiled their Black & White+ 400 film (which could be processed C-41) alongside the growth in mini-lab processing, and the film manufacturers had rallied together spending approximately \$1 billion on manufacturing and marketing APS film and cameras with the hope of infiltrating the amateur market. Sales of the 24mm "Advanced Photo System" film format grew for the first three years but has since seen extinction. The only reference to APS these days being to sensor sizes. Back then, "Film was king," says Andrew Stephenson of the Wildlight stock library. "Quite frankly it was easier to do a job on film. When we used to do shoots at Wildlight, life was simple. Now, photographers find themselves in a bit of a labyrinth pushing pixels around."



© MARK LANG



# Flashback

A 1999 issue of *Australian Photography* records the same sentiment, "Film is still acknowledged as the most convenient, economical and best method of image capture, storage and retrieval." Until only a few years ago, a 35mm negative could still store more information about a scene and offer bigger, higher quality enlargements than the images captured via digital SLRs, although those days are far behind us, Stephenson still admits, "In a way, digital was the beginning of the end."

## DSLR was making waves

Come the turn of the century there was a wave of disdain from purists who couldn't fathom a world where digital photography reigned supreme, but it was certainly an exciting time when both professional and amateur photographers were happily honeymooning with the cool new gear that marked the digital revolution. Although, back then cameras that produced 5x7inch prints were deemed suitable for commercial application and anything that captured more than 2 megapixels was notably impressive. Anything better was going to cost you about the same as a house deposit. "People were starting to get excited with what digital had to offer," says Stephenson, "but it was still very much in its infancy unless you were doing stuff for real estate agents with your Nikon Coolpix. Anything better was a little out of one's budget."

[capture] jan\_feb.10

## Early digital offerings

Brand	Nikon Coolpix 950 (E-950)	Canon PowerShot Pro 70	Canon EOS D2000	Leaf Volare
Type	Point and shoot	Point and shoot	DSLR	Three-shot RGB capture digital back.
Max Resolution	1600 x 1200 pixels	1536 x 1042 pixels	2.0 million (1736 x 1160)	6.3 million (2048 x 3096)
ISO Range	ISO 80	ISO 100 (high res.) ISO 100-400 (low res.)	200-1600	ISO 25 for colour ISO 100 for B&W
CCD size			15.1 x 22.5mm	24 x 36mm
Focal length conversion factor	n/a	n/a	1.6x	1.95 x with 6x6
Price	\$2,299	\$2,699	\$14,400	\$40,697

## Did you catch this camera?



*Commercial Photography* (as *Capture* magazine was known back then) told readers to keep their eyes on the Kodak DCS460, which boasted a 6.2 megapixel CCD sensor, colour LCD screen for viewing thumbnails, 520MB onboard data storage and 3.5fps for up to 12 frames. You could save money on gym fees by toting around this bulky baby around – it weighed in at just under 2kg without the battery pack, hard drive and lens, and it would have set you back a whopping \$25K. Imagine what these guys would have said if they knew just ten years later, fourteen year olds would be carrying around cameras with up roughly 60

times the capacity (with a 32GB SD card) on devices that weigh less than 100g!

## Moral battles

It was only in 1998 that the Copyright Act afforded commercial and advertising photographers first rights to the images they produced, but as the century turned we were still fighting for control of moral rights. Does anyone remember the case where photographer Grant Matthews went to court over ACP magazine's use of his image of Kate Fisher in *New Idea*? The image was found to be taken out of context as neither Matthews or Fisher were consulted before it was used.

Projections 2010 is proudly presented by

 TRAMP LINE  SAATCHI & SAATCHI

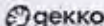


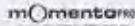
## PROJECTIONS 2010 CALL FOR ENTRIES NOW OPEN

A photographic competition  
to find Australia's best emerging  
photographers.

See [theprojections.com](http://theprojections.com)  
for details and closing dates.

sponsored by

 gekkko

 mOmentar

 capture

 S2

 Kayell



THE FRONT



SUNSTUDIOS

THE  
BERLIN  
BRANDENBURG

After Matthews' win in court that year, Peter Adams, former president of the ACMP aptly reminded us, "The law is only going to be as good to as the photographer wants it to be, and allows it to be."

### Dealing with data

A 1999 advertisement for a Camedia FlashCard floppy disk adapter tells its own story. How many people have floppy disk drives on their PCs or laptops these days? Digital photography was still in its infancy – even today we are a far cry from standardisation of file formats – and the vast multitude of images on electronic format alone risk becoming inaccessible or obsolete. Alan Davies, curator of photographs at the State Library of NSW, admits that alongside the conveniences opened by the digital revolution comes the risk and inconvenience of images incompatibility with new systems. "The immediacy of the digital image has become its principal value, with little thought to its long-term survival. Pictures taken yesterday may not be retrievable by the next generation," says Davies. "Within a decade of the introduction of analogue videodisc storage of photographs at the State Library of New South Wales in 1989, the technology was superseded and videodiscs today are simply plastic curiosities."

### To print or not to print?

So what does this mean for us today, apart from backing up photos and ensuring you convert electronic files into readable formats? "Professional photography has a different role today," says Lesley Downey, who has been in the industry for 17 years. "When you've been brought up on film, you take great pride in the quality of output. Today not everyone cares what type of album they produce, but if you are a professional that can offer something rare, the value of your service is higher. And you know that an album will always be able to be viewed."

Back in 1999 Hewlett-Packard and Epson hit best-friend status amongst photographers by providing a new standard of versatility and power to the professional who needed prints good enough to display. Kylie Lyons, who was been operating Handprint Photography in NSW since 1993 says the introduction of in-house printing paved the way for the efficient workflow that professionals can benefit from today. "Once upon a time we used to send images out to the lab for printing. It would take days and then might come back with a mistake. A lot more people are printing in-house and it saves costs and time."

### Looking ahead

"Clients don't expect much any more because anyone can take a photo," Andrew Stephenson says. "But those who knew the industry before digital know that there is quality and technique off the screen – be that in film or video – and in today's decreasing standards don't be too surprised at what can wow people." Alan Davies agrees. "I'm still a big optimist when it comes to photography. Ten years ago it was hard to take a good photo and today it is far too easy to take a bad photo. Professional photographers stand out amidst the dross because their images will last and will be a joy to look well at in the future. I have looked at some 19th century photos – some are real standouts. That's what the pros have to aim to give to the next few generations."

The key, he says, is to stay optimistic and experimental with all that the future brings. "From using sheets of metal and mercury vapour to develop prints, from glass plates to film, from black-and-white to colour, from paper then to digital – photography has had quite an amazing journey," Davies concludes. And considering that digital technology is very much in its infancy compared to manual imaging processes, there's no telling where we'll go next.

### CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Michael Amendolia – [www.michaelamendolia.com](http://www.michaelamendolia.com)

Alan Davies – [www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)

Lesley Downie – [www.downiephotography.com.au](http://www.downiephotography.com.au)

Kylie Lyons – [www.handprint.net.au](http://www.handprint.net.au)

Andrew Stephenson – [www.wildlight.net](http://www.wildlight.net)