Log In   Register

SEARCH

CONTESTS   WORKSHOPS   VIDEOS   FORUMS   SUBSCRIBE   NEWSLETTER   IPAD   VIDEO STORE

HOME > GEAR   EMAIL

The 30 Most Important Digital Cameras of All Time

From the first prototype of 1975 to Sony's Cyber-shot RX1 of 2012, here's a chronicle of photography's inevitable march to digital

BY BY DAN RICHARDS, WITH REPORTING BY AIMEE BALDRIDGE ON OCTOBER 22, 2013   33

RELATED TAGS: GEAR, CAMERAS, DIGITAL CAMERAS, DSLR, HISTORY

Like 2.7k   Tweet 291   g+1 58   Sh   ▲ ▼   1 point

By Sandro Bisaro   + MORE PHOTOS

Digital photography has proven to be one of the most world-changing technological breakthroughs of the late 20th century. But the quest to capture and transmit images via electrons began nearly two centuries ago. Just a few years after Frenchman Nicéphore Niépce produced the first fixed photographic image in 1826 or 1827, another invention—long-distance digital telecommunication—arrived. And not long after Samuel F.B. Morse and Alfred Vail developed a viable electric telegraph and a binary code for conveying messages, inventors began to explore sending and recording images via dots and dashes.

Piece by piece, the technologies that would make digital imaging possible fell into place. By 1860, you could send a kind of fax; in the early the 20th century, news organizations could transmit pictures as dot arrays. By mid-20th-century, videotape recording and the digital computer added other critical pieces; solid-state electronics and the microchip would shrink them to manageable size. By the 80s, "still video" cameras captured analog images via a semiconductor array invented at Bell Labs in 1969: the charge-coupled device, or CCD. Which brings us to the first of these, the most important digital cameras of all time—up until now, of course.

1975 Kodak digital camera prototype

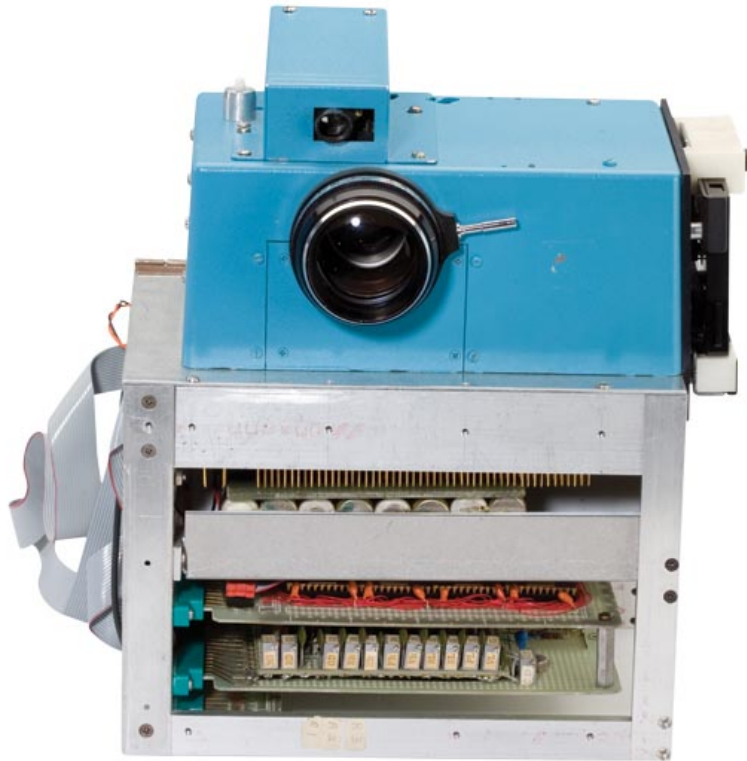Camera of the Year: Nikon D750

New Gear: Tenba DNA 13 Camera Bag

Gangsters & Grifters: Classic Crime Photos from the Chicago Tribune

FAA Regulations May Require Commercial Drone Photographers to Get a Pilot's License

Gangsters & Grifters: Gritty Crime

Courtesy of the George Eastman House

Kodak engineer Steven Sasson started with "a white piece of paper" when, at age 25, he got the assignment to come up with an application for CCDs. He decided on a camera with no moving parts, recording in a digital format. Sasson and his team spent a year cobbling together this 8-pound device, built around a new Fairchild Semiconductor 100x100-pixel sensor. It took the first digital image, in black and white, in December 1975.

(The George Eastman House Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, NY, provided this photo and other photos of cameras in its collection.)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | … | 30 | NEXT › |

Recommend   2,740 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

LOGIN OR REGISTER TO POST COMMENTS

WE RECOMMEND

- **Could the Digital Electric Objects EO1 Finally Fix the Digital Picture Frame?**

FROM AROUND THE WEB

- **10 Games That Crossed Over From Literature** *(RantGamer)*

- **What happens in Vegas… gets Photoshopped out. Learn how here.** *(lynda.com)*

- **8 Things That Get Seriously Discounted in November** *(Comments for ShopBlog)*

- **Pirates, eat your heart out: Rolls-Royce envisions crewless drone freight ships** *(Digital Trends)*

- **Biker's Final Moments Shown in Harrowing Road Safety Video ...** *(Bilibr)*

- **A Rich Woman Abandoned This Apartment In 1942. What They Just Found Inside Is Incredible.** *(BoredLion)*

Recommended by

+ MORE BUYING GUIDE
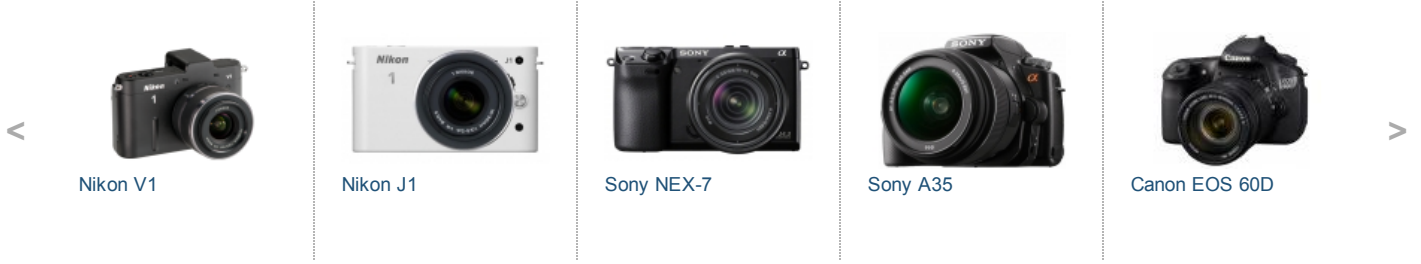
Nikon V1

Nikon J1

Sony NEX-7

Sony A35

Canon EOS 60D

SUBSCRIBE TO
POPPHOTO
And SAVE 80%

Name	
Address	
City	
State	Select your State ▼
Zip	
Email	

GEAR

Tested Reviews

Cameras

Lenses

Accessories

All Gear

HOW-TO

Shooting

Processing

Lighting

All How-to

BUYING GUIDE

Interchangeable-Lens Cameras

Compact Cameras

Lenses

All Brands

All Buying Guide

NEWS

All News

PHOTOS

Photo of the Day

All Photos

Subscribe | Customer Service | Contact Us | Media Kit | Site Map | Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | Abuse | Newsletter Signup

Visit Our Sister Sites ▼