



Olympus Gazette

The digital revolution: 1996-2008



As the dawn of the new millennium approached, the world began to experience its first taste of an exciting new photographic era. Suddenly digital technology was revolutionising the way we shot, stored, edited and displayed our photographs. In 1996, 100,000 digital cameras were sold throughout Europe. That same year Olympus launched the first digital consumer camera with a complete system of peripherals to match.

The digital market grows in leaps and bounds

Not a year has gone by since the mid-1990s without novel technology making its way onto the market, and Olympus has always been at the forefront of this innovative trend. In 1997, digital camera sales in Europe rose to 350,000 and the first Olympus all-in-one SLR cameras were introduced. By the end of the 20th



century, the internet was abuzz and digital lifestyles were becoming a reality.

A new century of photography

The year 2000 saw 2 million digital cameras sold in Europe, with Olympus retaining its position as European market leader. As the world celebrated a millennial birthday, Olympus introduced the E-100RS, a cutting-edge 10x zoom camera with an optical image stabiliser and an electronic view finder capable of shooting 15 frames per second. The digital camera segment was becoming a mass market, and Olympus led the way with 2001's C-4040 ZOOM and its 1:1.8-2.6, 3x optical zoom lens.



Digital cameras go global

In 2002 Olympus had already sold 10 million digital cameras by the month of September, and the Four Thirds Standard was launched. The next year saw a tipping point as digital camera sales equalled analogue camera sales for the first time, while the weatherproof μ DIGITAL led to continued growth for one of the highest selling camera series of all time. Olympus also introduced the splashproof D-SLR E-1 and the groundbreaking Four Thirds Standard based E-System was born.



Three years later Olympus released the μ 720 SW – a sturdy μ TOUGH that was waterproof to 3m and crushproof to boot. When Olympus unveiled the E-3 in 2007, it quickly gained a reputation as a reliable professional D-SLR for top photographers. It was also a good year for powerful zooms, with the 18x zoom of the SP-550UZ Ultra Zoom wowing the market.

Then Olympus announced the development of a revolutionary technological breakthrough that delivers the same high image quality as the Four Thirds Standard in a much more compact body: the Micro Four Thirds Standard. Watch this space!

By 2008 photography had gone truly digital, with worldwide sales of 44 million compact cameras and 3.7 million D-SLRs.