

Adorama.com – Blink detection leads new GE camera features



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Pre-PMA: Blink detection leads new GE camera features

Here's one we haven't seen before: blink detection. It joins a GPS receiver and smile detection among the new bells and whistles in the new line of GE cameras, to be announced this week at PMA. There are nine new models in all, with the 10MP E1050 being touted as the flagship, loaded with everything including the kitchen sink. The 1050 has a 5x zoom that starts at 28mm (35mm equivalent), and is expected to cost around \$249.99. As an aside, towards the bottom of the press release below is some interesting information of who is involved with GE's camera division and how it all got started.

For details, read the GE press release:

9 new models announced for 2008

GE cameras score big features: smile and blink detection, better optics, HDTV, GPS, and more

LAS VEGAS (Jan. 31, 2008) – General Imaging, the worldwide exclusive licensee for GE digital cameras, announced the next generation of GE digital cameras for 2008. Nine all-new models will offer an exciting assortment of additional features, including smile detection, blink detection, upgraded lenses, and LCD screens that adjust to changes in ambient light. One new model, the E1050, makes photography even more fun, adding HDTV, touch-screen and GPS capability.

The 2008 GE models are among the first cameras on the market to offer smile detection and blink detection, two separate functions that allow users to capture their subjects at exactly the right moment.

Unveiled at the 2008 PMA trade show, the new offerings bring to 15 the total number of cameras in the GE-branded digital camera line. Last year's most popular features – panorama stitching, face detection, in-camera red-eye removal – are all back for 2008, combined with slimmer camera bodies. Setting a new standard for the term "feature-rich" is the new E1050, which boasts a number of innovative attributes, including:

- High-definition movie recording
- HDTV playback capability for both movies and stills
- User-friendly touch-screen controls to access more features with fewer buttons
- GPS receiver that allows busy photographers to keep track of exactly where they were when they shot their favorite scenes. Such features are usually found only in higher-priced SLR cameras or camcorders rather than a point-and-shoot digicam like the E1050. And unlike most cameras with HDTV capability, the E1050 does not require an additional "cradle" to support it.

Considering that it also has a 28mm equivalent wide-angle lens, the 10-megapixel, 5x zoom E1050 has everything today's digital camera enthusiast could want – for only \$249.99 MSRP.

"For our second year we have retained all the most popular features from the first year, added a long list of exciting new ones, and enhanced overall performance," said Hiroshi "Hugh" Komiya, chairman and CEO of General Imaging.

The new models span the entry-level A series, the ultra-compact G series with folded optics (non-protruding lens), and the mid-priced E series. Many of the new models will begin reaching store shelves by early spring.

All 2008 models will include smile detection and blink detection (two separate functions). The smile detection feature automatically detects when subjects are smiling and captures the photo at that point. The blink detection feature alerts the user if the subjects are blinking, immediately after the photo is captured, allowing the photo to be retaken.

New cameras in the E and G series will also include aspheric, all-glass lenses for sharper images and truer color reproduction, along with auto-adjust LCD screens that adapt to changing light conditions. Many of the new GE cameras are slimmer than their 2007 counterparts, with the G2 and G3 each measuring a mere 18mm thick (just under 3/4 of an inch). In some cases, the flash was moved so it would be out of the way of the user's shooting fingers. These changes came in response to consumer feedback to the 2007 models.

"We have said from the beginning that we would be a nimble company that responds to consumer needs, and our new cameras reflect that philosophy," said Rene Buhay, General Imaging's senior vice president for marketing and sales in the Americas. "We think people are going to like what they see."

General Imaging was formed in 2006 when Komiya, who had retired as president of Olympus Imaging Corporation a year earlier, recruited a group of industry veterans to start a new camera company. Komiya first recruited Buhay, whose experience in electronics included work for Ricoh and ArcSoft. He also enlisted the services of a highly respected design team to create a sophisticated camera line loaded with all the best features in the industry.

At the same time, General Electric, which Fortune magazine consistently ranks as the most admired company in the world, was considering entry into the digital camera market and looking for the right licensee to carry the GE brand. General Imaging's vision for developing a high-quality, distinctively designed and technologically advanced line of cameras was a great fit for GE's goals, and a licensing agreement was signed in September 2006.

The first GE digital cameras went on sale on HSN on May 1, with Sears, Kmart and Radio Shack quickly following suit. Numerous other retailers (both online and on land) and distributors have signed on since then. GE digital cameras are now available throughout the U.S., Canada, Latin America, Europe and Asia. "We have come quite far in a year, that is for certain," Komiya said. "But this is only the beginning for GE digital cameras. We are here for the long term."