



September 11, 2010

Cameras making leap to 3-D

Fort Collins company one of first to offer technology, viewing products

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With the recent rise in popularity of three-dimensional movies, point-and-shoot cameras are looking to make the leap to 3-D, and a Fort Collins company is one of the first to offer the innovative technology along with its own novel viewing products.

In August, Fujifilm announced the release of its new FinePix Real3D W3 camera, a digital point-and-shoot camera that produces three-dimensional images by taking two separate images - one for each eye.

The camera shoots both photos and video in 3-D, and images can be viewed in 3-D without glasses on the camera's screen or on a 3-D TV.

Local entrepreneurs Ken Burgess and Tanya Alsip joined forces last summer after being laid off from a GPS company. The two founded the Fort Collins-based 3-D optics company Cyclopital3D because Fuji was creating the new camera that would need practical applications to view the photos.

In addition to already selling 60 of the new 3-D cameras since they went on sale this month, Burgess and Alsip are developing new 3-D photo viewers and attachments for the camera.

Burgess has designed a digital 3-D photo viewer that allows users to view their 3-D photos anywhere for \$695. He also is working on prototypes for a \$299 print viewer and a \$179 macro attachment for the camera.

The two expect that 3-D cameras are the wave of the future and that their viewing products will be the tool people will use to view those photos.

"We see this as the next model," Alsip said. "Like the iPod for 3-D photos."

Cyclopital3D's target audience will be young photographers from the amateur to professional. They hope to attract wedding photographers looking to add a new niche to the business.

To date, Burgess has invested all his earnings back into production of new products while looking for investors. As sales pick up from the new camera, the company hopes to expand and hire more employees. Currently, the duo is doing all its research and production out of Burgess' home in the 300 block of S. Washington Ave., Fort Collins.

Diane Rainey, senior manager of corporate communications with Fujifilm, said it is still too soon to provide any sales numbers for the camera but did say the initial response they have received pertaining to the camera has been positive.

Fujifilm, for which digital cameras are just one aspect of the company's operations, opted to delve into the 3-D camera world after the success of digital cameras and 3-D films. Rainey also said that analysts predict that in the next 12 months, more than one million 3-D televisions will be sold, and the FinePix Real3D W3 is a good way to create content for those TVs.

According to PC World, early 3-D adapters this year suggest that cameras with 3-D photo and video capability might be big news in 2011.

Burgess and Alsip hope that is the case.

While current awareness of 3-D photography is relatively low, the two plan to change that as they bring the National Stereoscopic Association national convention to Loveland next summer. With 3,000 NSA members, Burgess and Alsip will co-chair the event that showcases the latest in 3-D technology and art.

The two also are looking to start a Northern Colorado 3-D photo club next month.

Burgess first discovered 3-D photography in 1995 and was immediately hooked when he saw the images he could produce.

Alsip, more of a casual photographer who picked it up as a hobby, said the similarity of today's surge in 3-D technology to that of the 1950s when 3-D cameras and viewfinders exploded onto the scene.

Three-dimensional photography dates back to the 1800s where it was considered the "television" of its time, Burgess said.

"It is difficult to do art with a 3-D camera; it's more about realism," Burgess said.

Additional Facts

Interested?

For more information on Cyclopital3D and the FinePix Real3D W3 camera, visit www.cyclopital3d.com.
