4/25/2005 For Immediate Release: OpenRAW Web Site Launched; Confronts Issues Crucial to Quality Digital Photography and Archiving of Photographic Images

The OpenRAW Working Group launched a website today at: http://www.OpenRAW.org designed to solve issues crucial to the future of photography.

Digital technology is revolutionizing the photography industry, and an emerging part of that technology is the set of RAW camera file formats. Most professional photographers prefer using RAW image capture because it offers the highest quality and the greatest creative control.

The grass roots OpenRAW group arose out of photographers' frustration with camera manufacturers' refusal to openly document their proprietary RAW file formats. That lack of file format information inhibits innovation, limits image processing choices, and endangers the long-term accessibility of millions of photographs. The goal of the new group is to obtain complete documentation by manufacturers of their RAW file formats.

"Our primary strategy is to educate the public and the manufacturers," said Juergen Specht, the Japan-based German photographer who is spearheading the OpenRAW group. Specht also founded the highly regarded D1scussion mailing list for Nikon dSLR photographers, and hosts a similar 1Dscussion group for Canon photographers. Specht continued, "Once photographers understand what's at stake, and once digital camera manufacturers understand how their profitability will be enhanced by the release of the RAW file format specifications, our goals will be realized."

The Importance of RAW File Formats

A RAW file contains unprocessed sensor data and other vital shot information from a digital camera. The many RAW file formats are proprietary, and typically differ from camera to camera. RAW file formats let photographers:

- Preserve the maximum amount of original image data.
- Adjust settings such as exposure and white balance after the shot is taken.
- Transcend the limitations of fixed in-camera processing.
- Obtain the highest possible image quality from each file.
- Improve image quality over time as RAW processing capabilities advance.
- Possess an archival image whose longevity can rival, and potentially outlast, film.

The Problem of Undocumented RAW File Formats

Undocumented RAW file formats present a number of challenges. The problems include:

- Limitation of image processing choices that meet differing workflow and quality needs.
- Increased probability that, over time, a RAW file will become unreadable or unable to be processed properly.
- Waste of 3rd party software development resources.

The OpenRAW Solution

The OpenRAW group wants camera manufacturers to document publicly all of their RAW image file formats: past, present, and future. By doing so, manufacturers will provide photographers with a maximum set of processing choices and the best guarantee of future image decoding.

There are already instances of encrypted data in RAW files and dropped support by manufacturers for older camera models. The OpenRAW solution will prevent more such problems. The OpenRAW solution represents a win for photographers, a win for manufacturers, a win for software developers, and a win for the longterm transmission of human culture.

For more information please visit the OpenRAW web site: http://www.OpenRAW.org

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