

Introduction

While Phone Cameras up until recently had such poor levels of resolution, and small storage capacities, the whole idea of doing anything other than sending the photo to another phone user or posting it on the web or e-mailing these images, were incomprehensible to phone users. Now with increased resolutions and phone storage capacities their uses are able to be extended, with some provisos. [Avant-garde image makers think differently I believe.]

I would argue that, today's mobile phone cameras are the modern equivalent of the 126¹ and 110² cameras of the 60 & 70's, and the latest incarnation in the idea that George Eastman brought to the Western world way back in the 1900's "you press the button we do the rest"³. Many, many, family histories have been recorded using these small cameras, not so many serious bodies of work though. I am at a loss at the moment to remember anyone who has used a 126 or equivalent to produce a serious body of work however, and I don't consider Lartigue⁴ a candidate here as cameras were still in the realm of the wealthy middle and upper classes of his time.

*"...cameraphones, last year [2005] outsold digital still cameras by a ratio of six to one. While many were busy passing off the "fad" of cameraphones, and scoffing at a paucity of pixels, phone manufacturers were busy packing more into less..."*⁵

Has anything changed since then that would allow people to make and record their lives differently? Well computers and the internet have impacted dramatically, the way folks capture and share images, these cameras are more than perfect for recording family histories, and small and easy enough to share almost immediately. With most people's expectations of these images being along the lines of, can I see what is important, faces scenery etc, these cameras then serve this function well under the right conditions, outdoors in bright sun for example. They are then able to say to themselves, "I'll send it or have it printed for my Mum/Aunty/Friend". This is often the mark of successful photography so long as the important stuff is recognisable we are happy.

Such is the proliferation of these small cameras, that no longer do you even need a computer to "output", most photo labs, in Melbourne anyway, have the ability to accept all sizes and shapes of memory cards to enable printing from any cameras including phone cameras or accept blue-tooth⁶ file transfers. So already we have the ability to not only electronically share our phone camera images but now print them out using traditional min-lab i.e., produce small prints.

I believe that electronic sharing of these images is more than enough to justify their use, the proliferation of photo sharing sites out there along with websites interested in the idea of alternative image making means a body of work can be produced and shared easily and quickly with as many like-minded people as you can find. Provided you accept the limitations of these cameras, and plenty of limitations they have.

So what other things can we do with these cameras? Well unless you are prepared to accept great seas of digital artefacts and horrendous lens aberrations, it's highly unlikely that you will be making 1 meter wide prints and exhibiting them, if on the other hand you are happy with a small print there are some other options outside of online publishing. With access to any desktop publishing software and a decent quality printer, you can print your own cards and books thus adding some meaning to the work you are making using these discrete little cameras. Possibly even creating a level of revenue that could justify the time and effort spent on printing them. There are even several online services that allow you to upload and publish, books cards and calendars, to an online store. This is based on the premise of a small book as file sizes are still on the low side to make anything bigger than 6 inches by 4 inches. This year however Nokia has introduced a 5 mega-pixel phone camera, it will however still be beyond the reach of the average Australian consumer for a while yet as it retails currently for £400.00⁷, Samsung and LG also have competing size cameras.

Footnotes

1. **126**, a film format popular in the 1960's & 70's. In 1963, [Kodak](#) introduced a new film, encased in a plastic cartridge, for which they re-introduced the "126" designation. The term "126" was intended to show that images were 26mm square, using Kodak's common 1xx film numbering system. However the image size is actually 28 x 28 mm, but usually reduced to 26.5 x 26.5 mm by masking., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/126_film
2. **110**, The 110 cartridge format is a miniaturised version of Kodak's earlier, highly successful [126](#) format. The image is 13x17 [millimetres](#), with one [registration hole](#). The film is fully housed in a plastic cartridge, which also registers the image when the film is advanced. There is a continuous backing paper, and the frame number and film type are visible through a window at the rear of the cartridge. The film does not need to be rewound and is very simple to load and unload. It is pre-exposed with frame lines and numbers, a feature intended to make it easier and more efficient for photofinishers to print. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/110_film
3. **George Eastman**, ([July 12, 1854](#) – [March 14, 1932](#)) founded the [Eastman Kodak](#) Company and invented [roll film](#), helping to bring [photography](#) to the mainstream. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Eastman
4. **Jacques Henri Lartigue** ([June 13, 1894](#) - [September 12, 1986](#)) was a [French photographer](#) and [painter](#). Born in [Courbevoie](#) (a city outside of [Paris](#)), he is most famous for his stunning photos of [automobile races](#), planes and fashionable Parisian women from the turn of the century. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Henri_Lartigue
5. Digital lab ideas: Australian-based Hutt Street Photos reaps the harvest of cameraphone prints. (RETAILING): An article from: Photo Marketing [HTML] (Digital) by [Shiela Pursglove](#) (Author)
6. **Bluetooth** is an industrial specification for wireless [personal area networks](#) (PANs). Bluetooth provides a way to connect and exchange information between devices such as [mobile phones](#), [laptops](#), [PCs](#), [printers](#), [digital cameras](#), and [video game consoles](#) over a secure, globally unlicensed short-range [radio frequency](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluetooth>
7. <http://www.nseries.com/index.html#l=home>

To help you think about, what you're mobile phone camera can and can't do here's a table I've compiled, hopefully I covered everything?

Pro	Con
Small, goes everywhere.	Small size means small CCD, means small file size/s may inhibit output options. Also means large D.O.F.
Discrete, able to be used anywhere the user feels morally comfortable.	Certain social situations may not be the right place to make an image. Who draws this line?
Able to be sent anywhere anytime.	Costs could become prohibitive, if not used wisely, not supported by all telephony providers.
Instant feedback.	Critical self-evaluation of images not encouraged.*
Almost infinite Depth of Field.	Poor Lens quality.
Wide Angle lens, wider angle of view than the human eye.	Wide Angle lens, wider angle of view than the human eye, requires skillful use and operation in terms of composition.
Zoom is digital.	Limited Zoom is digital resulting in high levels of digital noise.
Unpredictable results, giving weird colours strange movement and noise and blur.	Unpredictable results, may not be desirable depending on users aesthetic.
Unpredictable results.	No technical controls, f stops shutter speeds etc.
Limited choices means image maker must think hard about how to make a good image, without relying on zooming etc.	Limited accessory range.
Can be used anywhere where there is light.	Requires ample light, unless user can accept high levels of digital noise.

**This actually applies to all digital camera users and is some ways the most difficult of skills to acquire.*

Other uses*

Documenting

Remember where you parked - In a parking lot or garage, snap a photo of the section where you've parked. If you're parked on the street in a strange neighborhood, grab a picture of an address, a landmark, or of the signs for the cross street.

"Wishlist" items you might want to buy later - If you're out and about and happen to see a CD, book, or other consumable you might want to pick up later on, snap a photo of the item's barcode. When you get home you can look the item up on Amazon or Froogle.com and find the best price, or just add it to your canonical online wishlist.

Show people where you've put things - If you've moved the mayonnaise jar with little Tyler's college money or relocated the good scissors to your work bench, snap a photo and mail it to your housemates.

Document your fender bender - If you get hit by another car (and once you're safely off the road), take a few fast photos of the damage as well as the other driver's tag and operator's license.

Record the hours of a new store - New dry cleaner or Thai restaurant you want to try? Grab a photo of the hours.

Capture inspiring design - See a poster, interior, or typeface you particularly like? Grab a snapshot and use it for later inspiration, research, or as part of a mood board.

Hunt for houses and apartments - If you're looking at potential apartments or a new house, get photos of the kitchen, the bedrooms—even the view from out of some windows.

Double-check your shopping selection - Can't remember whether you were supposed to pick up 5 10-penny nails or 10 5-penny nails? Send a photo to the one who sent you on the errand, and have them approve your purchase by return call or IM.

Document your haircut - Snap a few photos of a haircut that turned out well. Get the front, the sides, and the back, and make sure to note the name of the operator. Ask them to describe how to ask for this haircut again, and type it up wherever you're storing the photo, online or otherwise.

Carry your To-do list - If you're traveling particularly light one day and just have a couple things to remember while you're out, jot the tasks, phone numbers, or what have you on a sheet of paper, photograph it, and you're done.

More? * <http://www.43folders.com/2005/09/21/how-do-you-get-creative-with-your-phonecam/>

More Resources?

<http://www.bjp-online.com/public/showPage.html?page=196993>