



KONICA MINOLTA

Since Konica Minolta Europe is constantly receiving many requests for updates about the development status of the Dynax 7 Digital, Clemens Helberg, Marketing Manager from Konica Minolta Europe, has gained more information from the Japanese Development Centre.

He was able to ask Keiichi Ishizuka, General Manager of the Konica Minolta Development Center most of the questions posed by registered users of the Konica Minolta Photo World website.

Mr. Helberg asked questions about the most important features of the Dynax 7 Digital, the changes that have been made since the presentation of the mock-up model at the PMA show in February and the new lens lineup for the camera.



Keiichi Ishizuka



Clemens Helberg

Helberg: Is it certain that the Dynax 7 Digital will be released this autumn? Many of our customers seem to be concerned, since Konica Minolta has remained quiet for five months after the development announcement at the PMA show.

Ishizuka: We were not able to mention the exact month that it will be in stores, because, at the time of development announcement, the product schedule is changing too fast to be certain.

Helberg: So you mean the product will come out in autumn.

Ishizuka: The full product introduction is to be closely timed to coincide with Photokina 2004. Both development and production departments are under strong pressure to ship the product as soon after this time as possible, before the end of this year at least.



KONICA MINOLTA

Changes from the PMA mock-up

Helberg: The mock-up model at the PMA show featured an eye-sensor below the viewfinder. Is this still present on the final version?

Ishizuka: Yes, and we have made some minor design alterations after receiving several positive opinions from onlookers of the PMA mock-up model.

Helberg: How about the control dial layout?

Ishizuka: Generally no radical changes have been made. The mock-up model is based on near final basic concept. Our base concept for this Digital SLR is "Dynax 7", so this digital version aims to replicate the original film camera design ethic closely. Whilst unchanged in concept, the Dynax 7 Digital will have differences, especially when examined closely.

Mr. Ishizuka reveals an Anti-shake Demonstration display unit; the CCD is shifting by more than 1 cm.

Helberg: The built-in CCD Shift-type Anti-Shake function is one of the most interesting points of specification. Will this be the World's first to claim this feature this type of camera.

Ishizuka: Yes, we believe so. Let me show you how it works. The block here is the Anti-Shake mechanism unit for the DiIMAGE A2. The Anti-Shake method used within the new Digital SLR is almost the same as this however, its CCD weight is 3 times heavier, it has to be shifted within a range 4 times wider, by a speed 4 times faster than in the DiIMAGE A series models.



KONICA MINOLTA

Helberg: The CCD size is stunningly different. I see a gap between the CCD and the circuit board. Is this the range the CCD moves within?

Ishizuka: Yes, almost. I can move it manually. See?

Helberg: It moves that much?

Ishizuka: Yes. The range of movement is determined by taking many factors into consideration, such as limitations resulting from electrical control or production.

Helberg: It's amazing. It's much wider than expected. I was thinking it would be only a few millimeters.

Ishizuka: No. We can make it move more than 1 cm.

Helberg: Moving such a large CCD requires extreme flatness to keep focus accuracy, doesn't it?

Ishizuka: Yes, exactly. The adjustment has to be done very precisely. The same quality control process was also required on the DiMAGE A2. Because of its smaller size, any subtle unevenness can greatly affect to focus accuracy. Thus, we designed the mechanism to minimise the difference.

Helberg: It is often a concern of Digital SLR users that dust on the CCD can cause a problem. Is it possible to shake off the dust with the Anti-Shake function?

Ishizuka: The mechanism for CCD shift type Anti-Shake is not for dust reduction, however we tested to check its effect for dust reduction. We concluded that it's not suitable to use it as a dust reduction feature. Instead we will employ anti-statistic treatment for parts used inside, like a shutter unit.



KONICA MINOLTA

Expectations for new lens lineup

Helberg: It was announced all lenses are enabled the Anti-Shake function. Is the AF500mm f8 Reflex included too?

Ishizuka: Yes, we aim to incorporate that lens. We haven't fully completed the compatibility testing yet, but logically it is proven suitable. To confirm the operation with an actual body and entire Dynax lens range is a considerable task, this is being undertaken at the moment.

Helberg: Indeed, the expectations for this camera add to its appeal, with the wide variety of lenses as if being equipped with an Anti-Shake system. Although the conventional lenses are all useable, we still expect some new lenses exclusively designed for the Dynax 7 Digital. Are there any plans in the Development Centre for lenses optimised for the APS-C size imaging circle to get the best image?

Ishizuka: Our lenses are compatible with both conventional film and digital cameras at present, and it is natural to expect that such lenses form part of our plan. We will try to release some information as soon as possible. Within the premise that many of our consumers still enjoy conventional film SLR photography, we have to offer the best product line-up. There is an idea for the future, that for customers of Digital SLRs we will propose an exclusively designed APS based platform lenses that bring benefits for their size, weight and so on.



KONICA MINOLTA

Unification of Konica and Minolta

Helberg: Colour reproduction and Image Processing are important factors in digital photography. Our customers expect something superior from Konica Minolta, with the integration of traditional film manufacturer and camera manufacturer, in comparison to other manufacturers. Do you have any specific objectives in regard to this?

Ishizuka: Let me point out that in our plan, Dynax 7 Digital will be a stepping-stone toward our goal that I think may require three years to achieve. Amongst many factors, image accuracy lies on not only Firmware, but also hardware design.

Helberg: Yes.

Ishizuka: What we would like to realise with this first generation digital SLR is, to fuse two different colour reproduction methods, one from a film manufacturer and another from a camera maker, then to create a new value. Two members from legacy Konica team have joined the colour management team that was in place before the merger. Intense discussions are taking place all the time.

Helberg: Have there been disagreements?

Ishizuka: Yes, naturally. Their way of thinking is totally different. The principals may be different from both platforms, but the end result needs to be the same. It is rewarding for team members to ensure that the end result is as accurate as possible. All staff members are investigating both pros and cons, and working together to create a new value that neither Konica nor Minolta could solely achieve.

Helberg: Can you please specify the difference in respect of colour reproduction?

Ishizuka: The major difference lies between “colours of nature” and “colours in the users memory”. Camera manufacturers, especially legacy Minolta, used to reproduce colours with fidelity, while film suppliers seem to strongly emphasise colours in the users memory, or the visual impressions that people recall. We are studying the method of colour accuracy that results from the integration of those two aspects. We are using a panel of external experts who are able to judge things objectively.



KONICA MINOLTA

Helberg: What Colourspace do you plan to adopt, sRGB and Adobe RGB?

Ishizuka: Hmm. We cannot say with absolute certainty at present, however, we are ready to respond to the general needs and expectations of the market.

Helberg: Do you plan to create new Colourspaces?

Ishizuka: Colourspace affects not only the colours but also entire image specifications. It also impacts on other camera operation systems.

Helberg: To speak of “colours of nature” and “colours in the users memory”, RAW file format must be indispensable. Can we expect this to also be incorporated?

Ishizuka: Yes, but at this time the exact specification cannot be disclosed. We aim to ensure that users gain maximum satisfaction using it. Between now and launch we have only to refine it. The Technological study has been completed, and the target is clearly defined, we are working hard to achieve our target.

Helberg: What other specification aspects can you reveal?

Ishizuka: These remain embargoed until the product launch.

Helberg: Please.

Ishizuka: I feel image quality is a factor that most represents Konica Minolta, as an integrated company. Konica, an expert in colour reproduction with a long history in film manufacturing, is only satisfied by the same high quality results from digital. Minolta, has the same expectations, beyond being a leader in photo imaging it has also been studying colour for instruments, e.g. colour meters. We are able to offer products drawing on the expertise of both companies established strengths.



KONICA MINOLTA

Not EVF, or Monitor based Live View?

Helberg: One of the main advantages of a film SLR camera is the optical viewfinder. Are you going to use the optical viewfinder for your Digital SLR camera?

Ishizuka: Konica Minolta has not specified thus far. However the answer is simple, as it succeeds the concept of the Dynax 7. Generally for SLRs, the clarity of the optical viewfinder is one of the selling points.

Helberg: So, could a monitor based live-view be an option for your future Digital SLR development?

Ishizuka: Looking towards future developments, live-view function is a major possibility for digital SLR, which requires alliance with a suitable device supplier.

Helberg: Then, you have not given up on the possibility.

Ishizuka: We would not be positive about utilizing an EVF, but the live-view is a possible feature for our future digital SLR development.

Helberg: Konica Minolta has achieved many advancements in the refinements of the EVF quality through models of the DiMAGE 7 and DiMAGE A series. Even though this concept will be not continued in the digital SLR, there are expectations of Konica Minolta about the viewfinder quality.

Ishizuka: The product concept decides the specification. For instance, if someone wants to create a new interchangeable lens digital camera with a totally different concept, the specification will change. If thinking of the best solution, you firstly have to think how it will benefit our customers.



KONICA MINOLTA

Helberg: That's right. As long as it fits within the Dynax brand, it must be a camera that conventional Dynax users wish for, and the Anti-Shake and other beneficial functions adds value. Consumers are happy with their Dynax.

Ishizuka: Yes, that is what we aim to achieve. We have achieved good reputations for Dynax 7 and 9. Thanks in part for its viewfinder quality, and consider it very important to do the same with this digital SLR. Konica Minolta aims to give priority to the intended photographers requirements. We always want we improve through communication with our customers to decide our direction.

Pricing

Helberg: Over the past year, the inexpensive Digital SLRs increased share in the market, and more models are expected to join in this autumn. Which price range do you target for the Dynax 7 Digital?

Ishizuka: Sorry, whilst we understand that this is a matter of great interest to the reader it is an exceptionally sensitive matter within the market. The main aim of this camera is to provide good value for money, through offering excellent picture quality, and to satisfy customers who enjoy using well-engineered cameras and producing outstanding images. The price will be reflective of the market conditions for products of this status and specification, our exclusive feature is Anti-Shake.

Helberg: There was display material at the PMA show, in which the Dynax 7 Digital features with other SLRs behind it. Do you plan announcing more models in future?

Ishizuka: You have excellent vision; it is fair to say that the Dynax 7 Digital is the first of a new generation of Digital SLR cameras. But the timing of any future introductions cannot be discussed. The Digital SLR market cannot withstand the rate of replacement nor the mass of products that operate within the digital compact market.



KONICA MINOLTA

Since the announcement of the camera at the PMA, there has been no official information added to the initial information.

That Mr Ishizuka released this much information to Mr Helberg, is in our opinion evidence that the development is making fast progress.

The interview provided new facts about the Dynax 7 Digital, but also clarified two rumours about the Dynax 7 Digital that have been circulating. Firstly, the live view of the Dynax 7 Digital and if Konica Minolta is currently planning to release new models in the future.

Now it is certain that Konica Minolta is planning to release even more Digital SLR models in the future.

We are now even more convinced that the Dynax 7 Digital will be an outstanding camera, after learning about the preferences that Konica Minolta has in respect to the target group of the camera.

We can be looking forwards with great excitement!