

## The Death of the Compact Camera

Much has been made of the rise of cellphone cameras and mobile photography in general over the past few years. First, with skepticism and thinly-veiled mockery, and gradually with growing interest and even some semi-respectable gallery shows (though a few less-than-respectable ones, included a curated selection of Instagram photos that weren't even taken by the artist which is of dubious artistic merit). Finally, though, we're starting to see the end result of this process, something that probably hadn't occurred to most of us - at least, most of us who don't manufacture cameras: the death of the compact camera.

The compact camera has a long and storied history, dating back to the early 1900s and the Eastman-Kodak Company. With what was arguably the first 'compact' camera, the Brownie, Eastman-Kodak completely revolutionized the field of photography, and created the concept of the snapshot. Instead of being complicated devices that could only be operated by professionals dedicated to their craft, the camera and photography itself was suddenly within the reach of the average person. This set off a massive demand for the little cameras, and the Brownie continued to sell for decades, although it was of course gradually improved as the technology advanced.

Cellphone cameras have taken that to the next level, however, and completely removed the need for a separate camera unit. Gone are the days of grainy, single megapixel (or less!) cameras that were more of a novelty than an actually usable product. Instead, we're faced with cellphone cameras that have megapixel counts rivalling that of most compact cameras, and in some cases, some of the entry level and semi-professional digital SLR cameras as well. The only thing that's really lacking in the cellphone camera market is the lenses, although various third-party aftermarket lenses can be purchased by anyone looking to improve this side of things. The downside, of course, is that at some point, the light still has to pass through the built-in lens, generally to poor effect.

What this all means, though, is that the compact camera is essentially on its way out. Sales in 2014 were the worst in many years, and this trend is likely to continue as cellphone manufacturers continue to push the envelope when it comes to their cameras, as they do with all elements of smartphones. It seems likely, though, that the only people who have a problem with this are the camera manufacturers themselves. Maybe we'll see a Canon- or Nikon-branded phone sometime soon - that'd be a treat.