

MINOLTA CREATES NEW DIGITAL CAMERAS BASED ON WORLDWIDE STUDY OF CONSUMER NEEDS

New York City/San Francisco (May 23, 2001) – When Minolta set out to revamp their digital still camera product line, they wanted to create products that were revolutionary, products without peers or compromise, products that would change the way that people look at digital photography. In order to accomplish these goals, Minolta launched an exhaustive worldwide study that encompassed not only what consumers thought of digital photography, but also what they wanted to accomplish as serious photographers – no matter what the medium.

“Any competent manufacturer can make a digital camera,” said Brian Miller, vice president of marketing, Consumer Products Group, Minolta Corporation. “We wanted to make a digital Camera, with a capital ‘C’. We learned that there’s a big difference between making a device that can capture an image for e-mail and creating an instrument for real photography. And therein lies the difference between our new cameras and others: a unique understanding of not just what makes a great product, but what it takes to make a great picture.”

“On the face of it, the DiMAGE 7, DiMAGE 5 and the DiMAGE S304 are breakthroughs on their specifications alone,” said Miller. “With the DiMAGE 7, quite simply, there isn’t another five megapixel camera on the market today that can be sold at such an affordable price. Combine that with a 7X zoom and an innovative viewfinder, and you have a very exciting product. However, there’s more to our new cameras than specifications. There’s philosophy as well as science. Our new digital cameras allow our customers to explore their own creativity through the integration of advanced technology, the human interface and solid product design.”

According to Minolta’s research, although digital cameras have entered the mainstream, they have had to do so with a great deal of compromise. While it’s clear that consumers love the speed and immediacy of digital photography, digital cameras lacked many of the key qualities of traditional film cameras such as image quality, high-grade optics, and flexibility and creativity enhancing features that film camera users have grown to expect as standards. The new DiMAGE series guiding principle was to create a digital camera without compromise.

Minolta has discovered that there is a very strong correlation between consumers who have a strong intent to buy a digital camera and single lens reflex (SLR) film camera ownership. Over 60 percent of current digital camera owners also own a film SLR camera. Not surprisingly, SLR owners wanted features in a digital camera that were basic to their film camera, but they were also aware that these features were not available at an acceptable price, if at all. Further 30 percent of digital camera owners, even recent purchasers, planned to upgrade soon. This figure rose to 39 percent of those who owned two and three megapixel digital cameras.

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The new Minolta DiMAGE series of digital cameras, particularly the DiMAGE 7 and DiMAGE 5, were designed to meet the specifications for an "ideal digital camera" as identified in the survey:

- Be camera-like in operation, look and feel.
- Have high levels of basic performance, such as autofocus (AF) speed.
- Be simple to operate, yet have options for creative photography, much as in the AF SLR camera category.
- Have a wide variety of manual settings for shutter speeds and exposure.
- Have the ability to use system accessories such as filters and flash systems.
- Have high optical quality, including wide zoom options with or without interchangeable lenses.
- Be relatively affordable.

"Consumers were acutely aware that there was no product on the market that would meet these needs," said Miller. "Everything was a compromise in some respect, whether it be price, performance, ergonomics or flexibility. Today, all of that changes with the introduction of the DiMAGE 7 – a true digital camera without compromise. And with the addition of the DiMAGE 5 and DiMAGE S304, for the first time we can say with confidence, we have a line of products that make real photography in a digital format available to our customers."

Minolta Corporation

Minolta Corporation, headquartered in Ramsey, New Jersey, is the largest subsidiary of Minolta Co. Ltd. of Osaka, Japan, a leading manufacturer of cameras, business equipment, radiometric instruments and planetariums. Minolta Corporation's Consumer Products Group (CPG) markets 35mm film and Advanced Photo System cameras, digital cameras, binoculars, accessory lenses, photographic light meters, 35mm and Advanced Photo System film scanners and other consumer products. Minolta is the exclusive distributor of *Cokin* filters.

The corporation's Business Products Group (BPG) markets digital and analog office equipment. Products include black-and-white copiers, digital black and white printer/copiers, plain-paper laser facsimile machines, digital color printer/copiers, micrographic systems, document management software, and related office equipment.

For more information, visit Minolta's Web site located at www.minoltausa.com or access Minolta's PHOTOFAX at 800-528-4767.

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Contact Information:

Steve Rosenbaum/Leigh Grimm
S.I.R. Marketing Communications, Inc.
631-757-5665
sir@sironline.com

Jeannine Bogedal
Minolta Corporation
201-934-5220
jbogedal@minolta.com

Leo Derkowski/Shannon Tramacera, APR
Marketing Communications Connection
518-477-2575
mcc@marcomcon.com