

Will the lockdown of the photo industry ever end?

Camera makers without visions

EDITORIAL



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The figures on the camera market in 2020 published by the Japanese industry association CIPA on the occasion of the digital CP+ show a terrible picture of our industry: Only 8.9 million cameras were shipped last year, 59 percent less than the year before. In view of the Corona pandemic and the related canceled events, vacations and trips, this is no surprise, but it is still bad. Even worse: Those who had hoped that, as the last remaining photo fair with global awareness, the digital edition of the Japanese CP+ would provide new ideas to the industry, were bitterly disappointed.

After Fujifilm had already launched its X-E4 and GFX100S and Sony its Alpha 1 – certainly a highlight – in January, the only camera introduction at CP+ was the Canon EOS M50 Mark II. In fact, it is another nice system camera for vloggers, but definitely not an innovation that could escort the photo retailers out of the Corona crisis. The other note-

worthy new products were a dozen or so lenses plus a semi-professional video camera (from Sony). What a disaster!

With this “trade show”, CIPA, as the organizer of CP+, has made a clear statement that it has no desire to close the gap that photokina has left behind in the international imaging trade fair landscape. This was not only made clear by the miserable number of novelties. Even worse was the demonstrative uninspiredness with which the camera manufacturers attended the online fair (the phrase “presented themselves” would be a lie). The 20 “exhibitors” at CP+, which included all the big names such as Canon, Epson, Fujifilm, Nikon, Olympus (OM Digital Solutions), Panasonic, Ricoh, Sony and Tamron, did not set up digital exhibition stands, but instead launched dedicated websites for CP+. Believe it or not, all of them – with the exception of Fujifilm – were in Japanese. This also applied to the supporting program with workshops and lectures. A panel discussion featuring top engineers from the development departments – Japanese, a CIPA seminar on the digital camera market – Japanese.

And then there was the opening keynote. It was delivered by CIPA President Masaya Maeda, who resigned from the Office of President and COO of Canon Corporation due to health reasons last year. He

spoke – in Japanese, of course – on the exciting subject of “The past, present and future of sports photography”. What was announced as English subtitles comprised two to three lines each for two to three minutes of speaking. The exciting insights you could understand from them was that sports photography began in the 19th century and it still exists today. That is, according to Maeda, because the camera manufacturers remain committed to support sports photographers in capturing fascinating moments. This statement, which would have been every year, if not every second since the 19th century as true as it is today, was the only vision of the future imaging industry the Japanese camera industry had to offer at CP+. Embarrassing!

Despite the collapsing camera market, picture taking and filming are as popular with consumers as never before. As a result, more and more events and festivals are organized around the world to get people excited about taking and enjoying pictures. The Japanese camera industry should understand that there is a simple recipe for success: If you want to get people excited about your products, you need to be enthusiastic yourself first.

That is why my wish for the manufacturers in Japan is: get well (and enthusiastic) soon!