

The First Digital Camera - Steven Sasson

Steven Sasson is the inventor of the first digital camera.

He was born on July 4, 1950, and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Electrical Engineering in 1973. In his first job, the young American engineer found himself working for Eastman Kodak, a household brand with a virtual monopoly on the photography market.

A Supervisor at work assigned the 24-year-old engineer to build an electronic camera; a self-contained (portable) camera. One year later, he delivered it, and it was as big as a toaster weighing 3.6 kilos or nearly 8 pounds! The pictures were black and white and it took 23 seconds to process the image. Sasson's camera was not the first to produce digital images, but it was the first hand-held digital camera.

His supervisor and the technical people at Kodak loved his camera but company executives were not impressed. Seeing the digital camera as a competitor to their own film products, rather than the future of photography, Kodak chose not to pursue it.

Of course, in those days there were no mobile phones, no internet, and most TVs were still in black and white and computers were the size of houses. Kodak was not the only company that was not ready for what was to come; Polaroid, Blockbuster Videos and many more didn't keep up with innovation. The mighty Eastman Kodak filed for bankruptcy in 2012. In its heights, the company had over 80% of the market in the US and 60% of the world market.

Steven Sasson believed in the potential of his invention and went on to greener pastures. In 2009, US President Barack Obama awarded Steven Sasson with the National Medal of Technology and Innovation at a ceremony in the White House. This is the highest honor awarded by the US government to scientists, engineers, and inventors.

The Economist also presented Mr. Sasson with an Innovation Award in 2009, commending the "seismic disruption" his invention caused in the field of consumer photography.

Steven Sasson lives in the United States, and in 2011 he was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

[In this link you can see a short video of Steven Sasson talking about his invention.](#)