

## The End of the POLAROID Epoch

Even Polaroid's own website confirms that manufacture of the wide variety of Polaroid instant films is winding up during 2008. The last coating of the professional pack films are taking place in the first months of the year, and with normal consumption turnaround will have reached their final rest in the market place by the end of the year.

The saddest aspect of this is the loss of the largest part of the legacy of Edwin Land. In a life combining ferocious scientific research with extraordinary entrepreneurial genius Land altered the photographic landscape in all areas from artistic to industrial.

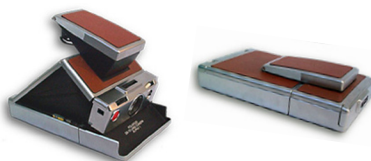


The name 'Polaroid' was originally coined to market the innovative light polarising film researched by Land in the pre-war years. This was envisaged to be adopted as a way of cancelling out car headlight glare, which was a major cause of death on the US roads.

The US administration and the automobile industry failed to seize the opportunity to make use of the anti-glare system - there was no quick and easy way to convert some 30 million older cars. However the name was firmly embedded, and became synonymous with the instant camera and film systems Land introduced after the war.

From the first sepia black and white peel-apart in 1948, through the intensive effort to move this forward into peel-apart colour, Land rode a wave of innovation coupled with successful marketing that made Polaroid a household name. The pinnacle was achieved in 1972 with the successful placement of SX70, the first fully encapsulated one-step colour print material.

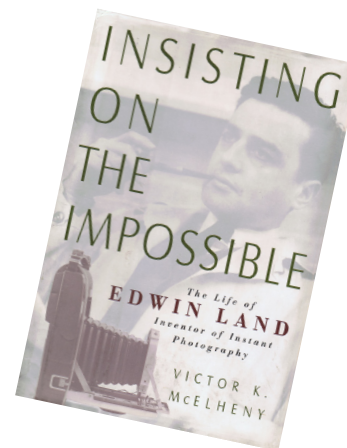
Perhaps no other innovation in silver-based photography could ever, or will ever be on a level with SX70. It was an edifice of design breakthrough, from the incredibly complex folding SLR optics right down to the 125nm fluorocarbon coating on the polyester print viewing cover.



The success of instant photography paved the way for the takeup of the digital chip into imaging territory, and in 1982 the new Apple Mac was given Polaroid-style marketing treatment. Land's major failure, the launch of Polavision in 1978 signalled the start of this crossover. Polavision was an 8mm additive cine process, which had to be processed within its viewer. The film & equipment was expensive, the film could not be edited, and there was no sound capability.

Polavision completely bombed, and out of 200,000 sets manufactured, maybe only 60,000 were sold, into a marketplace which was just starting to receive VHS video equipment. Land was asked to leave his own company. The wave that had carried Polaroid for decades was beginning to subside, and by the time Land died in 1991 Intel was starting to use his own techniques for achieving supremacy in microprocessor chip-building.

So this year clean the rollers in your Polaroid back, and shoot some frames of Polaroid film, in salutation to the passing of the work of Edwin Land - a scientist & entrepreneur who probably did more in his life to wrest the seemingly impossible from the remarkable silver halides than any other innovator in the history of photography.



There have been a number of books chronicling the Polaroid history, but none approaches the exhaustive work published in 1998 by Victor K McElheny, 'Insisting on the Impossible'.

Now available in a paperback print-on-demand format, we have laid in a good supply of copies. Covering such topics as Land's involvement in WW2 armaments, the U2 spy plane controversy and spy satellites, full of fascinating technical detail, 500 pages for only £12.99! (P&P £3.00 on this title.)

[WWW.SILVERPRINT.CO.UK](http://WWW.SILVERPRINT.CO.UK)



Full details of everything we offer, now standing at about 500 web-pages, not to mention downloadable PDF's etc. Mail-order from the site, or come & visit us in Waterloo.

Silverprint Ltd  
12 Valentine Place, London  
SE1 8QH  
tel 020 7620 0844