

GigaPan technology can capture a crowd in detail

October 20 2011, By Mark W. Smith

The next time you head out to the concert event of the year - or even a sporting event - make sure you're well-coiffed and ready for your close-up.

Interactive panoramic images that can capture an entire crowd of people in incredibly fine detail have become the latest trend in digital event keepsakes.

U2 captured each crowd on the U.S. leg of its U2 360° tour this year using a system called the GigaPixel FanCam. The Detroit Tigers have used a technology called the GigaPan to capture crowds at a handful of games this summer.

After the concert or game, fans can head to the Web and zoom in on that night's GigaPan and play a bit of Where's Waldo, finding themselves and adding their name to the image.

The interactive images work by stitching together hundreds of photos into one sweeping 360-degree look at the crowd. Each GigaPan contains billions of pixels.

It takes about 20 minutes for a single photographer to capture all the images needed for the GigaPans, said Matthew Gould, vice president of communications for Major League Baseball Advanced Media.

The GigaPan project was developed as a partnership between Carnegie

Mellon University, NASA and Google. A host of GigaPan images from around the world can be seen at gigapan.org.

For the MLB, the GigaPans started as an experiment during last year's playoff games.

"We're always looking at ways to use technology to deepen the connection the fans have to the ballpark and to the team," Gould says.

This year, each of the postseason MLB games will be recorded with a [GigaPan](#), so chances are Comerica Park will be seeing more of them this fall.

Reactions to the GigaPans often range from awe over the incredible detail of the images to a bit of Big Brother trepidation.

Both the U2 and Tigers implementations of the technology allow for a couple of safeguards to ensure someone's name isn't added to the image without their consent.

For the [U2](#) concert images, friends could tag other people, but an e-mail would have to be sent to each of the tagged people so they could approve their name's addition.

The MLB system, called Tagoramic, uses Facebook integration to tag the photos, but allows users to tag only the names of people that have already used the service and given permission for that to happen.

Fans may notice some bugs, though, where the individual [images](#) are stitched together without 100-percent precision. Some fans may show up with a missing arm or, worse, a missing head.

Others may find themselves absent if they were on a concession stand

run or otherwise on the move.

The overall result, though, is an incredible look at almost every face in the crowd with some of those faces identified soon after the event.

"You see it really taking hold on those types of events where fans really want to have that memory for their lifetime," Gould says.

Do consider this another reason, though, not to lie about where you're headed after work.

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