

Tech nostalgia on show at Berlin's IFA

September 3 2018, by Daphne Rousseau



The Polaroid camera, an almost forgotten vestige from the pre-digital era, is back on display at Berlin's IFA tech show

For many consumers, rewinding cassettes, carefully placing a needle on a record or shaking dry a Polaroid photo may all feel like long-forgotten gestures from a bygone era.

But they're everywhere to be seen again at Berlin's IFA tech show, albeit

it with an unmistakable digital touch.

The "new trends" section of the fair, which often showcases upcoming Christmas-season blockbusters, is dominated by a stand belonging to Polaroid, the household-name camera firm that not so long ago appeared near death.

Known as the One Step+, the snapper looks exactly like a traditional Polaroid from the outside—but offers Bluetooth connectivity to sync up with Android and iPhone apps.

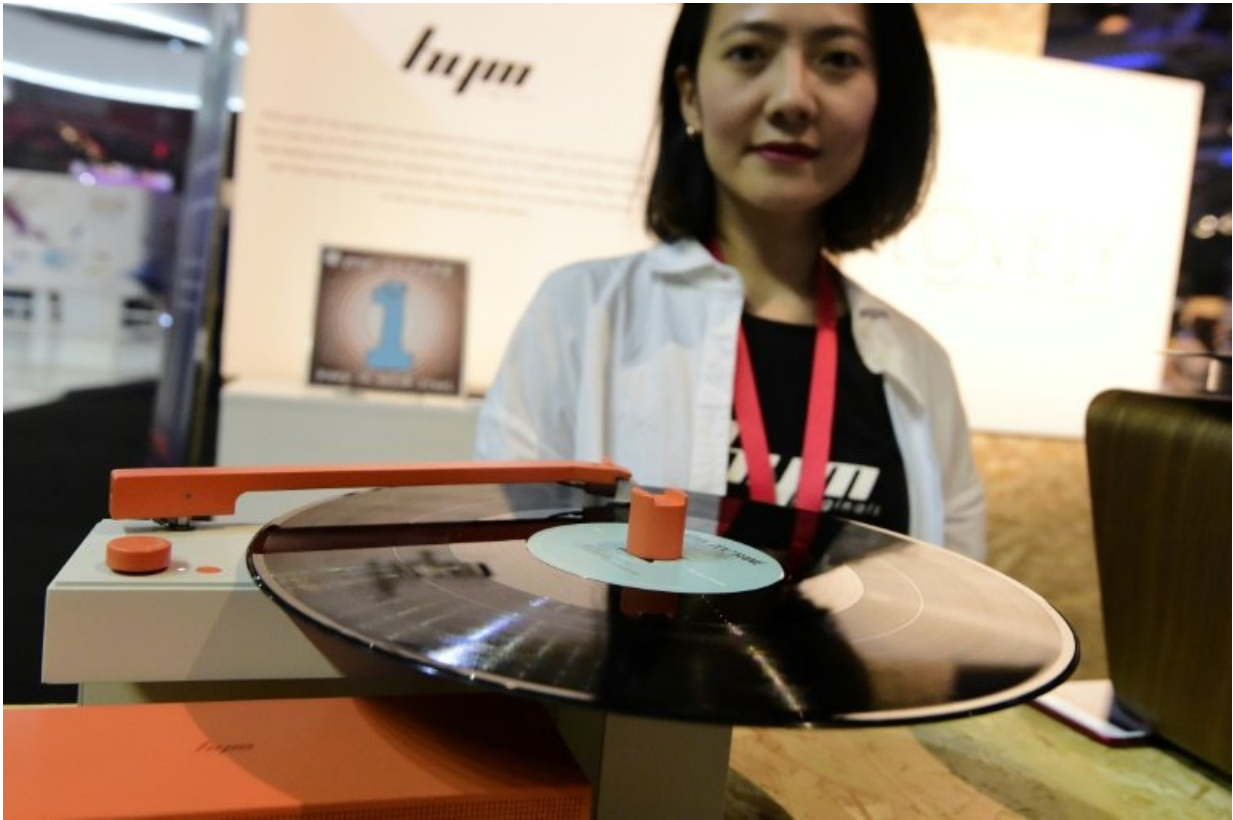
Competitor Kodak also has an instant camera, the Printomatic, on offer, claiming less than 40 seconds to develop a photo in colour or black-and-white.

"For the new generation, it's totally new. They have no idea how to take a picture like this, without a screen, or to wait a week for it to get developed", said Polaroid spokesman Tobias Henze.

Unlike digital photos trapped under smartphone glass, "you can frame it, put it on the wall, offer it or put it in a scrapbook," he points out.

Audiostalgia

In the music world, audio purists and those looking for a more "instagrammable" way to listen are met with ever more options for playing cassettes and vinyl records.



Portable record turntables are making a comeback, too

Manufacturers have hard data to back up their turn to the past, with 33 RPM discs accounting for some 14 percent of US album sales in 2017, compared with 11 percent the previous year.

That's why IFA visitors can lust after Yamaha's Vinyl 500 turntable, which nods to modernity with a Wifi connection that also allows users to stream music.

Meanwhile, a slew of startups offer portable turntables that can be lugged around in a satchel or even clipped onto the edge of a speaker or a shelf.

For those with enormous digital collections, Sony vaunts the ability of its DMP-Z1 player—priced at \$13,000—to restore the sound quality and audio "grain" of a vinyl pressing.

Debate may rage forever in the audiophile world about whether the traditional discs truly offer superior sound.

But the trend towards the black record is firmly established across Europe, with small-scale publishers popping up in disused factory buildings across the continent.

Outside the air-conditioned halls of the IFA, hip young Berliners are spoiled for choice among shops offering vinyls and cassettes.

"Old formats, in audio, video, photo negatives or records have a very large user base, almost 50 percent of the market," says Klaus Boehm, of consultancy Deloitte.

"Our multimedia use will coexist in the coming years with these older formats, and I'd advise people not to throw away their old devices," he cautioned.

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