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TECHNOLOGY > Personal Tech

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Camera phones let users share lives

Suddenly, those "Hmm, that's sort of neat" moments can be sent out to the whole world.

April 7, 2004: 10:19 AM EDT

NEW YORK (Reuters) - When mobile phones meld with instant photography, new ways of viewing everyday life emerge.

As cameras become standard features on mobile phones, millions of users are rediscovering photography in unexpected places: in the kitchen, down the block and on the bus -- from the backyards of Middle America all the way to Korea and down to Cuba.

While the Instamatic Age was once obsessed with capturing images of smiling faces, vast landscapes, and the 3x5-inch photo print as a family artifact, mobile phone photography is looking in a new direction.



Photo: CNN/Money

Yes, the pictures can be grainy -- especially indoors -- but camera phones capture moments that might otherwise be forgotten.

Picture what you ate for breakfast or capture the startled look in your cat's eyes. Catch the reflection in a puddle on the sidewalk as you walk to work or the texture of a cloud against a flat blue sky.

"This is no longer about disposable cameras. We call it 'disposable photography,'" said Ben Wood, a wireless analyst with market research firm Gartner Inc. in London.

There's no such thing as a bad photo. The delete key takes care of the headless body or any other misfire. There's no cost for making mistakes.

"Camera phone pictures are the ones you took today to share with friends," said Chris Hoar, founder of [TextAmerica](#), an online photo diary site popular with camera phone aficionados. "Now everything gets documented."

TextAmerica.com has some 100,000 active monthly users, said Hoar, a London transplant who lives near San Diego.

Turning the camera on yourself and snapping a picture is also common. "Everyone stages their own reality," Hoar says.

To be sure, the technical constraints of early camera phones play a role in determining subject matter.

Resolution is low compared with digital cameras. Devices also lack zoom or flash attachments, making pictures fuzzy and indecipherable in poor light, and hardly printable.

Sharing pictures from camera phones typically means e-mailing each image to a computer e-mail account in order to save to a hard disk or post on a Web site. This involves several steps and can be awkward for less tech-minded souls.

For an even richer set of functions, **Inficon** Technologies of Woodbridge, N.J., recently introduced [mBlog](#), which helps consumers create full-fledged Web sites using Movable Type publishing software and offers mobile photo-related services.

Correction
An earlier version of this story incorrectly reported that mBlog was introduced by Landmat International of Reykjavik, Iceland. It was in fact Inficon Technologies of Woodbridge, N.J. CNN/Money regrets the error.

Consumer electronics company Sony Corp., a maker of stylish mobile phones through its Sony Ericsson joint venture, is just one service that offers free online photo storage to anyone who visits the site. Kodak's [Ofoto](#), with 12 million members as of the end of 2003, is the biggest such site.

When camera phones are commonplace

Jill Aldort, an analyst with market researcher InfoTrends of Norwell, Massachusetts, predicts that sales of camera phones in the United States and Canada will nearly triple this year to 21 million devices, up from 7-1/2 million in 2003.

Worldwide sales of camera phones are expected to total 150 million in 2004 -- just over a quarter of all mobile phone sales, up from 70 million last year. Aldort expects sales to reach 656 million units by 2008.

Mobile phone companies have invested billions of dollars in new networks capable of handling not just phone calls but photos, e-mails, even video. U.S. carriers are just getting underway with phone-to-phone picture-swapping services.

Currently, most picture messages are sent by consumers from phones via e-mail to computers or straight to Web sites. That will be necessary until more users have picture-ready phones.

"Eventually (the camera phone) will become commonplace. People will have a camera with them at most times," predicted Matt Kaiser, director of multimedia messaging for Atlanta-based Cingular, a joint venture of BellSouth and SBC Communications.

As more people purchase camera-ready devices, phone-to-phone picture messaging promises far greater convenience, as no special effort to send and receive pictures will be needed, Kaiser said.

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Cingular's service now costs 25 cents per photo, or \$2.99 for 20 picture messages. In coming weeks, the company is set to introduce plans that allow more photo messages to be sent for the same price, Kaiser said.

U.S. mobile carriers must first agree to allow subscribers to send pictures to other networks, something Verizon Wireless spokesman Jeffrey Nelson

predicts Verizon and several other national carriers will be ready to offer later this year.

"We will communicate with pictures more and more," said Sanjay Jha, president of the wireless technology group at Qualcomm Inc., developer of mobile phone network technology that is popular in the United States and Asia.

But camera phones are only a transitional product to wireless video phones, Jha said. Already, Korean manufacturers are offering tiny phones with full camcorders, products that will become widespread as high-speed networks are built to handle the higher data-rate transmissions of video. ■

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- Comments and feedback
- Group posts into categories
- TrackBack inter-weblog communication
- Public search engine
- Standard and custom Templates
- XML or RSS headlines
- XHTML indexes, or custom data formats.
- File and image uploading
- Thumbnail creation
- IP Banning
- Email notification
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- ...and much more!

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mBlog Highlights

ieri sera ospite a nessunorma...
c'era un tizio... che presentava il suo Libro: dice: trattasi della gente che ha rovinato l' Italia... dal titolo: Nomi e Cognomi... li x l&igr;
...Posted by sharpfour 2004-05-18 11:35:30

New look
Na sexta-feira pinteí meu cabelo, desta vez acho que com a pratica chegamos a perfeicao, a bagunca no banheiro foi quase nula. Agora olhem o resultad
...Posted by millondon 2004-05-18 11:33:41

Campo
Una excusa tan buena como cualquier otra para mover la foto de mi cabezón al archivo de la web...
...Posted by RainKing 2004-05-18 12:25:21

The cleaner dude
The cleaner is freaking me out now. Here's the thing. There is this old man who is the cleaner in the Business Faculty of UTS. And I always see him a
...Posted by Khushee 2004-05-18 09:37:07

The not-so happy and cheery place
Clearly "sucking on the nomination lemon" (credit to the autocue) inspires some fantastic turns of phrase from our beloved housemates: 1. Elle, while
...Posted by Kent 2004-05-17 21:47:01

big brother thoughts
Matty - Skip this entry ;-)
Kent - read on ;-)
I have to say I'm actually liking Aphrodite more now that she is actually out of the house and has se
...Posted by Nimeton 2004-05-17 12:05:15

First Year--done
And I do mean done. Had the last final today, and it feels incredible. I feel very Paper Chase-ish in that I don't even want to see my grades. I ju
...Posted by Stack 2004-05-14 13:29:51

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Feature set ▶

- SMS/MMS - send text/multimedia messages to your mBlog
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- Thumbnail creation
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- Email notification
- Mail entry
- ...and much more!

What is mBlog?

mBlog combines the latest in Internet and wireless technology so that you can post Text and Multimedia to your live journal. mBlog is paving the way for a **new medium of communication** through a 'blog' like web publishing system. Technically speaking, blogs offer a way to produce web pages by filling out a form. The text entered and graphics uploaded are displayed on a page that is organized with the most recent entry at the top and older entries below. mBlogs provide a **mobile archive** mechanism for all personal entries, **personalization** of content, **search** features to look for specific information within content, and **syndication** features for communication with friends and family.

What can I do with it?

Anything you want really. The very nature of a blog lends itself to being a **real time journal**. Got a thought? ...Blog it! mBlogs can be used to capture any event as it occurs. Whether you want to **share pictures** of your firstborn with your family or you want to blog a hilarious situation for friends, mBlog will give you the power to capture the moment. Through syndication you can share memories in real time and **receive immediate commentary** from your circle of readers.

Do I need to program?

Not at all. MBlog provides a user-friendly interface to manage the look and feel of your blogs without the need to program at all. The mBlog system was designed to host highly functional blogs for the beginner with no prior knowledge of HTML to the advanced tech junkie. Choose from a variety of standard templates to accent your live journal or use your own custom template. Blog your thoughts to your personalized site **via any web browser or mobile device** by filling out a simple form. Upload **images, sounds, and multimedia** files to share with your friends and family with the click of a button.

How do I get started?

Getting started with mBlog couldn't be simpler. Pick a name for your blog, register for free, choose a template and start blogging. If you need any help or have any comments feel free to contact us at any time.

Whats 'under the hood'?

mBlog is driven by the award-winning open source **MovableType (MT)** personal publishing system. mBlog consists of various modifications to the MT source as well as integrated **custom modules** developed in order to provide this free service to you. mBlogs mobility features are derived from modules designed using **Perl** and **Simplewire's SMS/MMS API**.