



Home > Issues > 8/30/04

Diversions

Help! My digital camera ate its pix

By Alex Markels

It was the perfect Kodak moment. My wife and 4-month-old son spinning around the dance floor at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival earlier this year, the little one giggling and flapping his arms to the beat of clarinet legend Pete Fountain. But as I turned on my Olympus digital camera, it flashed an alarming "E" for error on its screen. I almost broke down in tears as I realized that all the pictures I'd taken over the weekend--the Mardi Gras Indians in full purple-feathered regalia, the Zulu dancers from South Africa, Smokey Robinson singing "Tears of a Clown" --had vanished.

advertisement



silent•treatment
(Sī'lənt trēt'mənt)
n **1.** A temporary act of teenage rebellion, usu. the result of being confronted by a parent. **2.** Extended silence used to avoid discussion about a drug or drinking problem.

IT'S ONLY ATTITUDE. GET PAST IT HERE. >

299

For all of its film-free promise, digital photography has a long way to go before it's foolproof. "The cameras are so complicated and the manuals so bad that people just don't know how to use them," says David Zimmerman, president of LC Technology Intl., who has built a company around retrieving lost digital images. But a few tips can avoid many crashes, and--when those digital pictures do vanish--PC programs can help bring them back.

My mistake was common. I'd been using the camera's "delete" function to remove the images I didn't want from the camera's SmartMedia card each night, making more room for the next day's pictures. But that fragmented the card's databank, spreading the pictures around the card

and causing the same errors that can plague a computer's hard drive.

"What you should have done is download all your images to your computer each night, then reformat the card before using it again," explains Zimmerman. Those without access to a PC or laptop should bring extra memory cards, which start at about \$30 apiece.

Manuals also warn against low batteries, pulling the card out with the camera turned on, using the card in another camera brand, and even exposure to X-ray machines. Then there are the things manuals don't mention: "Dropping the camera, submerging it in water, the dog biting the card We even had one instance where someone went to the zoo and a monkey drooled on it," Zimmerman says.

In most cases, software like LC Tech's **Photorecovery** and **RescuePro** can wrest the images back from the brink. The downloadable software, which sells for about \$40 at *lc-tech.com*, scans the card for recognizable patterns, such as JPEG images. The same goes for other products, like **MediaRecover** (about \$30 at *mediarecover.com*). Technophobes can send their cards directly to LC Tech or take them to a photo store, although the costs are much higher. (My local camera store wanted \$45 just to

advertisement

For **Hot Job Tracks & Career Tools**
Visit our **Work & Career Section**



The net Net of the Internet

.Net

look at mine, and \$1 per image rescued.)

The beauty of programs like Photorecovery is that you can download a demo version that tells you whether your images can be saved. That program couldn't rescue my son from digital purgatory, but the MediaRecover program finally did the trick, saving about 75 percent of the images I'd taken, ensuring me a record of my son's earliest musical achievement.

ARTICLE TOOLS

E-mail article to a friend

Go to top of the page

Respond to this article

Free E-mail newsletters

Get the magazine 4 free trial issues



Get 4 Free Issues of U.S. News! Enter your trial subscription to U.S. News and receive 4 risk-free issues.

First Name Last Name

Address City

State Zip Email

advertisement



Copyright © 2004 U.S. News & World Report, L.P. All rights reserved. Use of this Web site constitutes acceptance of our Terms and Conditions of Use and Privacy Policy.

[Subscribe](#) | [Text Index](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact U.S. News](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Browser Specifications](#)