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The CMOS War Between Canon and Sony

The latter is also expanding its CMOS manufacturing facilities

Web-sites in the photographic industry today published a Sony press release dated June 6 in which the company also announced its plans to invest a significant amount of money in the expansion of the Kumamoto Technology Center (Kumamoto TEC) Fab 2 facility that manufactures CMOS sensors. Canon was quoted by news agency Reuters as saying that it would invest about 55 billion yen ($451 million) to build a new factory in Japan to double its production capacity of image sensors used in digital cameras.Given the date of the release, it's now difficult to say for sure who was the first to announce the investments. Was it Sony or Canon? We don't know that, but we do know that Sony is planning a 60 billion JPY investment while Canon is 5 billion behind.Unlike Canon, which **clearly stated** that some of the sensors would find their way into compact models, Sony doesn't mention anything specific. Here's an excerpt from the press release: "Over the next three years, Sony will continue to strengthen its CMOS sensor manufacturing operations to provide growth markets such as mobile phones and digital still cameras with CMOS sensors that combine high image quality with advanced processing speeds." Sony also announced that the investment would take place from fiscal year 2007 to fiscal 2009. As noted yesterday, Canon's CMOS units are responsible for the company's supremacy in the professional field, the low noise found in images taken at high ISO sensitives convincing a large number of Nikon users to switch to 1Ds Mark II and 1D Mark III. Except for the experimental LBCAST JFET sensor in the D2H and D2Hs, Nikon purchases all its sensors from Sony and this means that it's unlikely to have its models delayed for sensor shortages. However, Canon's units have a reputation for producing low-noise high ISO images, one of the major complaints shared by Nikon users. It would be wise for Sony to invest some of the billions into some research and development, otherwise Nikon might eventually turn to someone else to produce their sensors (Dalsa could be an option). These are only speculations of course, but it's not impossible for Nikon to make a switch. The good news from all this is that we might see more and more compacts with CMOS sensors inside. Could this be the beginning of the end for CCDs?

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